

creator



father

KING



A ONE YEAR[®] JOURNEY WITH GOD

JOSHUA COOLEY

Praise for *Creator, Father, King*

Joshua Cooley has written a terrific devotional for young people! From January 1 to December 31, this is a biblically solid and relevant collection of insights into God's Word, Christ-centered thinking, and Jesus-honoring living. I will buy this book for my grandchildren—I can't think of a stronger endorsement!

Randy Alcorn

Author of Heaven, Does God Want Us to Be Happy?, and It's All about Jesus

In a world of uncertainty, today's young people need something they can depend on. They need truth—not the changing waves of cultural opinions. Joshua Cooley's book, *Creator, Father, King: A One Year Journey with God*, is just what teenagers need. In daily bites, this book masterfully gives young readers a thorough foundation in biblical truth—the kind of real information about essential matters of faith that can guide them through their entire lives. It's like having a friendly, gentle mentor providing a complete, exciting education about God and his world—and the importance of having a relationship with him through Jesus Christ.

Dave Branon

Author of Beyond the Valley and writer for Our Daily Bread

Joshua has hit another home run with *Creator, Father, King*. As a father of young children, I am always looking for ways to shepherd their hearts to the Lord, and this devotional is perfect. Joshua has presented a great opportunity to begin the discipline of spending time with the Lord on a daily basis. I pray that God's love for you through his Son, Jesus Christ, would be revealed through this devotional!

Brian Roberts

Former fourteen-year major league baseball player and two-time all-star

Creator, Father, King is an insightful and inspiring devotional that gives young people a valuable tool to help them grow in their Christian walk by

pointing them to the glory and majesty of God. Joshua Cooley has done youth and their parents a great service by writing this devotional book.

Tim Ellsworth

Director of communications at Union University and author of God in the Whirlwind and Pujols: More Than the Game

Popular author and youth leader Joshua Cooley has crafted a collection of daily devotionals for teens that are current and inspiring. Each day's reading is designed to magnify the Lord as Creator, Father, or King by highlighting biblical truth in a voice that connects with twenty-first century teenagers. This will be a great tool for individual discipleship, family devotions, Bible study in a local school, or a study guide for your entire youth group. No matter the setting, teens will grow as they meditate daily on his Word.

Ken Coley

Edd, senior professor of Christian education, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Joshua Cooley masterfully ties engaging content to a faithful theological foundation, this time creating a devotional for youth. This 365-day journey affords young readers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of God as an amazing Creator, a compassionate Father, and a reigning King. Each day delivers effective explanations of the biblical text coupled with relatable stories, answers to honest questions, and engaging fun facts. It is like having a youth pastor walking day-by-day with your child.

Eliza Huie

LCPC and author of Raising Kids in a Screen-Saturated World and Raising Teens in a Hyper-Sexualized World

God's character, his power, and his unfathomable love for us are foundational to Christian faith. Joshua does a fantastic job taking readers on a year-long journey into a deeper understanding of their heavenly Father. This is an especially important resource for kids today.

Jesse Florea

Author of The One Year Sports Devotions for Kids, Growing Up Super

Average: The Adventures of Average Boy, The One Year Devotions for Active Boys, *and* The One Year Every Day Devotions

As a high schooler, I was deeply formed in my young faith by reading through Oswald Chambers' devotional classic, *My Utmost for His Highest*. In *Creator, Father, King*, Joshua Cooley offers today's teenagers 365 daily readings that are deeply rooted in Scripture and accessible for adolescents. If your child has questions about God, this book will help them find the answers!

Drew Hill

Pastor and award-winning author of Alongside: Loving Teenagers with the Gospel

Creator, Father, King: A One Year Journey with God is a resource that ministers truth to youth while cultivating an atmosphere where meaningful conversation can happen with their parents. This resource is such a gift, for it leads young hearts to God by rehearsing the gospel of Jesus Christ while providing great potential to strengthen the parent/child relationship. This is a double blessing for the sake of Christ's name in the heart of youth and in their homes.

