

# JESUS: THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

## Jesus: The Gift of God's Grace

### Twelve Daily Studies for Christmas

John 1:1, 14, 16–17; 8:3–11; 2 Corinthians 9:15

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## Quotable

*My desire is that we will learn the importance of making the most important part of Christmas our focus—and that's Jesus.*

— Charles R. Swindoll

Every Christmas, millions of us go in search of the perfect gift for our loved ones. If the gift is just right, our loved ones open the package and say with a gasp, “It’s wonderful! Thank you!” as we beam with delight.

On the first Christmas, God gave the *ultimate* perfect gift to His loved ones—to all of us! He wrapped heaven’s treasure in the tiny, humble frame of a baby and, beaming with delight, gave us His only Son. On that night, like a proud father, God sent angels to deliver a heavenly birth announcement to some astonished shepherds, who rushed to see the baby born in an animal shelter and laid in a feeding trough as a makeshift crib (Luke 2:7).

And so, the first Christmas took place not in a cozy home around a brightly lit tree but in a pen with a few farm animals, some shepherds, and two exhausted parents gazing at the greatest gift anyone has ever received.

In this first of twelve daily Christmas studies based on four holiday messages by Chuck Swindoll, we’ll join the small gathering around the manger in their worship of Jesus Christ—God’s indescribable gift. We’ll look deeply into the child’s eyes, imagining the man Jesus, reflecting on His death and resurrection, and admiring four gifts that He offers us today—grace, truth, love, and hope.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. Read the following verses, and imagine the setting of the nativity as it might have been. A cold winter night. The sounds and smells of animals. A location in a hillside cave or on the dirt floor of the lower level beneath a first-century house.

After Mary and Joseph had settled into this shelter, “the time came for [Mary’s] baby to be born.” Luke continues,

*She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. (Luke 2:7)*



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After hearing the angels' announcement, the shepherds "hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And *there was the baby*, lying in the manger" (Luke 2:16, emphasis added).

For centuries, artists have attempted to capture the moment the shepherds saw the newborn Savior and His mother treasuring her baby. View the online image of the 1622 painting, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, by Gerard van Honthorst, which is exhibited at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, Germany.

What feelings do the figures in the painting convey? In the space below, record their perceived emotions, and write a prayer to God expressing the feelings you might have had if you had been there.

Now, let's open the Word to find Paul's description of adoration for Jesus.



#### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his message, Chuck reflects on Paul's expression of wonder: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15 NASB). Read [2 Corinthians 9:15](#) in the New Living Translation. How does this Bible version translate the verse?

Like a dry inkwell, Paul's mind was an empty reservoir from which to draw words to describe the wonder of Jesus. Perhaps one reason for Paul's speechless awe was Jesus' *eternal nature*, which John portrayed in the first chapter of his gospel.



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#### Observation: Jesus Existed Before Bethlehem

A key principle in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is observation. Observation helps you grasp what the text says before attempting to interpret and apply it. Read slowly John 1:1–5, and write down the answers to the following questions.

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 any parallel phrases, comparisons, repetitions, or themes.



#### Interpretation and Correlation: God's Son Became Human

Who is the Word? The apostle John unveiled His identity as Jesus, specifically the Messiah, to whom John the Baptizer pointed (John 1:6–9, 15, 29–34).

What does it mean that “the Word became human and made his home among us” (1:14)? To help with your interpretation, correlate John 1:14 with Paul’s explanation of Jesus’ incarnation in Philippians 2:6–7. What added information did Paul provide?



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#### Application: Worship Jesus, God Incarnate

Chuck summed up this study, connecting the doctrine of the incarnation with the birth of Jesus:

Do not think that Jesus began at Bethlehem. Do not think that Jesus began to exist when He was conceived in the womb. That's when He became a human. He has always existed. Being deity, there has never been a time He did not exist. This is what the Pharisees could never grasp. . . . But we see Him, and, thanks to John, we understand Him to be the One who came through the miracle of the Holy Spirit's work in Mary's womb.

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. Write down your praise to God for His indescribable gift: Jesus!

Why did God give us His Son? One reason was 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 this verse in more detail and focus on Jesus as the giver of grace.



#### 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.*



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## Quotable

*My desire is that we will learn the importance of making the most important part of Christmas our focus—and that's Jesus.*

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Christmas is the day we celebrate the birthday of Jesus. But is it accurate to say that Jesus has a birthday in the same sense as other great men and women in history? Can a day in December truly mark the beginning of the Son of God?

