

THE SEASON THAT STILL TOUCHES HEARTS

STUDY ONE

The Gift That Still Saves Lives

John 1:1–5, 14; 2 Corinthians 9:15

The story of Christmas doesn't begin at a stable in Bethlehem but in the throne room of the King. In fact, it begins before time in "eternity past," in a beginning that really had no beginning, where only the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit existed.

—Charles R. Swindoll

ON the first Christmas, God gave the ultimate gift to the world. He wrapped heaven's glory in the tiny, humble frame of a baby and, beaming with delight, gave us His only Son.

Pondering God's extravagant love offering to the world, Paul exclaimed: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15 NASB). The great apostle whose command of the Greek language produced eloquent prose and inspiring essays was at a loss for words. God's gift was *indescribable*! Paul even coined the Greek word translated "indescribable," for it appears nowhere else in Greek literature. The embodiment of God's greatest gift to humanity, Jesus is a treasure too wonderful for words.

Perhaps one reason for Paul's speechless awe was Jesus' *eternal nature*—which John explained in the first chapter of his gospel. Open your Bible to John 1, and prepare your heart to welcome the true wonder of Christmas.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

God gave His Son to the world “to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Take a moment to let this thought sink into your heart, and write a prayer of thanksgiving and adoration to the Father for sending Jesus, our Savior—God’s personal gift to you!

Now, let’s open the Word to John’s description of adoration for Jesus in John 1.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read slowly the following verses.

*In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1–5)*



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Observation: Jesus Existed before Bethlehem

A key principle in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is observation,¹ which helps you grasp what the text says before attempting to interpret and apply it. Reread 1 John 1:1–5, and highlight with your cursor in different colors (or print the page and underline, circle, or place boxes around) words that are repeated for emphasis. Notice the concepts John emphasizes through the repetition of certain words: *Word, beginning, God, created, life, light, and darkness.*

What did John say about the divine nature of “the Word” in John 1:1?

Write the phrases in verses 2–5 that describe the Word’s actions. Note the parallel phrases.

The Word is Jesus, the Messiah to whom John the Baptizer pointed (John 1:6–9, 15, 29–34). When did Jesus’ existence *begin*? He had no beginning because He was with God in eternity past, *existing as God* before time began.

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Interpretation: God’s Planning and Wrapping the Gift

We often turn to the account of Jesus’ birth in Luke 2 to find the Christmas story, but the real story, according to John 1, goes back to eternity past and Jesus’ original home in heaven.

How God Planned to Save the World

In his message, Chuck described God as three persons yet one nature—the Godhead—and *God’s plan to save the world* (God’s “eternal decrees”).

Before there was time, before there was space, before there was matter, the eternal decrees were determined by the Godhead. Think with me: the Godhead—comprised of Father, Son, and Spirit; coequal, coeternal, and coexistent—knew everything and, therefore, was able to plan for anything. Knowing that people would populate the earth and knowing that sin would ultimately come and dominate the people of the earth, there would have to be a solution for those people whom God loved. There would have to be a solution to that sin problem that separated humanity from deity.

What was God’s solution to save the world, according to *John 1:14, 29*, and *3:16*?

How God Wrapped His Gift for the World

God’s solution of sending His Son included a problem. How could God’s Son, “the sinless, spotless Lamb of God” (1 Peter 1:19), take on flesh and remain sinless? The answer came in the way God “wrapped” His gift to the world.



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How did Isaiah indicate the Messiah would enter the world (*Isaiah 7:14*)? And how was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled in Jesus' conception (*Luke 1:30–35*)?

We refer often to the virgin birth because Mary, upon giving birth, was still a virgin. But to be technical about it, it was a virgin conception. God wrapped the Word in Mary's womb in a miracle. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Unwrapping God's Gift

God wrapped His most precious gift to humanity in a miracle in Mary's womb. The unwrapping came when Mary gave birth to Jesus, and "the Word became human and made his home among us" (John 1:14).

As Jesus grew into manhood, nothing about Jesus' appearance set Him apart. Though John witnessed Jesus' glory at the transfiguration, "the glory of the Father's one and only Son" (1:14), most people saw Jesus as any other human—with no halo or heavenly glow to identify Him as the Son of God. Because of His ordinary appearance, many struggled to see Him for who He truly was.

How did John say most people received the Gift of God (*1:10–11*)?



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How did His family and those who knew Jesus growing up in Nazareth receive Him (*Mark 3:21; 6:1–3*)?

Here's the gift given to save lives and yet His very family questioned who He was. So, when I meet people who struggle with Jesus, I remember passages like this. Rather than rebuking them, I understand. When they unwrap the gift, all they see is just another Jewish man.
—Chuck Swindoll



Application: Treasuring God's Gift

What is your response when you see Jesus for who He truly is? The baby in the manger was deity wrapped in human flesh, the sinless Son of God who bore the judgment of the world and rose triumphant from the grave. Oh, the wonderful blessing of believing in Jesus and receiving God's gift!

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. (John 1:12–13)

Take a few moments of private worship to picture the baby in the manger as *God in the flesh*. “This gift too wonderful for words” (2 Corinthians 9:15) is the giver of your life and the light shining in your dark world. In the space below, build on your words of adoration at the beginning of the study, and express your confidence in Christ as the Master of creation and the Lord of your life.



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God gave us His Son to channel His grace to the world. Through Jesus, we have all received “grace upon grace” (John 1:16 NASB). In the next study, we’ll examine how God showered His grace on Mary and Joseph through a life-changing surprise followed by soul-comforting relief.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, through Your Son, You made the universe. The tiny fingers on the baby in the manger formed the planets and flung the stars in space. In the misty, precreation past, You had me in mind as Your beloved. I praise You for the awesome God You are, and I thank You for Your indescribable gift: Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, click “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*” or visit sts.insight.org.

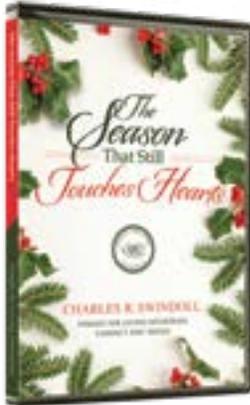


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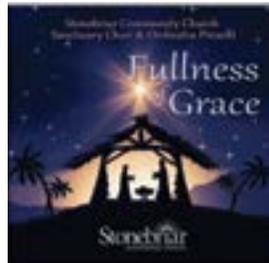
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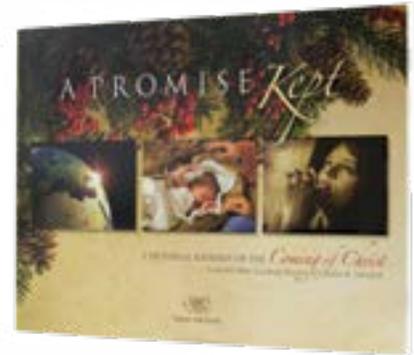
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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