

JOHN

SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH

JOHN

SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH

STORYTELLER

Lifeway Press®
Brentwood, Tennessee

Editorial Team

Ben Reed
Devotional writer

Tyler Quillet
Managing Editor

Stephanie Cross
Associate Editor

Joel Polk
Publisher, Small Group Publishing

Angel Prohaska
Assistant Editor

John Paul Basham
Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

Reid Patton
Senior Editor

Jon Rodda
Art Director

© 2023 Lifeway Press®

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Lifeway Press®; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027.

ISBN: 978-1-0877-8357-4 • Item number: 005842044

Dewey decimal classification: 226.5 • Subject heading: BIBLE / GOSPELS AND ACTS / JOHN

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

To order additional copies of this resource, write to Lifeway Resources Customer Service; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027; fax 615-251-5933; call toll free 800-458-2772; order online at Lifeway.com; or email orderentry@lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing • Lifeway Resources • 200 Powell Place • Brentwood, TN 37027

CONTENTS

About Storyteller.....	5
About John.....	6
How to Use This Study.....	12
Leading a Group.....	14

WEEK 1

Follow Me.....	17
----------------	----

WEEK 2

I Am He.....	47
--------------	----

WEEK 3

I Am Working Also.....	77
------------------------	----

WEEK 4

Believe In the One He Sent.....	107
---------------------------------	-----

WEEK 5

I Am the Light of the World.....	137
----------------------------------	-----

WEEK 6

I Am the Resurrection and the Life.....	167
---	-----

WEEK 7

I Will Draw All People to Myself.....	197
---------------------------------------	-----

Photo Credits.....	230
--------------------	-----

ABOUT STORYTELLER

God could've chosen to reveal Himself in any way that He desired, yet in His wisdom, He chose to reveal Himself in the context of a story. We come to know and understand this reality as we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures and begin to see the entirety of Scripture as one interconnected story. By becoming familiar with the individual stories of Scripture, we train ourselves to see each as one part of God's big story.

Storyteller: John is a seven-week devotional and group Bible study experience designed to take people through Scripture in a way that is beautiful, intuitive, and interactive. Each volume uses a book of the Bible or a portion of Scripture from within a book to examine a key theme. This theme guides the Bible study experience and gives readers handles to help understand and digest what they're reading.

At the end of each study, you should have a deeper understanding of God, His Word, the big themes of Scripture, the connectedness of God's story, and His work in your life.

Let's enter the story together.

ABOUT JOHN

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than 90 percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to His teachings.

AUTHOR

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee. The early church also held that the apostle John was the author of this Gospel.

DATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING

John was likely written in the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. The testimony of the early church also favors a date after AD 70.

The most likely place of writing is Ephesus, one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire at the time, though the envisioned readership of John’s Gospel transcends any one historical setting.

John’s original audience was probably composed of people in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond toward the close of the first century AD. This is likely why John frequently explained Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translated Aramaic terms into Greek.

MESSAGE AND EMPHASIS

The purpose statement in 20:30-31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

John emphasized the deity of Jesus from the beginning of his Gospel. Jesus used the significant phrase "I am" seven times in John, claiming the personal name of God as His own. In John, Jesus is always in charge and knows what will happen in advance.

Knowing and believing are key terms for John. Both occur more than ninety times in this Gospel and are always used as verbs. Jesus's teaching in John reminds us that knowing God and believing in Jesus are expressed in action.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

Of all the Gospels and any of the New Testament books, the Gospel of John most clearly teaches the deity and preexistence of Christ (1:1-2,18; 8:58; 17:5,24; 20:28). Together with the Gospel of Matthew, it provides the most striking proofs of Jesus's messiahship. Jesus's messianic mission is shown to originate with God the Father, "the One who sent" Jesus (7:16,18,28,33; 8:26,29; 15:21), and to culminate in His commissioning of His new messianic community in the power of His Spirit (20:21-22).²

WHY STUDY JOHN?

The Gospel of John is one of four books that describes the life of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as Synoptic Gospels because they use many of the same events and lay them out much the same way. John's Gospel follows a different outline and includes much material that is not covered in the other three Gospels. John's thesis statement is recorded near the end of the book:

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

—**JOHN 20:30-31**

John's Gospel is organized in two big sections: the book of the signs and the book of the exaltation. Both ask us to examine the evidence about Jesus, believe, and find life in His name. The book of the signs is the focus of this study, and it introduces us to Jesus through the lens of seven key miracles or signs that He performed to disclose His identity and prove His divinity. These signs are meant to show us who Jesus is and what He is like. They disclose to us what He cares about and point us back to God. For all of us following Jesus, and those who are just looking into who Jesus is, these signs lead us on a path to the Savior.