Unlike every other baby, Jesus had no beginning point. He existed before His birth just as the apostle John stated: “In the beginning the Word already existed” (John 1:1). Jesus Himself declared His preexistence: “Before Abraham was even born, I AM!” (8:58). And He affirmed His true origins: “I have come down from heaven” (6:38). John the Baptizer, who was born before Jesus, testified to Jesus’ eternal nature: “He existed long before me” (1:15).

In eternity past, Jesus as the Son of God communed in perfect harmony with His Father and the Holy Spirit. This is the mystery of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three in one. Coequal, coexistent, and coeternal.

Why, then, did God the Father send His Son into His creation? For what purpose was Jesus born?



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As we seek answers to these questions in God’s Word, let’s prepare our hearts by meditating on the angel’s song to the shepherds. After announcing Jesus’ birth, the angel “was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

*“Glory to God in highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”*  
(Luke 2:13–14)



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The angels sang glory to God and a blessing of peace to humankind. In the space below, join the heavenly host by writing a prayer of praise to God for giving us His Son and asking the Lord to bless you with the peace the angels offered the fearful shepherds that first Christmas night.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Now read slowly and reflectively the following verses from John's gospel.

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:14, 16–18 NASB)*



### Observation: Jesus Gives God's Grace

The *Searching the Scriptures* method of observation invites you to examine the text as a detective might look for clues. What stands out? Do you see any repeated words, contrasts, or comparisons? Can you summarize the flow of thought? What are the action words and descriptors? Do you see a word you need to define?

With these questions in mind, reread the verses above using your Bible study magnifying glass. Feel free to print the page and make notes on paper or use the PDF tool to highlight a word or phrase with your cursor. What do you observe?

Back to our initial questions. Why did God the Father send His Son into His creation? For what purpose was Jesus born? One purpose was to give us the gift of God's grace. Did you notice the word *grace* appearing several times? It's a significant theme in John's gospel. Let's look closer at the meaning of *grace*.



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#### Interpretation and Correlation: We Receive Grace upon Grace

Focus on the verse, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (John 1:16 NASB). In his message, Chuck Swindoll explained the phrase “grace upon grace” this way: “I like to think of it as one gracious act after another, one grace moment after another.” Read John 1:16 in *the New Living Translation* and in Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase *The Message*. How do these versions express the phrase?

Did you notice in John 1:16 the contrast between Jesus and Moses? Grace upon grace came through Jesus, but *law upon law* (so to speak) came through Moses.

The Mosaic law revealed God’s holiness and lit the way to freedom from sin. God meant the law to be a blessing for God’s people, like a jeweled crown. Unfortunately, this glittering headpiece was corrupted into an iron yoke of traditions forged by religious tyrants to enslave God’s people (Mark 7:8).

Correlate this text by comparing the unbearable yoke of the legalists with the yoke of grace Jesus offered in *Matthew 11:28–30*. What words describe Jesus and His yoke, along with its blessings to all who wear it?

Jesus’ gentle nature attracted weary people burdened by legalism. His open arms of grace drew crowds of overburdened people. In his message, Chuck defines *grace* in two ways. First, grace is God’s unmerited favor, such as our pardon from sin. Second, it is the quality Jesus displayed through His gracious acts. It is the “the loveliness of God,” as Chuck puts it.

Instead of chaining us to a religious grindstone, Jesus invites us to walk with Him forever linked by grace. We *live in* His grace as we receive His love, forgiveness, and acceptance, and we *live out* His grace through our gracious acts to others.



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#### Application: Receive Jesus' Gift of Grace

Chuck urges us this Christmas to keep our focus on Jesus and His gracious deeds.

Think about Jesus. He often touched the unclean. He always welcomed sinners. He ate with them. He was with those suffering from leprosy. Not only did He touch them, He cleansed them and welcomed them back. He even stayed in their homes. He dined with scoundrels and tax collectors. . . . He broke the mold because He was a man of grace.

As you prepare to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, celebrate His gift of grace. How do you need to receive His grace this Christmas? Write your answer below. In prayer, thank Him for His gift of grace, and ask Him for help to pass His grace to others.



#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I want to follow Your Son who drew crowds of overburdened people with His song of grace. I join the multitudes who followed Him then and throughout the centuries. Thank You for sending Your Son to show me Your heart of love and acceptance. I receive the grace offered by Jesus and the peace offered by the angels. Help me to overflow with Your grace and peace to all I meet today. Amen.*



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## DAY 3

Jesus was born at a time when law was king. Rome kept order in its vast empire by wielding a club of judgment to crush any lawbreakers who challenged the emperor's authority. At the local level, kings and governors chiseled in stone their own laws to lay on people's backs. But that's not all; Pharisees, scribes, and priests added to the Jews' burden thousands of religious laws on top of the civil laws.

