

# THE WORD OF GOD

We are about to study God's Word. The Bible or scriptures is also called God's Word or the Word of God. To gain a better understanding of God's Word, we will start with John's Gospel, which begins with,

"In the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the Word was God." (Jn 1:1)

**"In the beginning...."**

These are also in fact the first words of the Bible and so John is taking us back to Genesis the first book of the Bible to the story of how God created the universe.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews. Like English, words in Hebrew can have more than one meaning. For instance in English the word ring can mean a circle or it can mean to give someone a phone call, eg She lost her ring and had to ring her husband. In another language there would be a different word for each meaning. When something is translated, we lose something in the translation. The core meanings are still gained, but a bit of research is needed for a more complete picture.

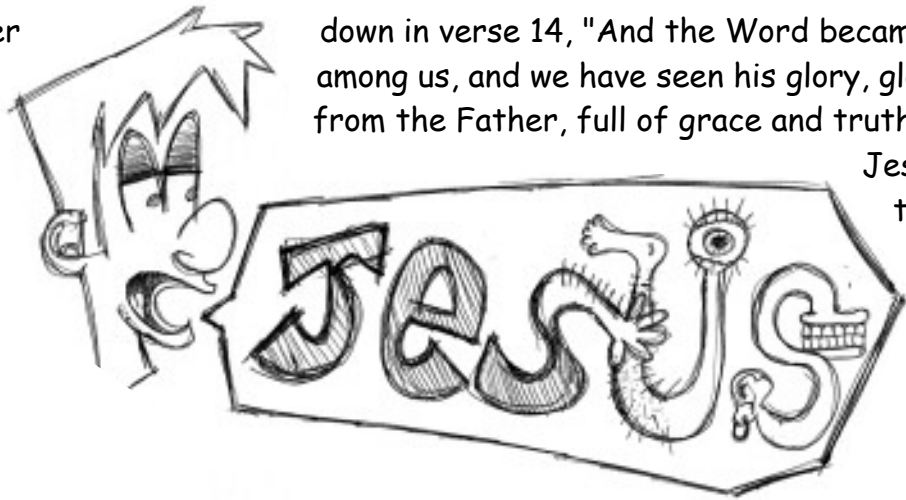
We can now study God using this text. The study of God is theology and the person who studies God is a theologian.



Genesis (1:1-4a)	Commentary	John (1:1-5)	Commentary
In the beginning	Same starting words	In the beginning	
when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,	We start with 4 'ugly' words, 'no form', 'void', 'darkness' and 'deep'. The Hebrew word for 'deep' can also be translated as 'abyss'. In other words, a profound chaos.	was the word, the word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.	John describes this dynamic of God speaking 'the Word', through which all things were created. But he takes us deeper, he indicates that this Word existed with God before it was spoken and that what has come into being in the Word was life and this life is the light of all people.
while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.	The Hebrew word translated here for Spirit is "ruwach" which also means breath and wind. God was breathing over the chaos. But it also means God's Spirit was 'blowing' over the waters.	All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.	
Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.	"Let there be light" is one word in Hebrew, "Light!" Whatever God speaks instantly comes into existence. This word was so powerful it created the whole universe.		
And God saw the light was good...	What God makes is good. God made you - you are very good!!!		

## THE INCARNATION; GOD BECOMING MAN - JESUS

We can see further flesh and dwelt of the only Son The Word is The name we give mystery of the Word (God) becoming man (Jesus) is the 'Incarnation'.



down in verse 14, "And the Word became among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus.  
the

## THE TRINITY

THE WORD BECAME FLESH! thys'07

This passage clearly indicates that Jesus, the Word existed with God and was God. Let us now reflect back to Genesis again. To speak a word we need a speaker and we need a breath to carry the word. Let's put this all together into a table

Speaker	God the Father
Breath	God the Holy Spirit
Word	God the Son, Jesus

We can see here a Trinitarian image that John leads us toward at the start of his gospel. We see God the Father speaking the Word (God the Son) by the breath of

God the Holy Spirit. One God in three persons. Each person is involved in the work of creation. Each person is needed for creation to happen. We can now better understand John's words "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." As we reflect upon God's creative work, we start to reflect on who God is and how powerful God is. Just think about God creating the universe out of nothing. How incredibly powerful that is. Since God can do that, imagine what else God can do...

Obviously there are no limits to his power if he wanted to use it. God is all-powerful. We use the word omnipotent to describe this, 'omni' meaning 'all' and 'potent' meaning 'powerful'. It is this all powerful word that John highlights at the beginning of his gospel.

## Omni-what?

Is there a limit to God? The short answer to that is no. God is infinite. There is no limit. God is all powerful. Another word for all powerful is omnipotent (omni - all, potent - powerful: from the latin). Why do we believe God is all powerful? God created the whole universe out of nothing. If God created the whole universe he can do anything. God is infinite. Since he created the universe and was always around, that means he is above time and space, since he created time and space. There was no time when God was not. He has always existed. Since he is above time and space, he has no end as well. He has no beginning nor end. God being beyond time and space is called 'transcendent'. God is above all. In fact if God forgot anything it would cease to exist.