Meet Jesus. See Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Find life in His name.



OUTLINE OF JOHN

I. The Prologue (1:1-18)

II. The Book of the Signs (1:19–12:50)

A. The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)

1. The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)
2. The Beginning of Jesus's Ministry (1:35-51)

B. The Cana Cycle: Jesus's Inaugural Signs and Conversations (2–4)

1. Sign 1: Changing Water into Wine at the Wedding in Cana (2:1-12)
2. The Clearing of the Temple (2:13-22)
3. Conversations: Nicodemus, and the Samaritan Woman (2:23–4:42)
4. Sign 2: The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:43-54)

C. The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amid Mounting Unbelief (5–10)

1. Sign 3: Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-47)
2. Sign 4: Feeding the Five Thousand (6:1-15)
3. Sign 5: Walking on Water (6:16-21)
3. Bread of Life Discourse (6:22-71)
4. Jesus at the Festival of Shelters (7–8)
5. Sign 6: The Healing of the Blind Man (9)
7. Good Shepherd Discourse (10)

D. Final Passover and Other Events (11–12)

1. Sign 7: The Raising of Lazarus (11)
2. Final Events of Jesus's Public Ministry (12)¹

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week follows a repeated rhythm to guide you in your study of John and was crafted with lots of white space and photographic imagery to facilitate a time of reflection on Scripture.

The week begins with an introduction to the themes of the week. Throughout each week you'll find Scripture readings, devotions, and beautiful imagery to guide your time.



WEEK 1
FOLLOW ME



Each week includes five days of Scripture reading along with a short devotional thought and three questions to process what you've read.

The Scripture reading is printed out for you with plenty of space for you to take notes, circle, underline, and interact with the passage.



DAY 41 PAUSE & LISTEN

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

JOHN 11:25-26

152 JOHN

I Am the Resurrection and the Life 153

The sixth day contains no reading beyond a couple of verses to give you time to pause and listen to what God has said through the Scriptures this week. You may be tempted to skip this day all together, but resist this temptation. Sit and be quiet with God—even if it's only for a few minutes.

The seventh day each week offers a list of open-ended questions that apply to any passage of Scripture. Use this day to reflect on your own or meet with a group to discuss what you've learned. Take intentional time to remember and reflect on what the story of John is teaching you.

DAY 7

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on John 11:2-25.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

How does this week's Scripture point you to Jesus?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Take a moment and thank God for the eternal life that's offered to you. Praise Him for this free gift that's available to all.

44 JOHN

Julia Mc 45

FESTIVALS *in* JOHN

John chapters 5–12 are known as the Festival Cycle because much of the narrative involved commemorative and Jewish ceremonial festivals. These chapters feature, including commentary between Jesus and Jewish authorities. John's original audience would've been introduced to these festivals and their significance seasonally. John was trying to show his audience that Jesus was the fulfillment of these Jewish feasts, but to make that connection, readers need some extra help.

The Unnamed Festival

After the 3 Jewish feasts took place, and Jesus was up to Jerusalem.

JOHN 5

This first unnamed festival was likely Passover or the Festival of Shelters. "After this" signals a shift in time to John. These events were like several months to a year after the events in chapter 4. This provided an occasion for Jesus to defend the ministry and exonerate evidence for His identity.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread

How the Passover is a Jewish festival, see note.

JOHN 6

Passover is the backdrop for Jesus' feeding of the five thousand and His teaching on being the Bread of Life. This is the second Passover mentioned in John. The Passover is the first and most important annual Jewish festival. It commemorated the final plague on Egypt when the birthright of the Egyptians died and the Hebrews were spared because of the blood smeared on their doorposts (see Exodus 12:11, 21–27, 43, 46).

The Passover was also called the feast of unleavened bread (see Exodus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:16) because only unleavened bread was eaten during the seven-day Intermittent Unleavened Passover (see Exodus 23:18, 19; Deuteronomy 16:18). Unleavened bread referred to the fact that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread before their hasty departure from Egypt. It was also apparently connected to the barley harvest (see Leviticus 23:4–6).

The Festival of Shelters

The Jewish Festival of Shelters, was also.

JOHN 7

The fourth annual festival was the Festival of Shelters, or booths or tabernacles (see 2 Chronicles 3:1; Ezra 3:1; Nehemiah 8:16). It commemorated the Lord's provision for the harvest. It celebrated the ingathering of the labor of the field (see Exodus 23:16), the fruit of the earth (see Leviticus 23:39), the ingathering of the tithing flour and tithing oil (Deuteronomy 18:15), and the dwelling in shelters, which were to be joyful reminders to Israel (see Leviticus 23:42; Deuteronomy 16:14). The "booth" in Scripture is an image of protection, preservation, and shelter from heat and storm (see Psalm 27:1–20; Isaiah 40). The rejoicing community included family, servants, widows, orphans, Levites, and sojourners (see Deuteronomy 16:13–15).

