

*30 Days with a Great Spiritual Teacher*

# Abide in Love



The Gospel Spirituality of  
**JOHN THE EVANGELIST**  
JOHN KIRVAN

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JOHN KIRVAN, who conceived this series and has authored most of its titles, writes primarily about classical spirituality. His other recent books include *God Hunger, Silent Hope, Raw Faith*, and *There Is a God, There Is No God*.

Unless otherwise indicated, the scripture texts have been freely developed from the earliest English translations.

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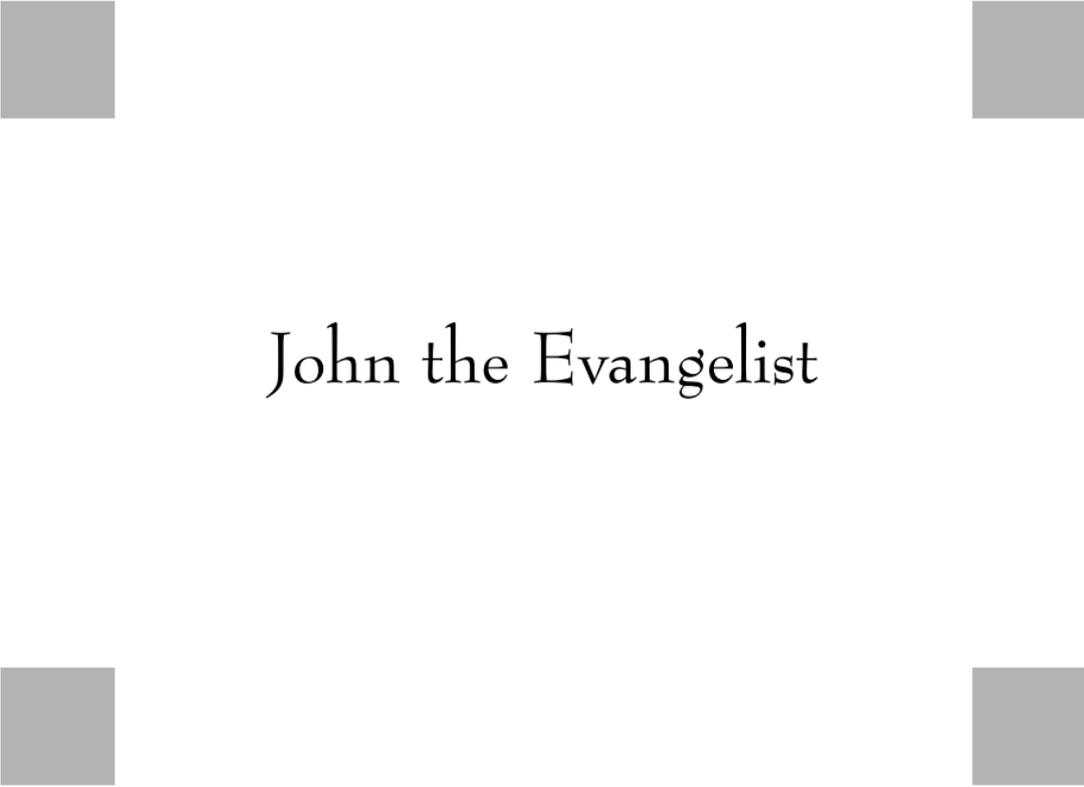
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*Let us not  
love in word nor in speech,  
but in deed  
and in truth.*

*Let us live in truth,  
even when our hearts  
try to persuade us otherwise.  
Let us live in truth knowing that  
God is greater than our hearts  
and knows all things.*

JOHN THE EVANGELIST



# John the Evangelist

It might be more satisfying if we knew for certain that the apostle we call John the Evangelist was the author of the works that we love and continue to study for their spiritual wisdom.

However, the fact that we don't know who actually wrote these soul-shaping documents becomes irrelevant. It may be frustrating, but it is not crucial to our spiritual journey.

What we do know is far more important than what we don't know.

We know that all through the works which we attribute to John, there is a singular, distinctive, and passionate vision of what it is like to love and be loved by God.