Bud Burk

Pastor for children and family discipleship, Bethlehem Baptist Church, downtown campus

Joshua Cooley understands the depths of theology and the world of boys of girls! His engaging language will draw kids in and encourage them to grow in their knowledge of God every day. I love the "Now What?" sections that give kids an immediate way to act upon the truths they're learning; it'll help them draw a straight line from doctrine to life.

Jared Kennedy

Co-founder and managing editor of Gospel-Centered Family and author of The Beginner's Gospel Story Bible *and* God Made Me for Worship

In *Creator, Father, King*, Joshua Cooley weaves together a Bible study of God's character, with compelling illustrations and fun facts that will

keep you turning the page, looking for more, day by day. Joshua makes important gospel connections to help the reader understand the larger story of the Bible. The gospel message he presents in the pages of this book has the power to transform lives. If you're looking for a Bible study you can easily fit into your day, or for a mealtime devotional to use with your family, get a copy of *Creator, Father, King*. You won't be disappointed.

Marty Machowski

Pastor and author of Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God, The Ology, The Gospel Story Bible, and other gospel-rich resources for church and home

I'm always looking for the best books—Bible resources that I can place with confidence in the hands of my own kids. This book is a perfect fit. With *Creator, Father, King*, Joshua Cooley is fast becoming one of the most trusted voices for teens today. Fusing Bible study, theology, and wisdom for life, with lots of fun and interesting facts, this new 365-day devotional will capture your middle- and high-schoolers' interest and guide them into the riches of God's Word.

Champ Thornton

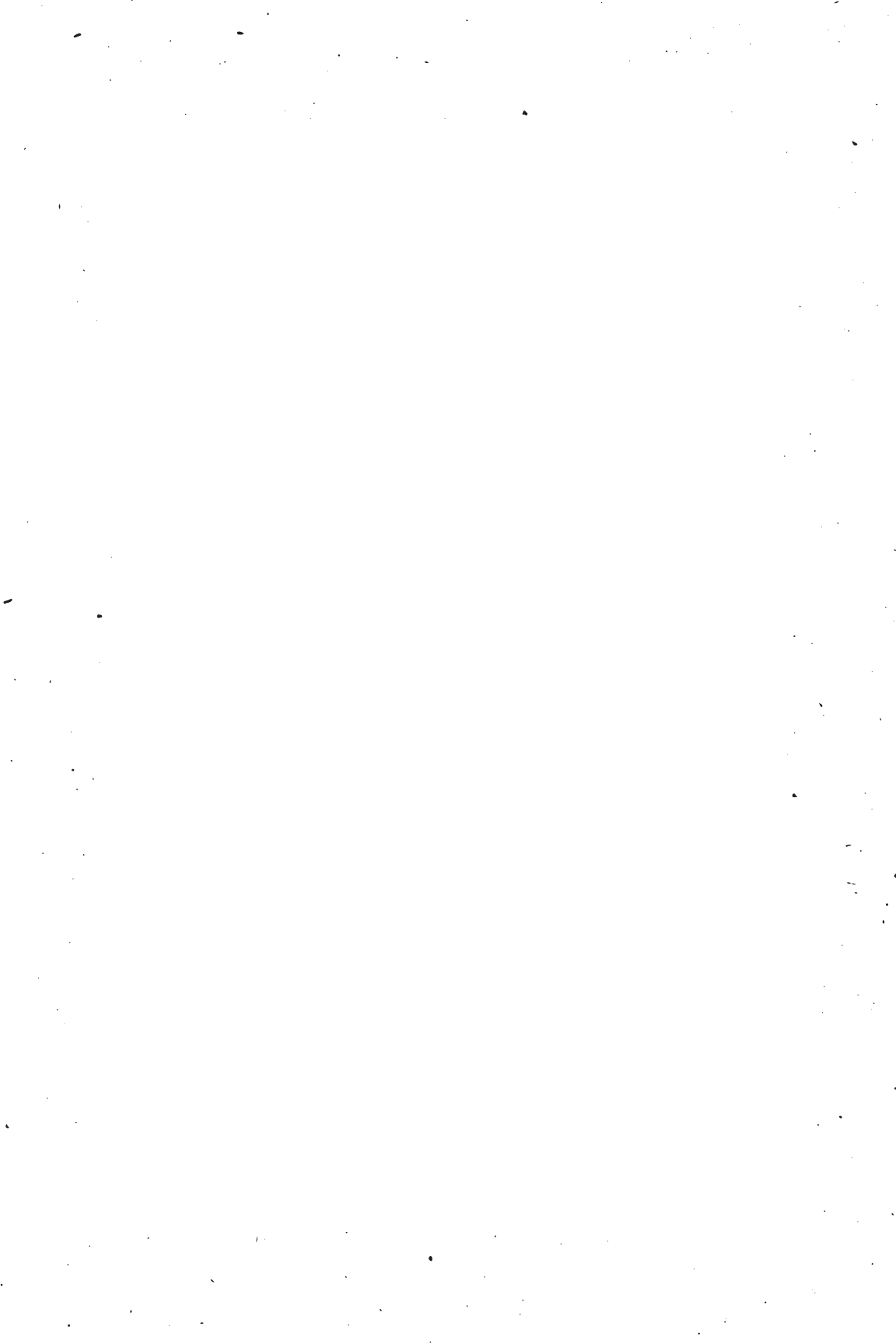
Pastor and author of several books, including The Radical Book for Kids and Why Do We Say Good Night?