John was teaching that Jesus is our ultimate provision and shelter—whether He was recognized or not.

The Festival of Dedication

Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter.

JOHN 10

Also called the Festival of Lights (in modern Hebrew, Hanukkah), the origin goes back to the time between the Old Testament and New Testament when a group of Jewish fighters fought as the Maccabees overthrew an oppressive government. This festival celebrated the rededication of the temple. When the Jews returned to the temple, they could only find one jar of oil that hadn't been corrupted, and that oil miraculously lasted for eight days when it should've only lasted for one. This celebration is a reminder that darkness may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning!

84 JOHN

I Am Working After 85

Throughout each week of study, you will notice callout boxes or supplemental pages provided to give greater context and clarity to the Scripture you're reading. These features will help you connect John to the bigger story of Scripture.

LEADING A GROUP

Each week of study contains a set of questions that can be used for small group meetings. These open-ended questions are meant to guide discussion of the week's Scripture passage. No matter the size of your group, here are some helpful tips for guiding discussion.

PREPARE

REVIEW the Scripture and your answers to the week's questions ahead of time.

PRAY over your group as well as the Scriptures you've been studying. Ask God's Spirit for help to lead the group deeper into God's truth and deeper in relationship with one another.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

We live in a time when our attention is increasingly divided. Try to see your group time as a space and respite from the digital clutter—from scrolling, notifications, likes, and newsfeeds. Commit to one another to give focused time and attention to the discussion at hand and minimize outside distractions. Help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE IS INCLUDED. Your goal is to foster a community where people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES. Even though you may be "leading" the group, try to see yourself as a participant steering the conversation rather than a teacher imparting information.

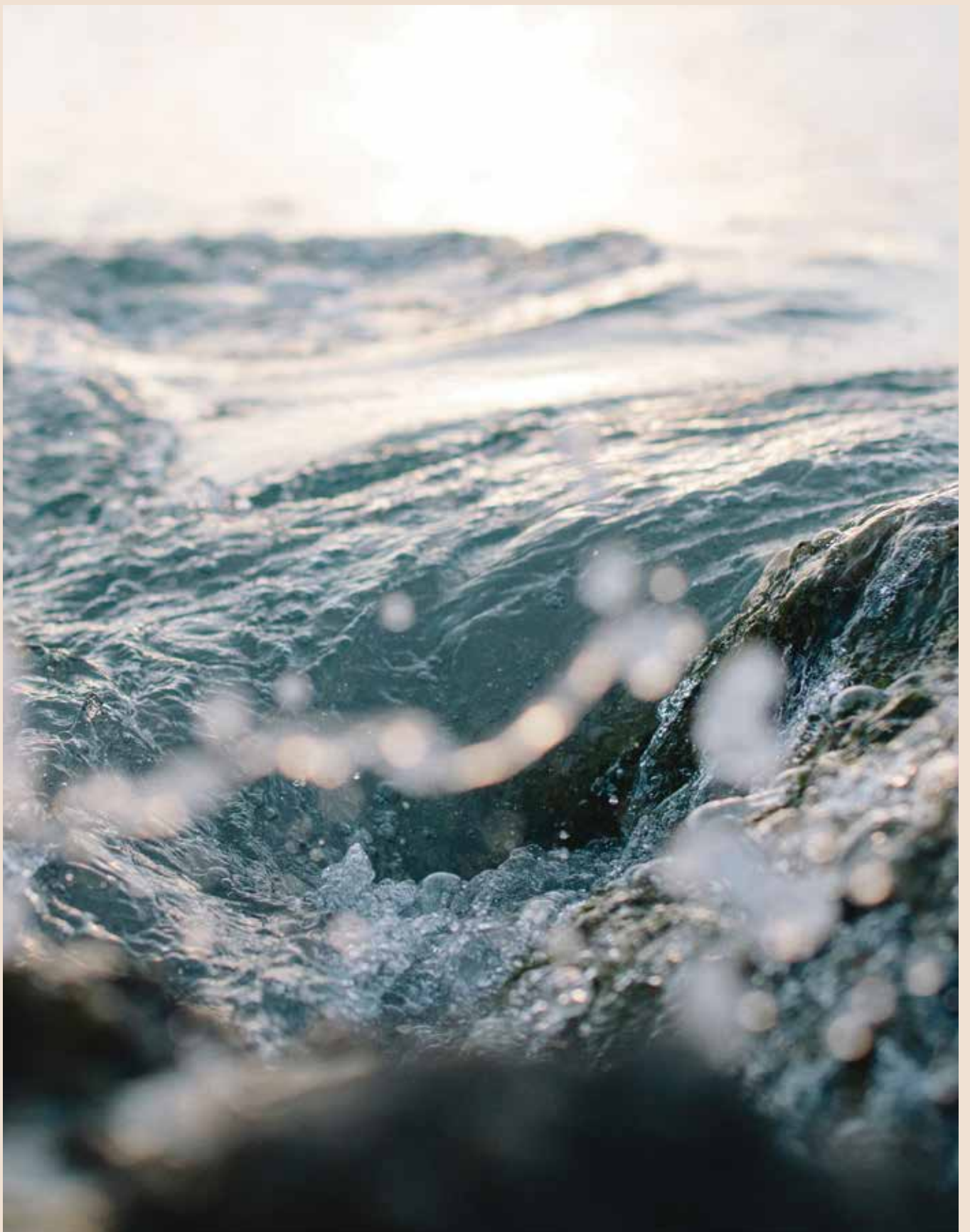
DON'T RUSH. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People may need time, and we should be glad to give it to them. Don't feel like you have to ask all the questions or stay away from questions that aren't included. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to one another. Take your time.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking other people to share when they have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. Conversation stalls when people feel that you don't want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer. Engagement and affirmation keeps the conversation going.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. The questions in this study are meant to steer the conversation back to God, His Word, and the work of the gospel in our lives. Opinions and experiences are valuable and can be helpful, but God is the center of the Bible, the center of our story, and should be the center of our discussion. Trust Him to lead the discussion. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING

Spiritual growth occurs in the context of community. Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Your group will be more enjoyable the more you get to know one another through time spent outside of an official group meeting. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending. Reserve time each week to touch base with individual group members.



WEEK 1

FOLLOW ME

In the beginning was the Word.

John's Gospel begins all the way at the beginning.

Before time, before creation, before anything existed but God, we receive testimony from God that Jesus is the Son of God. He always has been. He always will be.

The testimony is followed up by the testimony of John the Baptist, who saw Jesus and declared Him to be "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29).

This testimony provided support as Jesus asked young men to follow Him and be His disciples. These men sensed something in Jesus that they couldn't find anywhere else. These disciples decided to "come and see" (1:46) what Jesus was doing and where He would lead.

The week culminated with the first of seven signs that demonstrate Jesus's identity. He turned water into wine at a wedding feast in a town called Cana, and then He reclaimed God's temple for God's glory.

Through this testimony and teaching, many reached John's intended conclusion and "believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing" (2:23).

The question is, *Will you? Will you read about these signs, hear the testimony, and believe?* Come and see the heart of Jesus.

JOHN 1:1-18

PROLOGUE

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’”) ¹⁶ Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, ¹⁷ for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.

DAY

1

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Like all stories, John starts at the beginning. Prior to John, the phrase “In the beginning” was only used one other time in Scripture—in the first line of the first book of the Bible, Genesis. At the start John takes us all the way back to the very beginning of the Bible, to the very beginning of time itself.

But John uses these words in his prologue for different reasons than Moses used them in Genesis. John gives us a different angle on the same story because John is telling us a specific story. He wants us to know Jesus was part of the plan from the beginning. Like God the Father, God the Son was present at the creation of the world. And in the beginning of John, we learn about a new beginning through a new covenant that will lead to new life.

Just as the original creation account in Genesis 1 took seven days, John structured the first twelve chapters of his Gospel around seven miracles, or signs, to show us Jesus’s true identity as the One who is truly man and truly God. Each sign is like holding a diamond up to the light: with each turn, rather than seeing a different diamond, you see more of its beauty in this new “creation” account. Each of these signs is concluded with a report letting us know how the people responded to Jesus.

In stark contrast to gods worshiped by the broader culture at the time of the writing, we see that the Word (Jesus) descended from His throne to live among us (see John 1:14). Jesus is a wholly different ruler, the face and embodiment of God the Father. He wasn’t simply staying in heaven, doling out rules and tasks. Culturally and theologically different than what most expected, Jesus is “the true light that gives light to everyone” (1:9). That light didn’t just extend to first-century readers: you and I aren’t beyond this Light’s reach. He is being revealed to us in the pages of John’s Gospel.

A serene sunset scene over a calm body of water. The sun is positioned just above the horizon, creating a bright, golden path of light that reflects across the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, transitioning from deep orange near the horizon to a pale, hazy blue at the top. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Jesus was the plan from the beginning.

