

JESUS: THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

Jesus: The Gift of God's Truth

Twelve Daily Studies for Christmas

John 1:14–18; 8:31–32; 14:1–6

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

DAY 4

Have people ever led you to believe something that wasn't true? It happens frequently during the Christmas shopping season as advertisers glamorize their products to make a sale. Only after we buy the item do we realize we were duped by a slick sales pitch.

If only we had a truth-meter that would flash green when people were being honest and red when they were misleading us, then we'd know the real score. With this handy device, we could test the words of advertisers, politicians, commentators . . . anyone, and we'd never be hoodwinked again!

God never lies. It goes against His nature to lie, so it follows that when God became flesh, *truth* became flesh as well. Jesus was the embodiment of truth. If a truth-meter existed in the first century, anyone who tested Jesus' words would have seen only green lights all the time!

We continue our Christmas series with three daily Bible studies on Jesus as the gift of God's *truth*. As we open God's Word, let's prepare our hearts to receive the teaching of the Holy Spirit.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

If you've been hurt by someone who lied to you, then you may have difficulty trusting people. Through God's Word, the Holy Spirit ushers us into a safe realm where only truth exists, never deception. Because God speaks truth, we can trust Him. Take a few moments to invite God to use His Spirit to "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) through His Word today.

Quotable

*Jesus was in
a category by
Himself. He
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— Charles R. Swindoll



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

If you're in a private place, read the following verses aloud. Reading aloud focuses our mind and tunes our ears to hear the author's emphasis.

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. (John 1:14 NASB)

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (8:31–32)

What words or phrases stood out to you as you read?



Observation: Truth Personified

Observation is the *Searching the Scriptures* method of looking in the text for contrast, comparisons, repetition, cause-and-effect, and other features that might help us understand the author's intended meaning. Notice in John 1:14 (NASB) the flow of thought which begins with "the Word" and concludes with "truth." You might draw a line between those words in your Bible to show the connection.

We define *Word* in this context as "the true communication of God's essential nature." As the incarnation of the Word, Jesus was a true expression of God in human form—the heart and soul of God in flesh and blood. Read again John 1:14. What did the Word do? And what were the results?



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In the setting of John 8, Jesus was talking to people who “believed in him” (John 8:31). These people saw Jesus for who He truly was. They saw the inner glory of Jesus just as John described in John 1:14. What did Jesus say true disciples did (8:31)?

What were the outcomes of being a true disciple (8:32)?



Interpretation and Correlation: Truth Experienced

By interpreting and correlating, we seek to understand the meaning of a passage in context, compared to similar passages. According to John 8:31, abiding in Jesus' teaching is linked to knowing the truth and being set free (John 8:31–32).

An interpretive paraphrase can provide us a fresh understanding of Scripture. Read John 8:31–32 in Eugene Peterson's interpretive paraphrase of the Bible, *The Message*:

Then Jesus turned to the Jews who had claimed to believe in him. “If you stick with this, living out what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.”

According to this reading, we experience truth when we live out what Jesus taught. How is that so? What's the connection between truth and doing what Jesus taught?



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Likewise, what's the connection between freedom and doing what Jesus taught?

Because Jesus embodied the truth *and* taught the truth, we never have to worry that we're on the wrong path if we follow Him. His way always points us in the right direction to the best result: freedom.



Application: We Need Grace in Every Season

In his message, Chuck Swindoll described the world of freedom when we enter through the gate of truth:

When I know the truth, I'm freed from self because I know life isn't about me. I'm not the center of attention. I know the truth about myself. I'm free from others' expectations and opinions. I am free from sin. Sin no longer masters us when the Lord tells us the truth about it.

Where can you find truth this Christmas? Certainly not in the fairy-tale hype of the season. Only in the baby in the manger, who grew up to become the greatest of all teachers, can you find truth to nourish your soul. On what truth would you like to focus your mind today and throughout this Christmas season? If you need prompting, read the rest of John 8, looking for one special truth in Jesus' words to which you can cling today.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You give the best gifts: peace, love, joy. But the greatest gift is Your Son whose words of life are true and trustworthy. Help me today to shape my thoughts around His words so I can keep my mind and heart free from the contamination of the lies of this world. Thank You for the gift of truth, in Jesus' name, amen.



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DAY 5

Chaplain of the Kansas Senate Fred Holloman was known for his plain-spoken manner and unpretentious invocations when he opened senate sessions. In his book, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, author Kent Hughes recalls this simple prayer for God's help in discerning truth.

