

The ONE
YEAR®

THE ONE YEAR®
DEVOTIONS WITH

JOSIAH

365 DEVOTIONS TO
HELP YOU KNOW AND
LOVE THE SAVIOR

JOSHUA COOLEY

This is a fantastic, fun, friendly way for students to understand what it truly means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. But that's not all! Through real-life examples and easy-to-understand illustrations, they'll also learn how to grow spiritually and how to live in victory. Every ten- to fourteen-year-old student *needs* this book, and they'll *love* reading it!

SUSIE SHELLENBERGER

Full-time speaker and writer, SusieShellenberger.com

Regardless of age, there is nothing more impactful than daily time spent with, and learning about, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through *The One Year Devotions with Jesus*, Joshua Cooley provides that opportunity to kids of all ages, mixing in practical ways to apply biblical truths to their lives and including interesting, Bible-based facts that they'll be excited to share with their friends—teaching others about their heavenly Father in the process. Cooley is a gifted writer whose heart is set on bringing anyone who reads his book closer to the one who inspires him, Christ the Lord.

CLAY MEYER

Editor, *FCA Magazine*, Fellowship of Christian Athletes

The introduction of this book says it all: “This book is all about Jesus.” Joshua Cooley has provided a great opportunity for our kids to spend 365 days studying and learning to love Jesus. This devotional grows children in an understanding of who Jesus is so they can begin to have a relationship with him. This book weaves together the character of Jesus with theological doctrine. Well-thought-out sections break down what each doctrine means, provide next steps, and include fun things readers might not know. I'm looking forward to taking my kids through this book—there's no doubt good conversations will come from it.

JEFF HUTCHINGS

Pastor of family ministries, The Journey at Tower Grove

The One Year Devotions with Jesus will challenge your kids to think and will hold their attention with a ton of fun facts and activities. By the time your kids finish this devotional, they will know the gospel, understand what it means to become a Christian, and know what true faith looks like. That

is exactly what I want for my children. Put a copy under the Christmas tree for each of your teens and preteens—they'll open it just in time to get started January 1.

MARTY MACHOWSKI

Family pastor and author of *Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God*, *The Gospel Story Bible*, and *The Gospel Story* Sunday school curriculum

Joshua Cooley is a student of the Bible and a student of kids. He's a gifted writer and communicator who can connect the deep truths about Jesus and his redemptive story to the real world where kids live. *The One Year Devotions with Jesus* is biblical Christology unpacked in a way preteens can connect with. What a gift to the church!

JARED KENNEDY

Pastor of families at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY



JOSHUA COOLEY



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Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the name *Jesus Christ*?

A good man? A moral teacher? Some ancient philosopher with long, brown hair, sandals, and a dusty robe? Perhaps you lump him in with other famous religious leaders such as Buddha or Muhammad. Is he nothing more than an imaginary hero to you—an ancient Batman or Superman? Maybe you just picture him as a cute baby in a manger. Or a bloodied martyr on a Roman cross.

Many people have different opinions about Jesus. Ask ten people who he is and you might get ten different answers.

The same was true when Jesus lived on earth. Chapter 16 in the Gospel of Matthew gives us a fascinating look at what first-century Jews thought about the man they called “Jesus of Nazareth.”

At that time, Jesus’ fame was exploding. Thousands of people were flocking to him from all over ancient Israel. They had never heard anyone speak or perform miracles like he did. News of Jesus’ growing fame had even reached Herod Antipas, the Roman-appointed ruler of Israel’s Galilean district. Everyone wanted to know who this extraordinary man was.

So one day, during a rare quiet moment, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” Jesus’ disciples answered, “Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” Interesting guesses, but all wrong.

Then Jesus looked directly at his disciples and asked, “But who do *you* say I am?” Peter, the boldest of the group, proclaimed in one of the most glorious confessions in Scripture, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Peter got it right. But sadly, most of his countrymen didn't. Today, roughly two thousand years later, the world is still largely confused about Jesus' true identity. Jesus is the most famous person in history, but he is also the most misunderstood.

Some people think he was just a good man who taught us how to be nicer. Many think he was an important prophet of God, but nothing more. Others believe he possessed superhuman powers, but certainly not a fully divine status. Still others treat him like a heavenly buddy—a really nice guy to have around when you find yourself in a pinch. And then there are countless people who don't know, or care, if Jesus exists at all.

But your understanding of Jesus and what you do with that knowledge matters . . . *a lot*. In fact, the Bible says your eternal fate depends on it. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, the apostle Paul calls the gospel—the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the salvation he offers—a message of “first importance” (NIV). Faith in Jesus brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. Rejection of Jesus, or even indifference toward him, brings everlasting punishment. It's *that* important.