REFLECTIONS

Take some time to read Genesis 1:1-31. What connections can you make between Genesis 1 and John 1?

According to John 1:12-13, what does it mean to be a child of God? How does someone step into that relationship?

CONNECTING THE STORY

This section, known as John's prologue, intentionally pulls themes and language from the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1. There we learn that God created the universe and everything in it from nothing through an act of His will. Here we learn that Jesus is God and was with God in the beginning. From the outset of John's Gospel, there is no denying Jesus's identity.

JOHN 1:19-42

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY

¹⁹This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰He didn't deny it but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹"What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?"

"I am not," he said.

"Are you the Prophet?"

"No," he answered.

²²"Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"

²³He said, "I am a **voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord** — just as Isaiah the prophet said."

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

²⁶"I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him.

²⁷He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." ²⁸All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

THE LAMB OF GOD

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is the one I told you about: 'After me

comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.' ³¹I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. ³³I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on — he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

³⁵The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

They said to him, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹"Come and you'll see," he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated "the Christ"), ⁴²and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter").

DAY

2

TESTIMONY

It had been over four hundred years since the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, was penned. The Gospel of John picks up where Malachi left off, declaring that God would send a messenger for His people (see Malachi 3:1-2). This messenger is John the Baptist. His arrival on the scene is also a fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, which John quoted in verse 23.

Biblically, a prophet is one who speaks God's words to people. And though John the Baptist stands in the line of the prophets, he is distinct. He didn't operate in the temple, but in the wilderness, bringing a message of repentance and baptism. While previous prophets had simply said, "Look to God," John the Baptist said, "God is here among us."

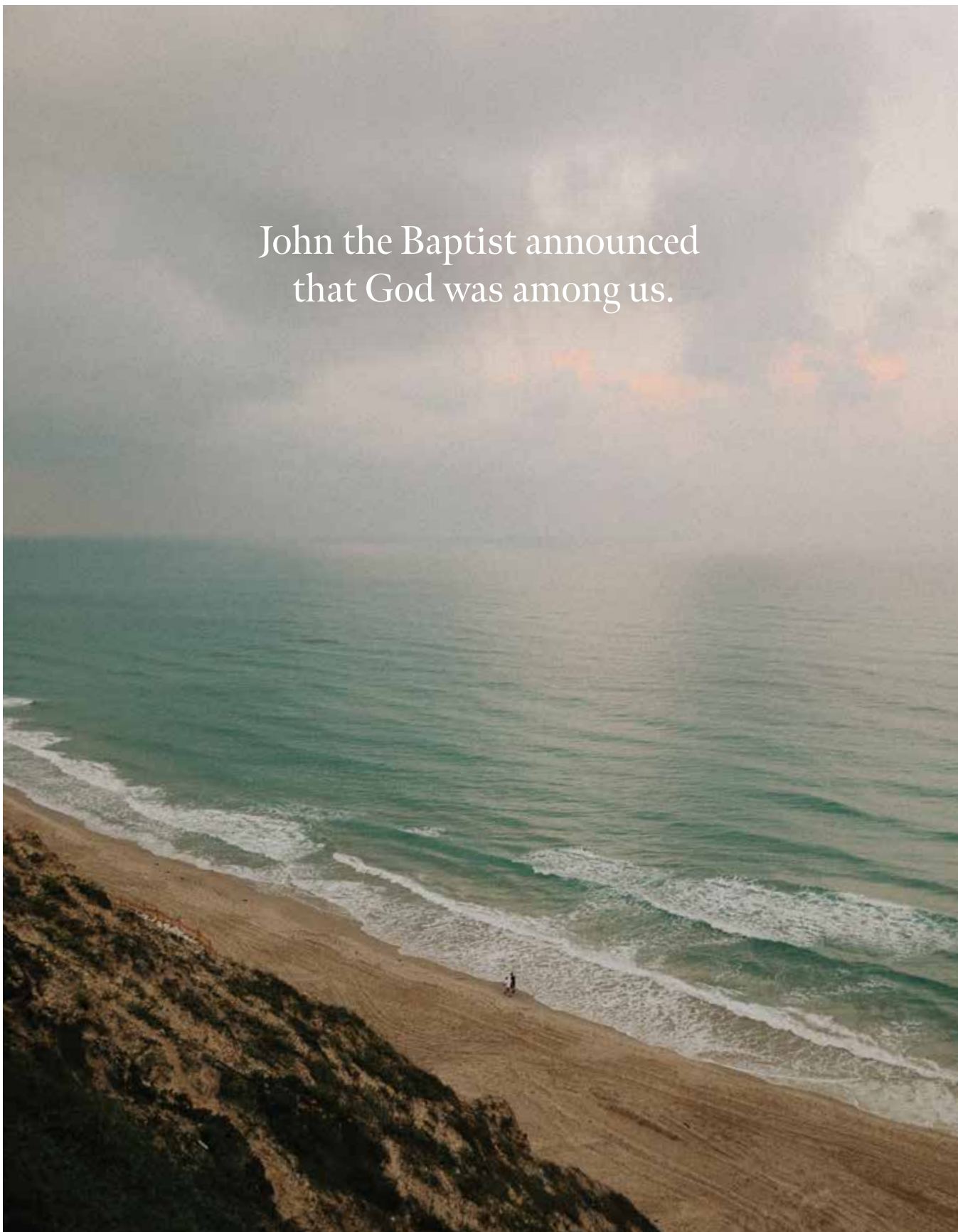
In this Gospel account, we learn who Jesus is through the testimony (or stories) of others. John the Baptist believed his purpose was that "[Jesus] might be revealed to Israel" (1:31). When John saw Jesus coming toward him, He declared the truth about who Jesus is, saying, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:39).