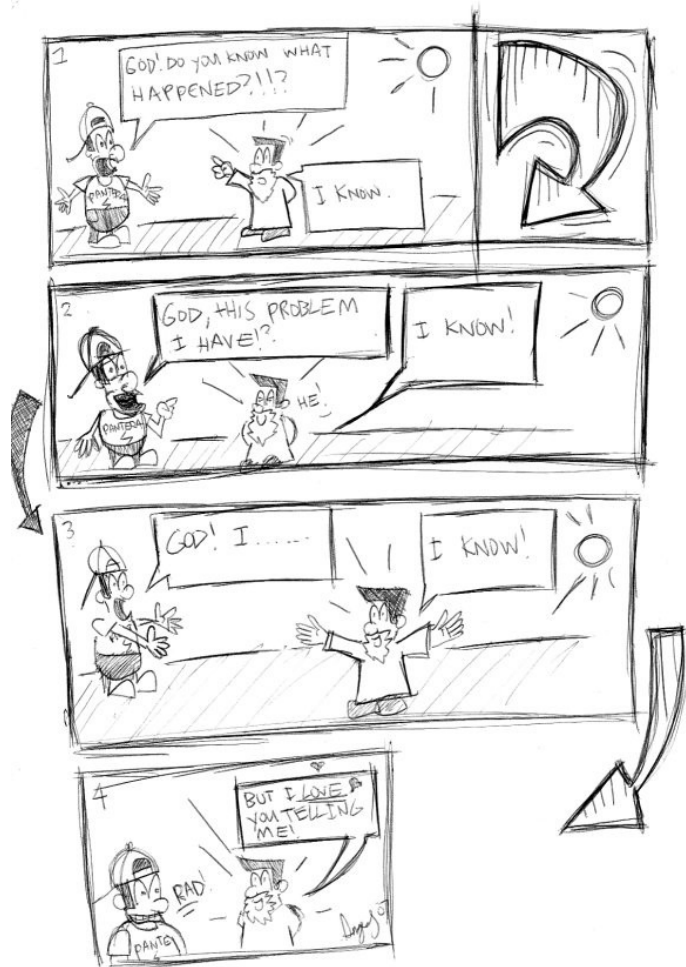


God is also all knowing (omniscient) and present everywhere (omnipresent). Imagine how many atoms you have in your body. Imagine all the atoms in the whole universe. God knows where every electron is in the whole universe every instant. That is nothing compared to his infinite capacity to know. God knows your every thought. "Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether." (Ps

139:4) God knows every thought you will have. God knows the future. This raises an important question.

If God knows so much and is so powerful, why doesn't he fix up the world more?

God will never force himself upon anyone, since he is love, he can only offer, never force. Sin is not of God, but of rejecting God. The world is as it is, because God honours our freedom and truly lets us choose. Every sin is God choosing to accept our free will. God is love. Love must be free for it to be love, otherwise it is slavery. God does not make slaves. Because God is so powerful he can even bring good out of evil. God lets every sin happen because he honours our freedom. God offers us forgiveness and mercy because he can bring good out of evil. God wants to empower you to transform the world. Everytime someone asks, "Why isn't God doing more?" God replies, "Why don't you let Jesus transform you so I can change the world through you?" How does God bring this goodness to us? Through Jesus who is the light and the life of the world.



## Jesus is the Word of God

When we talk about the Word of God, we can mean two things, Jesus and the Bible. Christianity is a religion of the Word, not primarily of the 'Book'. The Bible is not the be all and end all of Catholicism, but Jesus is. Jesus is bigger than the Bible - Jesus is God, the Bible is not God. The Bible reveals God to us. The Bible reveals Jesus to us. The Bible expresses God's word to us, so we call it the word of God. But since Jesus IS the Word of God, we should always be mindful that Jesus is the real source of all truth.

**"What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people."**

Let us now take a personal journey. Each of us are troubled at times in our life. We experience something of the darkness that may come our way. We may feel empty as if there is a deep void within us. Sometimes we feel like we are in an abyss and unable to get out. We clamour and struggle seeking some kind of order, but it just seems like chaos. I think we can all talk about times like that in our own lives. This is the place where the Bible starts, in *Genesis* with the 'void', 'darkness', 'emptiness', 'the abyss' and 'chaos'.

God wants to bring his light, life and love into our lives. *Genesis* explains that in that very darkness God brings light. John goes on to explain that it is there within the chaos that through Jesus, life and light are created. And Jesus comes into creation and eventually takes on flesh and lives among us. God with us, not to condemn but to save and to love.

**"But how do I get this new life?"**

What *Genesis* and John explains, is this life comes through the Word of God, Jesus who is also the Scriptures, the Bible. In other words, by reading the Bible, Jesus is formed in us, He comes to live in us, and this new life within us, becomes the light to guide our life by. By reading God's word we are brought into the new life of God and share in God's inner life. Divine life, light and love become ours.