To this world sinking under the weight of laws and tyrants, God gave His Son as a gift of grace to display God's true law and reveal the compassionate heart of the Lawgiver. In this study, we'll highlight a scene in which Jesus gave His gift to a woman condemned under the law at just the moment she needed grace most.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As we begin, reflect on your need for God's gift of grace through Jesus. If not for Him, we would all stand under judgment before God. Meditate on the following verses to prompt a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for His compassion, then ask the Lord to reveal His grace in a fresh way through His Word.

*The LORD is compassionate and merciful,  
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. . . .  
He does not punish us for all our sins;  
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.  
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him  
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.  
He has removed our sins as far from us  
as the east is from the west. (Psalm 103:8, 10–12)*

## Quotable

*My desire is that we will learn the importance of making the most important part of Christmas our focus—and that's Jesus.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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#### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

What do we find when we receive God's gift of grace through Jesus? Something we don't deserve—forgiveness. A certain woman caught in adultery and dragged before Jesus needed such a gift. Read the account in John 8:1–11.

*Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."*



#### Observation: A Woman in Need of Grace

Let's observe the details of this account. The setting was the temple where sinners went to atone for their sins and receive forgiveness. Against this backdrop of divine mercy, the merciless legalists brought a woman to trap Jesus. What was the dilemma Jesus faced?



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We don't know what Jesus drew in the dirt, but some think He may have been listing the accusers' sins. In this way, Jesus shifted the question from "What judgment does the woman deserve?" to "Who is qualified to judge her?" Reread Jesus' statement in John 8:7. How did Jesus turn the dilemma back on the accusers?

How did Jesus show grace to the woman while also confronting her sin (John 8:10–11)?



#### Interpretation and Correlation: Judgment Satisfied, Grace Offered

Let's explore further the meaning of this text by looking at the big picture. On a broader scale, who does the woman represent?

In general, who do the accusers represent?



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What are the lessons? One lesson is this: whether our sin is exposed or hidden, shocking or subtle, public or private, we all deserve judgment and desperately need grace. Jesus demonstrated that He alone is qualified to judge us and mediate our sin. He is our High Priest.

What does Hebrews 10:19–22 tell you about Jesus' role and work in atoning for your sin?

We all thirst for the compassion and forgiveness Jesus offered the woman caught in adultery, and we are so thankful to hear His words of pardon. As we count down the days to Christmas, let's remember that the baby in the manger was God's gift of saving grace to all sinners, then and now.



#### **Application: We Need Grace in Every Season**

In his message, Chuck Swindoll urged us to lean on Jesus' grace not just for pardon from sin but every day through every season of life.

We need grace all through our lives. We need grace as little children growing up. We need grace as teenagers, adapting to a world of adulthood. We need grace as middle-agers when the pressure of life is intense. We need grace when we get older. Grace is needed for those of us who marry and for those who remain single. Special grace is needed in releasing children from the nest. Grace is needed to forgive one another, to understand one another.

Close this study by writing down the ways you need God's gift of grace this Christmas season. Thank Him for your pardon from sin through Christ's atonement on the cross, and express your desire to lean on His grace in a special way today.



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#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your amazing grace that saved me. In my condition before You, I am no different than the woman caught in her sin standing before Jesus. But through Him and the grace You showed at Calvary's cross of mercy, my sins have been atoned and my soul set free! This Christmas may I lean on You for Christ's saving power to continue upholding me. Amen.*



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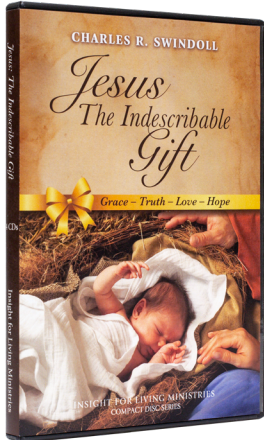
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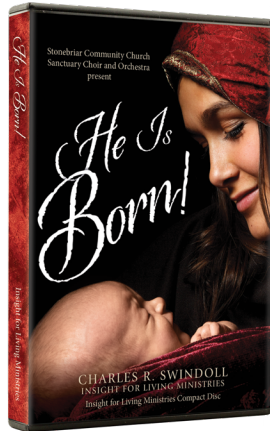
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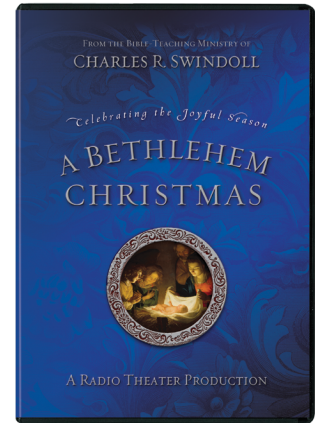
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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