How many young people give up reading the Bible because it felt boring, confusing, or irrelevant? This book will not only teach you how to read the Bible, but it will help you meet God in the Bible. And learning to meet God in the Bible will prepare you, more than anything else, for whatever future he brings for you.

Marshall Segal

Managing editor of desiringGod.org and author of Not Yet Married

Creator, Father, King



creator



A father

KING



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JOSHUA COOLEY



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Introduction

GOD.

In the English language, that word is only three letters long. Yet it brings a sense of wonder, reverence, and awe. Few other words in human history carry its weight—or mystery.

Billions of people around the world believe in God—or at least the idea of a supreme deity or higher power that governs the universe. But how many people fully understand who God is, what he is like, and why he created them? How many people know that they can have a close, personal relationship with the Creator of all things? How many people realize that they can bring all their sin and brokenness to him? How many people understand how to worship him? How many people truly grasp that they can *know* God?

These are questions of eternal significance. Yet there seem to be as many mistaken ideas about God in the world as there are fish in the ocean. This is a problem. People are looking in all the wrong places—or not looking at all. While we can't know everything about God—he's far too great for that—he has sufficiently revealed himself to us in his Word, the Bible. The Creator *wants* to be known by his creation!

Everything we need to know about God is found in the Bible, which God himself inspired. Scripture is our only source of inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient truth about God and his plan of salvation for sinful humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ. This devotional book was written to help draw you closer to God by consistently pointing you back to his Word. Our quest will reveal truth about the Lord from all sixty-six books of the Bible—Genesis through Revelation.

So we approach our goal—deepening our understanding, worship, and exaltation of God through faith in Jesus—with great joy and excitement! There is no greater purpose in life than glorifying our Creator. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

But we also embark on our study of God with great care and humility.

How do you adequately describe the great I AM? How do you communicate all the wonders of the Ancient of Days? How do you perfectly praise the eternal King of the universe who reigns in inexplicable heavenly splendor?

You don't.

At least, you acknowledge there's no way to do it *perfectly*. Any book (outside Scripture) that tries to comprehensively describe God's glory and majesty will fall short. The Lord God Almighty is far too great to be summarized by human words.

Yet he still calls us to worship him and draw near to him. So we take heart, lift our hands toward heaven and cry, "Abba, Father!," desperately longing for more of his presence, peace, power, and love, which he delights in lavishing upon his children.

Wherever you are in your faith journey, I pray that by reading this book, God will conform you more into the image of his Son through faith in Christ and obedience to his Word. As Hosea 6:3 says, "Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring."

So turn the page. Let's press on together to know the Lord. He will faithfully respond.

Joshua Cooley



JANUARY 1

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105

GET READY.