Do you *really* know who Jesus Christ is? Whatever your answer, this devotional is dedicated to helping you draw closer to him. Each day's devotion—all 365 of them—bears his name. This book is all about Jesus.

By reading on, you'll learn about his true identity, his incredible life and teachings, the amazing blessings he brings, and what you need to do about it.

So go ahead . . . turn the page and get started. The truth about Jesus Christ will change your life forever!

JANUARY 1

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.

COLOSSIANS 1:15

Happy New Year!

To begin a new year and a devotional book about Jesus Christ, it's only natural to start at the beginning.

No, not at Jesus' birth. That's not even close. To find Jesus' beginning, you'd have to go back *way* further than that.

In fact, if you were in a time machine going backward through history, you'd have to zoom past the Bethlehem manger. You'd have to leave Daniel, David, Moses, and Abraham in your stardust. And when you finally reached the creation of the universe in Genesis 1, guess what? You'd have to fill up the fuel tank (time travel requires premium unleaded) and keep on truckin' backward into eternity past.

Ultimately, though, your mission would fail. That's because Jesus *had* no beginning. He has always existed. In other words, Jesus was alive *before* Mary gave birth to him in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

Whoa. Talk about a brainteaser.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

How can someone be alive *before* he or she is born as a baby?

For humans, it's impossible. Our lives begin in our mothers' wombs, we live seventy to eighty years on average, and then we die.

But not Jesus. Because he is fully God, Jesus is eternal and all-powerful. He has always existed, and his power is limitless. Today's verse says Jesus existed "before anything was created." (We'll discuss Jesus' human birth in the January 15 devotion.)

Jesus is not a created being. He never had a beginning. He has existed for all time with God the Father and God's Spirit, the other two persons of the Holy Trinity. If you were drawing a timeline for Jesus' existence, it

would not have starting or ending points. The line would go forever in both directions!

This is difficult to understand. Our human brains can process only so much, and eternity is a tough concept. But Jesus *is* eternal because of who he is.

This is important to believe, because if Jesus was created, he would be limited in his power, like us. But he's not. He is fully God and all-powerful. And he's worthy of all our worship!

NOW WHAT?

Ask the oldest person in your family (probably a grandparent or great-grandparent) to share stories about what life was like when he or she was your age. Then remember that Jesus is infinitely older than your relative!

DID YOU KNOW?

The period before Jesus came to earth as a baby is called his "pre-incarnate state." *Incarnate* means to be flesh and blood like humans. So *pre-incarnate* means the time *before* Jesus became flesh and blood.



JANUARY 2

God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

HEBREWS 1:2-3

So if Jesus has existed forever (yesterday's devotion), what was he doing all that time before being born in Bethlehem? Since he's all-powerful and all-knowing, did he spend his days . . .

- beating every video game ever invented?
- playing golf on Pluto?
- helping the angels with their math homework?

Doubtful.

Here's what we know: at some point in eternity past, Jesus was actively involved with God the Father in creating the universe. When Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," Jesus was right there too!

Colossians 1:16 affirms this when it says, "Everything was created through him [Jesus] and for him." And Hebrews 1:2 says, "Through the Son he [God] created the universe."

Since Creation, Jesus also has kept the universe running smoothly. Hebrews 1:3 says, "He sustains everything by the mighty power of his command." And "he holds all creation together" (Colossians 1:17).

It's by Jesus' infinite power that the earth revolves around the sun, planets remain safely in their orbits, and stars twinkle in the nighttime sky. Amazing!

We also know that before coming to earth, Jesus enjoyed wonderful fellowship with God the Father (John 17:24) and shared God's glory (John 17:5). Otherwise, the Bible is mostly silent on Jesus' existence before he came to earth.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

Why doesn't the Bible tell us more about pre-Bethlehem Jesus? That's a mystery. But we know enough. The Bible provides everything God wants us to know about his Son. As 2 Timothy 3:15 says, "The holy Scriptures . . . have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus."

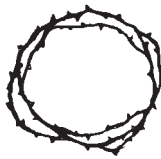
Through God's Word, we know that Jesus is our eternal Creator, our loving Savior, and our almighty King. He made us, and he holds the entire universe together by simply speaking. That's incredible, praiseworthy power!

NOW WHAT?

Spend time making something special: build an Erector set, do a craft, or bake some cookies with your mom. Whatever you make, you need supplies or ingredients to create it, right? Now consider how Jesus created the entire universe out of nothing at all. Wow!

DID YOU KNOW?

The sun is one of Earth's closest celestial neighbors, yet NASA estimates that it is ninety-three million miles away. This should start to give you an idea of how big Jesus' universe is and how powerful he is!



JANUARY 3

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. JOHN 1:1

1 + 1 = 2

The earth is round.