Sometimes as we read the Bible, it will be like a lightning bolt charging us up with new life and clear direction. We will feel God's special presence, His closeness. At other times, He may feel far away - these are times of growth in faith. But we must read it, daily. We want God's word to enter our hearts. That takes effort and time. We need to do it regularly and prayerfully for Jesus to enter deep into our hearts. We want to focus on Jesus, so we will start with the Gospels. We will start with the simplest gospel, Mark.

This course will cover Mark's gospel. That way we can deeply reflect on the whole life of Jesus. It will also open the door to understand more deeply the other gospels and in fact all of scripture.

So as we explore Mark's gospel, Jesus will be formed within us in a new way and we will have a deeper relationship with him. We will pray through the Mark's gospel. Here is a simple method to follow.

## PRAYER

I invite you to spend some time in prayer each day. I suggest 5 minutes and the following method. If it is the last thing you do before going to sleep - that is just fine. You may like to place your Bible and this booklet next to your bed to remind you to read and pray.

- 1) Call to mind God's presence, by making the sign of the cross.
- 2) Read the suggested passage for the day. Read it slowly. If something catches your attention. Think about it. If your mind starts to wander, go back to reading the scripture. It does not matter if you don't finish reading the whole passage. It is more important to think about God and reflect on his goodness.
- 3) If something comes to mind, particularly as a response to what you read, to do a particular thing, then make a decision to do it.
- 4) Finish with an Our Father and the sign of the cross.

**Here are the suggested scriptures for this week.**

Day 1) Gen 1:1-2:4a

Write down any reflections you have on reading through this passage.


Day 2) John 1:1-17

Write down any reflections you have on reading through this passage.


Day 3) Ez 37:1-14

Notice the words are connected with the breath or wind. That these words are powerful and create life.

Everytime you read *God's Word*, *God* is speaking and his Holy Spirit is active in transforming your life, even without you noticing it. In fact most of the time he prefers to work without anyone noticing it, because he is humble, and wants you to grow in faith. But over time you cannot help but clearly see the effects of his grace working in your life, if you keep reading his word.


Day 4) What does friendship with *God* mean? I think it has been best described by the Bishops of Vatican II when they wrote, "In His goodness and wisdom *God* chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through *Christ*, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible *God* (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself." ([DV 2](#))

Friends share what they have. A divine friend shares divinity. This quote clearly states that *God* wants to share his divinity with us! What do you think divine nature is like?


*Jesus* wants to be our friend and have fellowship with us. He invites us. He does not demand. He invites us. Out of his love he speaks to us as friends. He wants to live among us. He wants to fellowship with us to share his divine nature with us. Let me make this as clear as I can:

*God* wants to share ALL that he has with us. The universe is not the most important thing he has. The most important thing he has is himself. This is far more important than anything. *God* wants to share his very self with us, because he loves us. *God* invites us to share ourselves with him.

How does *God* share himself with us?


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Day 5. The Beginning of the Gospel Mk:1:1-6

What do you think a prophet is?


A Prophet

In biblical terms a prophet is not all about telling the future, but about being God's spokesperson. They speak for God. God calls the prophet to be his messenger. God chose lots of different people to be his prophets throughout the time of the Old Testament. Essentially they called back the people to God, to follow in God's ways.

How do you think you can better prepare for God to work in your life?


Day 6 At the Jordan Mk:1:7-11

'The heavens were opened'. Many believed that for some reason, God was no longer sending prophets to the people. There were many centuries without prophets performing miracles. John the Baptist performed no visible miracle. But he did draw many back to God and proclaim the truth. For this Jesus called him the greatest of the prophets. So when the heavens opened it was a sign that now was the time of new grace being poured down upon the people. What was this new grace?


Has Jesus done anything yet? No. Yet the Father says, "You are my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." God, the Father loves Jesus. Jesus doesn't have to do anything to earn the Father's love. The Father just loves him and is pleased with him anyway. Just as he loves you and delights in you without you having to do anything to earn that love from the father. He gives it freely, all the time. He forgives all your sin and wants you to experience his love. Take a few moments to reflect on that.

How do we come to experience that love from the father?


Day 7 The Temptation Mk:1:12-13

What are your initial thoughts?


Pretty strange. You receive God's Spirit and you would think you would be in heaven. But the Spirit leads to the desert where he was tempted. Why for forty days?


The forty days is like the forty years the Israelites had in the desert. They were tempted and purified in preparation for coming into the holy land. Jesus obviously passed the test. Sometimes we feel, "What is God doing? Why is everything going wrong?" But this can be all part of God's plan. The key is to learn to rely on God and trust him. It makes the journey easier. Jesus knows what it was like to be tempted. If the angels came, then he even needed the help of angels to get him through. So too do we need the help of others, just like Jesus. Sometimes we can think we can do it all on our own, with just the help of God. But God sends others to help us and wants us to rely on them as part of His plan. Sometimes we need to seek the help of others to get us through. It is all part of God's plan.

When you are tempted, pray. Seek the help of others if need be.

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