It is a vision that warrants our calling him the Beloved Apostle. In Da Vinci's classic Last Supper it is John who rests his head on the shoulders of Jesus. We envy him. We want to join him at the table. We want to be caught in God's embrace.

In this simple image, John tells us something about God that we desperately want to hear. God is approachable. God loves us.

It is a theme that runs through every page of John's gospel. It is a theme that is meant to color every page of our lives, especially our prayers.

For some, the spiritual wisdom of John will best be encountered in a systematic reading of all of his works. No words will be left unstudied. But for others, those for whom this book has been especially prepared, John's words will be a source of spiritual inspiration and encouragement.

Here are thirty meditations chosen from the words of John, not in some specific order, but selected for their capacity to stimulate our daily prayer.

You may want to choose your own sequence. You may want to shape your own meditations. Choose what appeals to you, what inspires you, what opens your heart to prayer, and what gives hope to your day.

Discover as John did that we need not be afraid in the presence of God.

God, the Word Made Flesh, is capable of friendship. In that comfort, our spirituality takes shape and strength.

We hear the Word, just as John heard the Word.

In the beginning was that Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

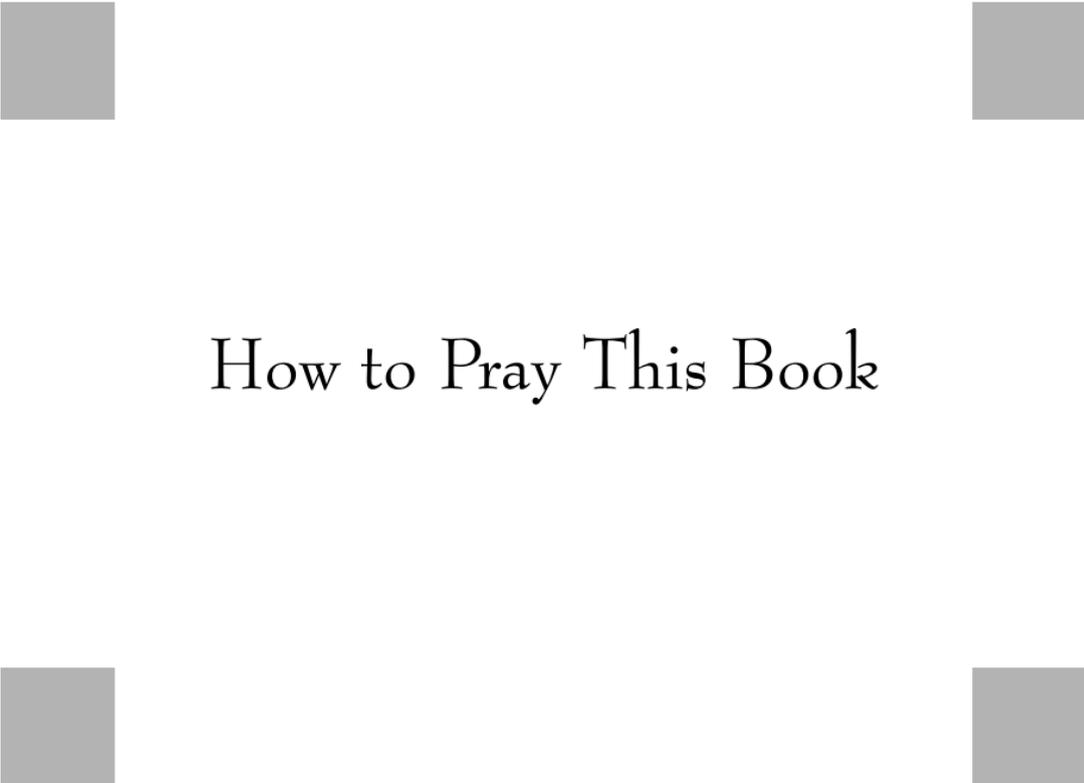
This above all was what John knew, what John taught.

What follows, therefore, is not an attempt to weave a theology from the pages of scripture. It is rather a series of meditations woven from the reflections of the apostle John and recorded in the sacred writings of his gospel and his epistles.