Here we also see the story of Jesus's first disciples. They saw something so compelling and necessary in Jesus that they left everything else to follow Him. When John pointed out Jesus was the Lamb of God, Andrew was so intrigued that he went to find his brother to tell him about Jesus.

Though these accounts, we begin to see what makes Jesus different, compelling, and worth following. We begin to see what it means to have found the Messiah. And we see Jesus changing lives.

Throughout his Gospel, John gives a glimpse into the life of Jesus and invites us to come and see. When we read these stories in Scripture, that's the invitation we hear from God: "Come and you'll see." That invitation—to come and see who Jesus is and what He is doing—exists for each of us every day.

John the Baptist announced
that God was among us.



REFLECTIONS

Write out a few things you learn about Jesus from these passages. What do you learn specifically about who Jesus is?

What has Jesus done in your life? What is He showing you as you've come to Him? If this is your first time seeking Jesus, what do you hope to learn about Him?

Who might you invite to come and see Jesus with you?

JOHN 1:43-51

PHILIP AND NATHANAEAL

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “Follow me.”

⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

⁴⁶“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him.

“Come and see,” Philip answered.

⁴⁷Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

⁴⁸“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered.

⁴⁹“Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹Then he said, “Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

DAY

3

THE SON OF GOD

Nicknames carry weight. How others refer to us tells us a lot about what they think of us. It also creates a reputation that we live up to—or don't live up to. They're earned over time, usually through something you did (or didn't do). Some nicknames we like and embrace, and others we reject. At times we base our identity on what people decide to call us; we choose to see ourselves how others see us.

Throughout the Bible one of the ways we learn about God is through the names and metaphors that describe His character and His nature. The Lord of Hosts, the Almighty, the Shepherd of Israel—all of these designations teach us something about God. The same is true of Jesus.

“Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth” (1:45) is His given name, but that is not the whole of who Jesus is. Throughout John's Gospel and the rest of the New Testament, Jesus is given different names and designations by Himself and by others. Yesterday's reading introduced one of them—“the Lamb of God.” Today's reading introduces a few more.

Jesus called Philip to follow Him, who in turn invited Nathanael along. Nathanael was skeptical and needed more proof. Yet, Jesus opened Nathanael's eyes, and we see in Nathanael's names for Jesus precisely who he believed Jesus was: “Son of God” and “King of Israel.” Maybe this is how you see Jesus. Or maybe like Nathanael, you are skeptical. Jesus did something seemingly insignificant to help Nathanael see Him for who He is. To Nathanael, and to all of us, Jesus would prove over and over again that He is worthy of the titles Nathanael used. This comparatively small sign from Jesus to a new disciple was only the beginning of His miracles and signs.

As the book goes on, we will see more signs and names that give us a clearer picture of who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish.

The Lamb of God has arrived
to take away our sins.



REFLECTIONS

Based on what you know so far, who is Jesus to you?

Do you need evidence before you can trust someone? Why? How does that translate to your relationship with Jesus?

As you make your way through this study, what would it look like for you to be open to Jesus being more than you imagined?

INSIGHTS

In the first century, it was extremely common for rabbis or religious teachers to require disciples who would follow them and learn at their feet. The word *disciple* literally means “learner.” As you continue through this book, notice the ways that Jesus intentionally taught and trained the disciples who followed Him.

JOHN 2:1-12

THE FIRST SIGN: TURNING WATER INTO WINE

2 On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus's mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding as well.³ When the wine ran out, Jesus's mother told him, "They don't have any wine."