It's a new year, and we are about to embark on an epic journey. This book will be an exciting, ambitious adventure purely because of its Subject. The theme is not a what, where, or when. It's a Who.

For the next 365 days, we'll be talking about God. We will explore God's perfect character and his eternal plan of redemption to save sinners. This is a monumental task, impossible to accomplish in one devotional book. God is too big to be contained within finite, printed pages. But he calls us to seek him and know him. So we excitedly prepare for our quest.

As we do, we might ask questions. The critical questions on a journey of this magnitude are endless:

- Who is God?
- What is he like?
- Can we know him at all? If so, how much?
- Why can't we see him? Or can we?
- Is he perfectly good?

The list goes on and on. We certainly don't want to get distracted by the questions and swerve off course as many others have.

Like travelers exploring a vast territory, we need a map—something to guide our trek. So we begin this yearlong study of God by turning to the only source of divinely inspired knowledge that God has provided: the Bible.

What's It Mean?

The answers to everything we need to know about God can be found in the Bible. It is the foundation for the Christian faith, the source of our knowledge of God, and the basis for this devotional.

The Lord has graciously chosen to reveal himself to us through

Scripture. We'll go into much greater depth about God's Word later on, but at the outset, it's important to acknowledge that the Bible is the only inerrant, authoritative, and fully sufficient book that was given to us by God himself, written under divine inspiration by holy men (2 Peter 1:20-21).

God cannot be fully known. He is far too great for that. But everything he wants us to know, he has revealed to us in his Word!

Now What?

Commit to reading *Creator, Father, King* this year. Have your Bible with you so you can study the verses mentioned in this book.

Did You Know?

Approximately forty authors, all under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, wrote the Bible over the span of at least 1,300 years.





JANUARY 2

The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

DEUTERONOMY 29:29

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED about the following subjects?

- the size of the universe and all the wonders in outer space
- the secrets found within the depths of the world's oceans
- the human body
- dinosaurs and how they went extinct
- the opposite sex and why they do what they do

(That last one is a real brainteaser!)

These are fascinating topics in life that we might learn a lot about but never fully understand. We can add another, infinitely greater, entity to the list: God.

What's It Mean?

At the outset of our exciting, wonderfully worthwhile exploration of God's holy nature and righteous acts throughout history, it's important to understand this: we can know a lot about the Lord, but we certainly can't know everything.

Does this concern you? Does it disappoint you? It shouldn't!

God is holy, meaning he is set apart and majestically transcendent above his creation. (We'll dig deeper into God's holiness in the January 10–11 devotions.) His ways are inscrutable—impossible to understand.

This is a good thing! After all, a god who can be fully known by finite humans isn't much of a god at all. But this is not the biblical God. Every time the Bible speaks about this aspect of God, it calls on us to worship him for his inscrutability.

As the apostle Paul says in Romans 11:33-36, “Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! For who can know the LORD’s thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.”

Despite God’s incomprehensible majesty, he is not aloof or unknowable. Amazingly, he is a personal God who desires close fellowship with his children. He has made known a great deal about himself to us in Scripture. As today’s verse says, we are “accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us.”

Now What?

Join Paul in giving glory to the holy God who makes himself known through his Word!

Did You Know?

Today’s verse was part of God’s covenant given to Israel through Moses before his people entered the Promised Land.





JANUARY 3

Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.

PSALM 90:2

ETERNITY IS A REALLY LONG TIME.

The concept of eternity stretches the human imagination beyond comprehension. Our finite minds can only process so much, and our earthly experience tells us that everything has a starting and ending point. How, we wonder, can something never have a beginning or an end?

But the Bible clearly states that eternity is real. In fact, Scripture declares that humans are created beings with a clear starting point (conception in our mothers' wombs) who possess souls that will live forever (either in glory or judgment after physical death, depending on whether we have submitted our lives to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith). Like humans, everything else in the universe—rocks, trees, mountains, oceans, all creatures in the animal kingdom—was created.

But there is one Being who wasn't. There is Someone who has neither beginning nor end.

He is God.

What's It Mean?