This is how he prayerfully remembered what it was like to spend his days with Jesus.

This is John's invitation to join him in prayer.

Let us pray.



# How to Pray This Book

The purpose of this book is to open a rich resource for its readers and to make accessible to today's spiritual seeker the experience and wisdom of John the Evangelist as it was recorded in the fourth gospel and in the epistles he sent to his followers.

Specifically, it has been written to stimulate and support your prayer life by drawing upon John's life, wisdom, and words as rich resources of ideas and themes to be meditated upon, to be contemplated, and to become the scriptural support of your daily search.

This is, therefore, not a book for mere reading. It invites you to meditate and pray its words on a daily basis for a period of thirty days.

It is a handbook for a spiritual journey.

Before you read these spiritual guidelines, remember that this book is meant to free your spirit, not to confine it. If on any

day the meditation does not resonate well for you, turn elsewhere to find a passage that seems to better fit the spirit of your day and your soul. Don't hesitate to repeat a day as often as you like until you feel that you have discovered what the Spirit, through the words of the evangelist, has to say to your spirit.

Here are suggestions for one way to use this book as a cornerstone of your prayers.

### *As Your Day Begins*

As the day begins, set aside a quiet moment in a quiet place to read the meditation suggested for the day.

The passage is short. It never runs more than a few hundred words, but it has been carefully selected to give a spiritual focus—a spiritual center to your whole day. It is designed to remind you, as another day begins, of your existence at a

spiritual level. It is meant to put you in the presence of the spiritual master who is your companion and teacher on this journey. But most of all, the purpose of the passage is to give the words a chance. After all, you are not just reading this passage, you are praying it. You are establishing a mood of serenity for your whole day. What's the rush?

### *All Through Your Day*

Immediately following the day's reading, you will find a single sentence which we have chosen to call a mantra, a word borrowed from the Hindu tradition but now in wide use in the West. This phrase is meant as a companion for your spirit as you move through a busy day. Write it down on a 3" x 5" card or on the appropriate page of your daybook. Look at it as often as you can. Repeat it quietly to yourself and go on your way.

It is not meant to stop you in your tracks or to distract you from responsibilities, but simply and gently to remind you of the presence of God and your desire to respond to this presence.

### *As Your Day Is Ending*

This is a time for letting go of the day.

Find a quiet place and quiet your spirit. Breathe deeply. Inhale, exhale—slowly and deliberately, again and again, until you feel your body let go of its tension.

Now read the evening prayer slowly, phrase by phrase. You will recognize at once that we have woven into it phrases taken from the meditation with which you began your day and the mantra that has accompanied you all through your day. In this way, a simple evening prayer gathers together the spiritual character of the day that is now ending as it began—in the presence of God.

It is a time for summary and closure.