⁴ "What has this concern of yours to do with me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ "Do whatever he tells you," his mother told the servants.

⁶ Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained twenty or thirty gallons.

⁷ "Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim.⁸ Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the headwaiter." And they did.

⁹ When the headwaiter tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from — though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom¹⁰ and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people are drunk, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

DAY

4

THE FIRST SIGN

We all love that part of the movie where the story begins to unfold and things start to make sense—which is exactly where we find ourselves in John 2. Jesus began to reveal His divinity, to show that He’s not just another prophet, a great teacher, or a mere man.

Here we witness the first of seven signs John highlighted to prove Jesus is God. To us, turning water into wine might seem like a cool party trick or even a magic trick. Those are things that pass as “miraculous” to us. However, every time Jesus performed a miracle, He was making a claim to His identity. The miracles (or signs) in John all disclose to the people in the story (and to us) that this Man is not like other men—He does things only God can do. John tells us these signs “revealed his glory” (2:11) and led His disciples to believe in Him.

As we read, though, we realize that this isn’t just some party trick or a feat to impress guests: Jesus actually turned six jars of water into six jars of wine as a demonstration of His power and divinity. The disciples’ response was the intended response.

Why is turning water into wine so significant? What should have taken years to accomplish, the maturing of fine wine, Jesus accomplished in a moment. Though it may seem a small thing to us, scientists would tell you that the amount of energy needed to transform this amount of liquid would be staggering. Yet it was done without any exertion and without drawing the attention of any attendants. Jesus’s ability to transform the water into wine is a glimpse into His total control over the physical world.

On the execution of this sign, Jesus revealed command and control of nature and painted the first strokes of His true identity: the Son of God.

Jesus's first miracle affirmed His
identity as the Son of God.



REFLECTIONS

How would you explain the significance of this passage in your own words to someone who does not yet believe in Jesus?

How does this sign strengthen your faith?

Is there something in your life that feels like it would take years, or even decades, to untangle? Pray that the God who can turn water to wine would begin to work miraculously!

INSIGHTS

The amount of water Jesus transformed is believed to be somewhere between 120-180 gallons.

SIGNS *of the* MESSIAH

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus performed seven signs that serve as proofs for His identity as the Son of God. They were a part of a growing body of evidence that John used to support his central goal—to have people believe in Jesus and find life in His name. Chronologically the seven signs are:

Turning Water into Wine

JOHN 2:1-12

Healing an Official's Son

JOHN 4:43-54

Healing a Disabled Man

JOHN 5:1-47

Feeding of the Five Thousand

JOHN 6:1-15

Walking on the Water

JOHN 6:16-21

Healing of the Blind Man

JOHN 9:1-12

Raising of Lazarus from the Dead

JOHN 11:1-46

JOHN 2:13-25

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

¹³ The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. ¹⁵ After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it is written: **Zeal for your house will consume me.**

¹⁸ So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."

²⁰ Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

²³ While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. ²⁴ Jesus, however, would not entrust himself to them, since he knew them all ²⁵ and because he did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man.

LIFE TO DEATH TO LIFE

Jesus went from the life of the party in John 2:1-12 to the death of another party in this passage. As He walked through the temple just before Passover, when crowds would have begun forming, He saw that the temple had become a marketplace. Instead of being a place to connect with and worship God, it was a place where goods were bought and sold.

Jesus became angry, but there's a difference between righteous and unrighteousness anger. Here, Jesus defended the dwelling place of God and the ability of all people to have access to the outer court, which should have been accessible to all who wanted to worship.

Jesus couldn't tolerate this misuse of God's temple. This truth takes on a whole new depth of meaning when Jesus calls Himself the temple in John 2:19-21. Jesus won't tolerate people using Him as an object to be traded and sold. He's the Savior of the world, not a bargaining chip.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus would continue to thwart expectations. Many Jews at the time expected the Messiah would be a military or political leader who would free them from Roman captivity. When Jesus said He's the Messiah, it's not that the people didn't believe, they were completely missing it. They were confused because this Messiah didn't line up with the one they thought would show up.

But Jesus's disciples did believe. They heard His words, saw His actions, and saw Him for who He was.

In this interchange Jesus revealed what He came to earth to accomplish: to pay for the sins of humanity by rising from the dead. His words were veiled to many, but for those who were willing to accept it, His meaning was clear. Jesus did not come to take from us as the money changers did; He came to give His life so that we might have life.

His disciples believed. They heard His words, saw His actions, and believed.



REFLECTIONS

Read John 2:25 again. How does this verse explain the way Jesus related to the crowds around Him?