What goes up must come down.

These are all simple facts that we take for granted. But at one point or another in history, they were either unknown, unexplained, or not accepted as truth. These facts help us understand life, and they remain true whether we believe them or not.

There is, however, another statement that far surpasses these others. It remains true regardless of our belief, and it will drastically change our lives—but only if we accept it. It's the simplest yet most profound statement ever: Jesus is God.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

So what's the big deal with that? Why is it so important that Jesus is God?

First, if Jesus wasn't God,

- he was a liar and a fraud, since he claimed to be God.
- Scripture itself would be greatly diminished as error prone and misleading since it consistently presents Jesus as God.
- Jesus couldn't have taken away our sins, because only a sinless Savior could do that, and only God is sinless.

But Jesus *is* God! He claimed it many times, including in John 10:30 when he said, "The Father and I are one." He proved it with his miracles and resurrection. And Scripture affirms it in many other passages such as today's verse, Titus 2:13, and 2 Peter 1:1. Another key passage, Colossians 2:9, says, "For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body."

This is where many people get confused. They wonder how a human can

also be God. But don't let that throw you off. As we learned in the previous two devotions, Jesus has always existed and was with God the Father in eternity past. He can do all things. When Jesus came to earth, he took on human form while remaining God—fully God and fully man.

As God himself, Jesus was perfectly and uniquely qualified to become the sacrifice for the sins of humanity, including yours!

NOW WHAT?

Read some of the passages mentioned above about Jesus' deity (divine nature), and pray for God to give you understanding and faith in this most important area.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are dozens of instances in the New Testament (which was originally written in Greek) where the Greek words *theos* (God) and *kyrios* (Lord) are used to describe Jesus—more proof that Jesus is fully God and fully man.



JANUARY 4

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

Good things come in threes.

The Three Stooges set the standard for American comedy in the early twentieth century. In literature, you've got the three musketeers, three blind mice, and three little pigs—all classics. Isaac Newton gave us the three laws of motion, while Christopher Columbus and his crew sailed to the New World in the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*. If you're in the mood for some groovy music, look no further than Earth, Wind & Fire (ask your parents). And of course, let's not forget our favorite fearless trio from Hogwarts: Harry, Ron, and Hermione.

You get the point. It's cool to be three.

Of course, the greatest trio of all time is the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Even though Scripture never actually uses the word *Trinity*, it clearly teaches God's triune—or “three-in-one”—nature.

There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). But God has three distinct persons—the Father, Son, and Spirit (see today's verse)—who are equal in divinity, yet separate in their roles.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

If your head is swimming right now, don't worry. It's normal. This is the deep end of the theological pool.

No human can fully understand how one God is three equal persons with different functions. But the Bible clearly teaches the Trinity, so we need to believe it. Besides, if God is as awesome and mysterious as Scripture says, it only makes sense that we cannot totally comprehend his greatness or nature.

So what is Jesus' role in the Trinity? While God the Father reigns over all creation, and the Holy Spirit regenerates sinful hearts and sanctifies believers

(both have other functions too), Jesus' main role was to come to earth and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice for our sins in order to make peace between us and God. As we've learned the last few days, Jesus was involved in creating the universe, and he still sustains it by his power, but the Son's chief role is reconciling lost sinners to a holy God.

Praise God for the Trinity! And praise God for the Trinity's second person, Jesus!

NOW WHAT?

The next time you do anything involving threes—such as watching a 3-D movie; eating a BLT sandwich; or playing rock, paper, scissors—remember the glorious truth of the Holy Trinity!

DID YOU KNOW?

While the Old Testament never specifically mentions the Trinity, it hints at it as early as Genesis 1:26, when God says on the sixth day of creation, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us." God didn't say, "Let *me* make . . ." He said, "Let *us* make . . .!"



JANUARY 5

Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed. MATTHEW 14:33

One of the most popular titles for Jesus in Scripture is "Son of God." Jesus claimed it, the disciples believed it, the apostle Paul proclaimed it, a pagan Roman centurion at the Crucifixion admitted it, demons acknowledged it, and God the Father affirmed it.

There's no denying that Jesus is the Son of God. But this presents us with another doozy of a brainteaser: If Jesus is God, how can he also be the Son of God? Which is it? Is he God or God's Son?

Well, actually he's both.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

As mentioned before, it's a doozy. But it's a question worth answering.

When Scripture refers to Jesus as the Son of God, it's a title that is always meant to highlight Jesus' deity, not imply that he is God's child. As discussed earlier in this book, Jesus is God. He is not a created being. He is equal to God the Father in divinity and has always existed.