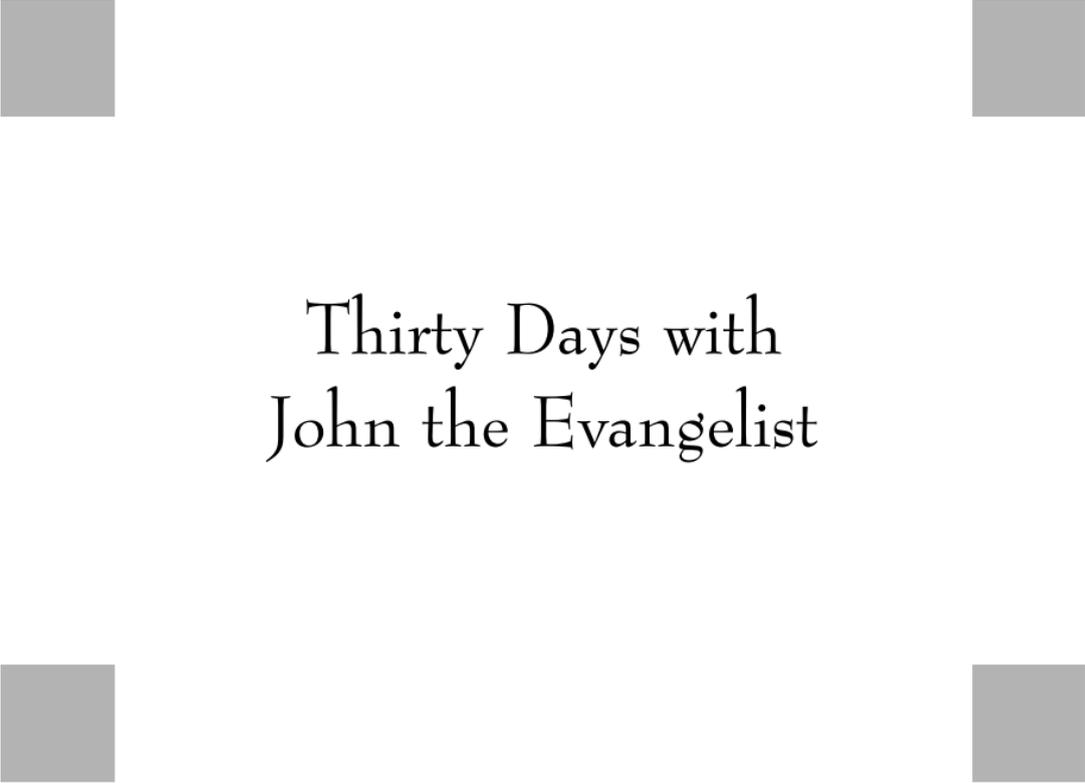
Invite God to embrace you with love and to protect you through the night.

Sleep well.

### *Some Other Ways to Use This Book*

1. Use it any way your spirit suggests. As mentioned earlier, skip a passage that doesn't resonate for you on a given day, or repeat for a second day, or even several days, a passage whose richness speaks to you. The truths of a spiritual life are not absorbed in a day or, for that matter, in a lifetime. So take your time. Be patient with the Lord. Be patient with yourself.
2. Take two passages and/or their mantras—the more contrasting the better—and “bang” them together. Spend time discovering how their similarities or differences illumine your path.

3. Start a spiritual journal to record and deepen your experience of this thirty-day journey. Using either the mantra or another phrase from the reading that appeals to you, write a spiritual account of your day, or a spiritual reflection. Create your own meditation.
4. Join millions who are seeking to deepen their spiritual life by joining with others to form a small group. More and more people are doing just this to support each other in their mutual quest. Meet once a week, or at least every other week, to discuss and pray about one of the meditations. There are many books and guides available to help you make such a group effective.



Thirty Days with  
John the Evangelist

# Day One

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## *My Day Begins*

*Dear friends . . . the Word has been made flesh.*

In the beginning was the Word.  
The Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.  
Through him all things came to be,  
not one thing had its being  
but through him.

All that came to be had life in him,  
and that life was the light of all people,  
a light that shines in the darkness,  
that darkness could not overpower.

A man came sent by God.  
His name was John.  
He came as a witness,  
as a witness to speak for the light  
so that everyone might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
only a witness to speak for the light.

The Word was the true light  
that enlightens all people,  
and he was coming into the world.

He was in the world  
that had its being through him,  
and the world did not know him.

He came to his own domain,  
and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who did accept him,  
who believed in his name,  
he gave power to become children of God,  
born not of human stock,  
nor urge of the flesh,  
nor of human will,  
but of God himself.

—John 1:1–13



*All Through the Day*

His word is made flesh.

## *My Day Is Ending*

Here in the gathering silence of this night,  
let not my heart be troubled,  
nor let it be afraid.

With your beloved John,  
let me be caught up in your love.

I know I need not look for you.  
You are waiting for me  
in the silent dark.

You have been here  
from the beginning.  
You have been here  
at every moment of this day.

Not one thing has had its being  
except through you.

All that has come to be  
has taken its life from you,  
a life that is the light of all,  
a light that shines in the dark,  
that darkness cannot overpower.

Your word is the true light  
That enlightens all of us.

Your word is the light  
that cannot be overcome by the dark.  
Hear my prayer.