Perhaps the idea that God is fully eternal—without beginning or end—doesn't surprise you. Maybe you've heard it many times before, and you're wondering what the big deal is.

Well, it's a very big deal.

If God weren't eternal, he'd have a point of origin like everything else. Anything that is created is subservient to something—or someone—else.

But no one created the Lord God Almighty. He is the self-existent Creator of all. He has always existed and always will.

This means that God doesn't play by anyone else's rules. He governs everything that he made and sets all the standards of right and wrong. When you self-exist before time, light, matter, energy, life, and anything

else in the universe—and then you create all those things out of your own power, will, and love—you have the authority to rule over everything exactly as you choose.

God—eternal in glory, power, and majesty—deserves all our praise!

Now What?

Take some time to think and pray about what God's eternal nature means for your life.

Did You Know?

In Revelation 1:8, God exclaims, “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end.” In ancient Greek, the original New Testament language, *alpha* is the first letter of the ancient Greek alphabet, while *omega* is the last letter. God used a vivid first-century cultural metaphor to describe his nature.





JANUARY 4

*God is Spirit, so those who worship him
must worship in spirit and in truth.*

JOHN 4:24

AS HUMANS, WE LOVE TO SEE, smell, hear, taste, and touch. That's why the world around us is so wonderful. There are so many good things for our senses to enjoy.

Take our sense of sight, for example. With our eyes, we can behold a gorgeous Maui sunset, or the snowcapped Swiss Alps, or a cloudless night with a million stars magnificently winking at us. We can see dolphins dancing through the surf, stallions sprinting across the turf, and eagles soaring through the sky.

But the Being who created and rules the universe is completely invisible to us. We cannot see God.

What's It Mean?

As today's verse says, God is a spirit. Maybe this surprises you. But God's spiritual nature is such an important topic to understand that for the next two days, we're going to discuss this aspect of God's character.

God's invisibility doesn't mean he's not real. Some people don't believe in God just because they can't see him. But if something's existence is determined merely by human sight, then by that logic, we'd have to conclude that wind doesn't exist either. This, of course, is absurd. Even though we can't see wind, we know it exists because we see its effects when it rustles tree leaves, or fills a yacht's sail, or causes great damage in a hurricane.

Likewise, even though we can't see God, we know he exists because we see "his effects," so to speak. We see the beautiful world he created. We marvel at how he keeps the entire universe running in an orderly way. We rejoice at how he works in human hearts.

The apostle Paul addresses this in Romans 1:18-20 when he talks about "sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever

since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.”

In other words, not believing in God just because you can't see him is not a good enough excuse. Likewise, Psalm 14:1 says, “Only fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’”

Don't be a fool! Look further than your eyes and believe in the God who is spirit.

Now What?

Pray for the faith to believe in the God you cannot see.

Did You Know?

In John 20:29, Jesus blessed everyone who believes in him without the benefit of seeing him!





JANUARY 5

*God is Spirit, so those who worship him must
worship in spirit and in truth.*

JOHN 4:24

TODAY IS THE SECOND part of our two-part series on God's spiritual nature. This is of vital importance in understanding God.

Yesterday, we learned that the invisible God calls us to believe in him even though we can't see him. But perhaps you're still scratching your head, not fully understanding God's spiritual nature. You might be wondering, *Okay, so God is a spirit. But what does that mean? What is he like?*

What's It Mean?

First, we must admit God's greatness and our limitations. Any human attempt to fully explain God's character and attributes, including his spiritual nature, is going to fall far short.

To help us understand, let's look at what God is not. He is not "The Man Upstairs." He's also not a white-bearded Father Time, a bolt-throwing Zeus-like character, or a ghost. He is not a spirit that is present in all the things he created (that's called pantheism). All of these notions are unbiblical, man-made ideas that dishonor God and grossly misrepresent his nature, holiness, and majesty.

God does not have a size or shape. He doesn't have a body or consist of physical matter. Whenever Scripture talks about God having human body characteristics (e.g., his "arm" in Exodus 15:16; his "lips" in Isaiah 30:27; his "eyes" in Hebrews 4:13), the biblical author is using metaphorical examples to help his readers understand something about God.