The people in the temple were confused about who Jesus truly was. Is there anything you've learned about Jesus this week that challenges your previously held beliefs? Explain.

Do you know people who have some misconceptions about Jesus? How might you introduce them to the Jesus you've been learning about?

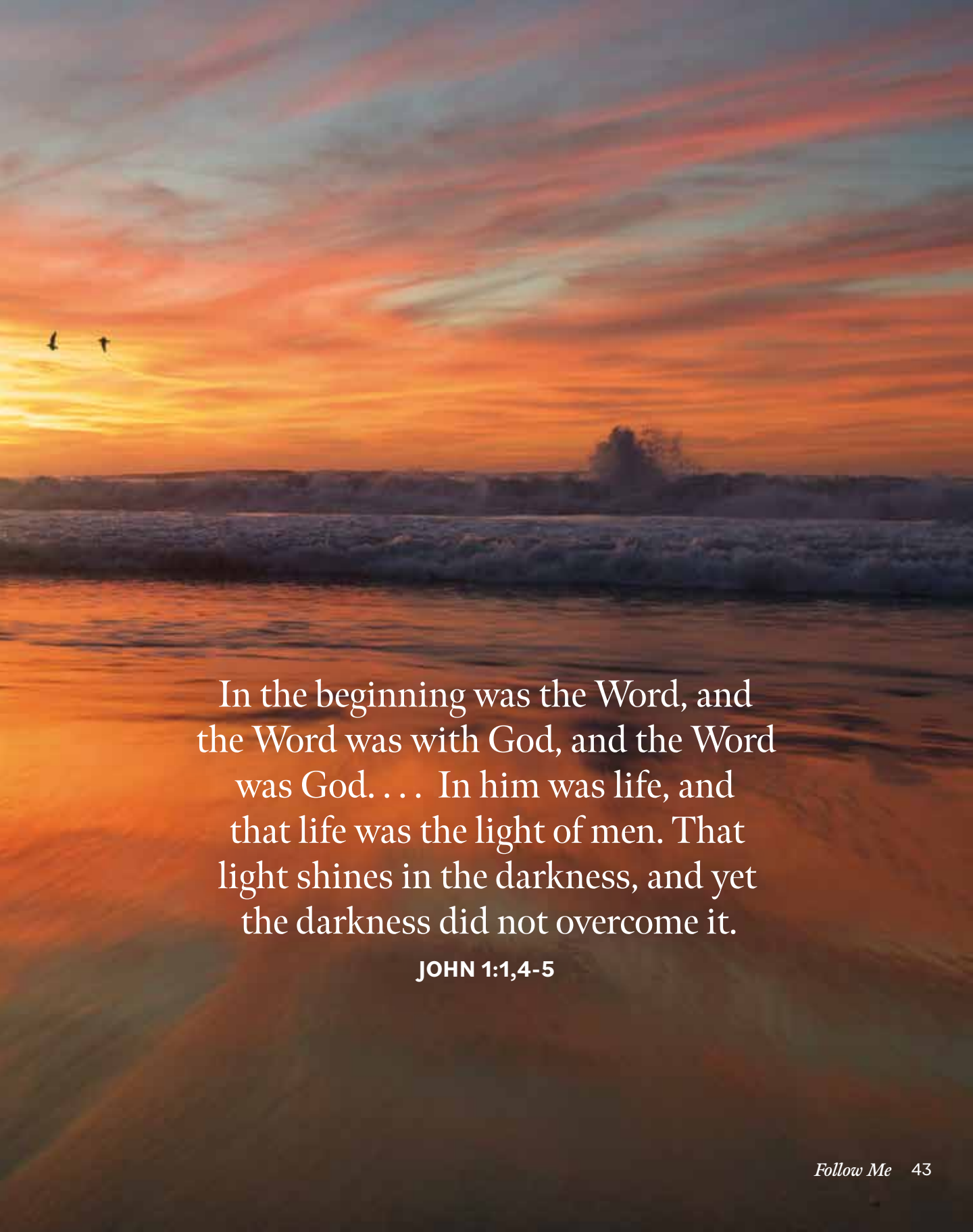
DAY

6

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



A sunset over the ocean with waves crashing and two birds flying in the sky. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and blue hues. The water is dark with white foam from the waves. Two birds are visible in the sky on the left side.

In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the Word
was God. . . . In him was life, and
that life was the light of men. That
light shines in the darkness, and yet
the darkness did not overcome it.

JOHN 1:1,4-5

DAY
7

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on John 1:1-2:25.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

How does this week's Scripture point you to Jesus?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Take a moment and thank God for the eternal life that's offered to you. Praise Him for this free gift that's available to all.