Jesus is called the Son of God not because he is God's offspring but because he is perfectly like the Father in all his attributes: holiness, power, wisdom, eternal nature, etc. The title "Son of God" also means that Jesus became obedient to the Father, willingly taking the role of a servant in coming to earth. There are lots of verses in the Gospel of John that discuss this, such as John 5:19; 8:28; 10:18; 12:49; 14:24; and 15:10.

Like a human son obeys and submits to his father, Jesus gladly submitted to God's ultimate plan for humanity. When we as humans sinfully rebelled against God, instead of punishing us (as he had every right to do), God sent his Son—the second person of the Trinity—to accomplish his great rescue plan. Jesus willingly left heaven's glory to become a man and pay the price for our wickedness. It would cost Jesus his life. But it would provide new life for us.

The Son of God is truly worthy of all our praise!

NOW WHAT?

To learn more about Jesus' divine sonship, read Hebrews 1–2.

DID YOU KNOW?

Even some of Jesus' fiercest opponents, the Jewish religious leaders, acknowledged that his claim to be God's Son was really a declaration that he was God. That's why they wanted to kill him for blasphemy, or bringing disrespect (in their minds) to God (John 5:18; 10:33; and 19:7).



JANUARY 6

There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But for us, there is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created and through whom we live. I CORINTHIANS 8:5-6

The ancient world was teeming with idols. Most cultures in the Old and New Testament eras were polytheistic. In other words, they believed in many gods. The ancient Mesopotamians did. So did the Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Persians, and Romans. These pagan nations worshiped gods such as Zeus, Poseidon, Jupiter, Apollo, Ra, Osiris, Baal, Molech, Ashur, Anu, Marduk . . . the list goes on and on.

But these so-called “gods” are no more real than Batman, Bugs Bunny, or Bigfoot. Scripture is very clear: there is only one true God.

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land of Canaan, which was filled with idol-worshipping nations, God reminded his people many times that he alone was God. Deuteronomy 4:39 says, “Remember this and keep it firmly in mind: The LORD is God both in heaven and on earth, and there is no other.”

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

As we dive deeper into our study of Jesus, it's crucial to understand this truth: there is only one true God, the God of the Bible, who exists in three equal yet distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All other gods are man-made ideas. They are false. Fake. Fictional. Phony.

The triune God of the Bible has no competitors. He is sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe. He sent his Son, Jesus, as the once-for-all sacrifice for sins. And by his Spirit, he draws lost sinners to salvation.

NOW WHAT?

Ask God to increase your faith in him and his unique position as the only true divine being that we are to worship.

DID YOU KNOW?

While most major religions in the world today aren't polytheistic, the belief in false gods still exists. Hinduism claims many deities. Islam, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism are examples of other false religions that preach a god who isn't the true God of the Bible.



JANUARY 7

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 3:23, NIV

A cool evening breeze rustled the leaves of Paradise. The trees in the Garden of Eden swayed back and forth. Everything on this day seemed perfect.

But it wasn't.

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman God created, were nowhere in sight. Unlike previous days, when they used to walk with God through his perfect creation, Adam and Eve now hid from their Creator in fear and shame. Earlier that day, they had been tempted by Satan—a.k.a. the devil, a fallen angel who is the chief enemy of God and all humanity—to disobey God. Adam and Eve gave in to temptation, choosing to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden.

Sin (breaking God's laws) had entered the world, and with it came sadness, pain, sickness, and death. We call this "the Fall." What's more, Adam and Eve were forced to leave the Garden forever.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

Sin didn't stop with Adam and Eve, though. Like a deadly plague, it infected the whole world. Romans 5:12 says, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."

Every human inherits a sinful nature. We are all sinful from birth (Psalm 51:5), rebelling against our Creator in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

As sinners, we fall short of God's standard of holiness (see today's verse). Sin separates us from our Creator and warrants eternal punishment (Romans 6:23).

Sin is serious. Really serious. It's a direct attack on our Creator. It's shaking our fist at God and saying, "No, I'm *not* going to do what you want me to do. I know best!" That's a pretty bold statement from created beings who can't even lift a finger apart from God's grace (his unmerited favor). We desperately needed a savior.

That's where Jesus comes in. As God's perfect Son, he was uniquely qualified to be the sacrifice for our sins. His death and resurrection satisfied God's wrath—his righteous anger—against sin.

The Fall is why we needed a savior. We all fall short of God's glory, but Jesus didn't. Our sin was great. But Jesus, our Savior, is greater!

NOW WHAT?

To learn more about the Fall, read Genesis 3. Then read Romans 5:18-21 to see how Jesus saved the day!

DID YOU KNOW?

Even as God punished Adam and Eve and sent them out of the garden, he still loved his children. Genesis 3:21 says God personally “made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.”