God is also not confined to a particular time or a place, like humans are. And he cannot be seen unless he reveals himself in a form that we can perceive, such as the pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21-22), Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6), or the partial revelation of his glory to Moses (Exodus 33:18-23).

There is great mystery to this aspect of God, and that's okay. God never

intended us to know him fully; he is far too awesome for that. But we can know him intimately. He is a personal God whom we can call our heavenly Father.

All told, he is more amazing than we can imagine!

Now What?

Praise the God whom you cannot see but you can know deeply and personally through Jesus Christ!

Did You Know?

God's spiritual nature was displayed most beautifully in Jesus' incarnation. God the Son, who did not originally have a physical body in eternity past, took on human flesh (John 1:14) to save God's people from their sins.





JANUARY 6

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4, ESV

ANU, MARDUK, AND ASHUR. Osiris, Ra, and Thoth. Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena. Mars, Apollo, and Mercury.

And that's just the tip of the polytheistic iceberg.

The ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and many others fabricated countless false gods in an attempt to explain the origin of the universe and the mysteries of the human experience. Today, most cultures around the world are not polytheistic like ancient times (although Hinduism still teaches the existence of many gods).

But for thousands of years, God has proclaimed the message clearly through his Word: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4, ESV). In ancient Israel, this famous verse was known as the Shema, which is the old Hebrew word for “hear” or “listen”—the opening command of the verse.

Throughout Scripture, God confirms that he is the one true God and that polytheism is a bunch of baloney:

- I am the LORD; there is no other God. (Isaiah 45:5)
- This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. (John 17:3)
- There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

What's It Mean?

Why does it matter that there's one God—and not a pantheon—who created and rules the universe? How should this truth affect our lives?

God answered that in the very next verse following the Shema: “And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

As the only true God in the universe, the Lord deserves undivided

rights to our hearts. He requires our utmost allegiance and devotion. Our worship in life is not to be distributed among anyone else. God alone reigns over the universe, and because of this, we should exclusively praise and obey him out of hearts overflowing with gratitude and love.

Through the Shema and all of Scripture, the one true God has spoken to you about himself. Have you heard?

Now What?

Prayerfully ask God to reveal where you might not be giving him your entire heart.

Did You Know?

There were more than two thousand gods and goddesses in the ancient Egyptian pantheon.





JANUARY 7

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

WHEN YOU THINK OF Genesis 1, what comes to mind?

If you are like most people with even a basic understanding of the Bible, you probably think of Creation—and rightfully so. The first chapter of Scripture goes into vivid detail about how God made the universe.

Yet look carefully at Genesis 1, and you'll find some fascinating details about God's nature. In fact, only two verses into the Bible, we see an allusion to God's triune nature when we read about God the Father in verse 1 and "the Spirit of God" in verse 2. (A prophetic allusion to Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and the second Person of the Trinity, comes a few chapters later in Genesis 3:15.)

In Genesis 1:26, when God was about to create humans, he said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness" (ESV, emphasis added). Why didn't God say, "Let me make man in my image"? Why does God refer to himself in the plural?

Because it's an amazing reference to his unique three-in-one nature.

What's It Mean?

There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), but there are three distinct persons that make up the one true God: the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. All are equal in their divine natures yet separate in their roles.

Is this confusing to you? If so, don't be discouraged! No human can fully comprehend the awesome wonders of the Trinity. There is beautiful mystery to it. If God could be completely understood by mere mortals like us, he wouldn't be a very great God, would he?

The study of the Trinity fills entire books. We're going to take the next three days to discuss God's glorious triune nature. These are just some initial steps of what should be an awe-filled, lifetime journey in understanding this amazing aspect of God.

Now What?

Ask God to give you a greater love and understanding of his three-in-one nature.

Did You Know?

You won't find the actual word *Trinity* anywhere in the Bible, yet it is one of the most important theological doctrines (or beliefs about God) in Christianity. References to the Trinity are scattered throughout Scripture, including today's verse and Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; and Jude 1:20-21.