Omniscient Father:
Help us to know who is telling
the truth. One side tells us one
thing, and the other just the opposite.
And if neither side is telling the truth, we would like to know
that, too.
And if each side is telling half the truth,
give us the wisdom to put the right halves
together.
In Jesus' name, Amen.¹

Thankfully, we never need to pray for divine discernment when listening to Jesus speak. With Jesus, there was no half-truth, political spin, or rhetorical sleight of hand. Every word He uttered was true, which means we can *trust* His teaching in His word. That's a good thing because our future depends on it!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Today's study pulls back the veil of the original home of the baby whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Jesus promised that His home one day will be our home too. As you open God's Word, invite the Lord to reveal His truth to you. Write a brief prayer asking the Lord to open your eyes to His marvelous plan and encourage you today.

Quotable

*Jesus was in
a category by
Himself. He
never left a false
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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The night before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus focused His teaching on the truths that would sustain His disciples and give them courage after He was gone. Read John 14:1–4 and see how many commands and promises you can find. Mark them with the PDF highlight tool, or print the page and underline them.

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.”

What promise is the central point of this passage?



Observation: Truth about the Future

Chuck Swindoll’s four-step Bible study method begins with observation. Observation requires that we slowly examine what the text says, reading the lines rather than reading “between the lines.”

As the personification of truth, Jesus made four true statements. First, what did He say about heaven in John 14:2?

Second, what did He say that He was going to do (John 14:2)?



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Third, what did He say He will do “when everything is ready” (John 14:3)?

Finally, note the phrase in John 14:3, “so that,” which indicates Christ’s objective, purpose, or reason. According to Jesus, *why* is He preparing a place for us in His Father’s home?



Interpretation and Correlation: Truths We Can Trust

The methods of interpretation and correlation help us understand the meaning of a text in context, compared to similar passages. What is the context of Jesus’ teaching about heaven according to John 13:1, 31–33?

The disciples’ hearts were troubled . . . understandably so! Jesus had just told them He would remain with them only a little while longer, and where He was going, they could not follow. To calm their fears, Jesus told His disciples to trust Him (John 14:1). Read the following verses and write down the basis for the disciples’ trust.



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John 7:16–18

John 8:31–32, 51

Our trust in Jesus is based on His trustworthiness. He never spoke anything that wasn't true, nor did He promise anything He could not fulfill.



Application: Trusting When We're Troubled

Are you feeling troubled during this Christmas season? The holidays can cause our deepest fears to surface when pressures increase in the family or at work. And for those who've lost someone close, songs of joy and love only heighten feelings of grief and loneliness.

The same baby Jesus who nestled in Mary's arms calls us to infant-like trust in Him. For what troubles do you need to trust your Savior this Christmas? List them below, and write a prayer of faith as you entrust your life into His care . . . both now and in the future.



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Jesus promised us a home in heaven, but even greater was the reassurance of His eternal presence: “you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:3). How does this promise encourage you today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You sent Your Son for many reasons, but one reason was to deliver a promise that I will dwell forever in Your heavenly home with You and Your Son. The promise of Your presence gives me hope to endure my trials today. Give me a feeling of closeness to You as I move through the moments of my day. Jesus is worthy of my trust, so I believe Your words to be true. I put my faith completely in You. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Fred Holloman, as quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 119–20.



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DAY 6

When people think of Christmas, they often picture a nativity set with carved figures of Mary and Joseph, shepherds, wise men, and a few farm animals serenely gazing at baby Jesus. For many folks, Christmas is about a baby in a manger, and that's as far as their spiritual understanding goes.

However, Christmas is much more than the birth of a baby. It's about *who* the baby is: the God of the universe in human flesh. And it's about *what* He did: proclaim the kingdom of God, die to bear the sins of the world, and rise again to offer eternal life. The splendor of His identity and the significance of His mission comprise the wonder of the baby Jesus, the *true* glory of Christmas.

In this study, we'll examine a statement Jesus made about His identity and mission, and we'll reflect on the spiritual impact of Jesus' life to add deeper meaning to Christmas.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to look at a nativity scene in your home or a painting online, such as Caravaggio's *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. Notice how all the figures orient toward the baby who is the focal point of the scene. In the space below, express to the Lord your desire to make Jesus the focal point of your life, and ask God to help you find the deeper meaning of Christmas through His Word.

Quotable

Jesus was in a category by Himself. He never left a false impression. Never tried to appear as someone He wasn't. He was the personification of the truth.

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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the previous study, we read that Jesus was going to prepare a place for His followers in His “Father’s home” (John 14:2) and that He would return to take them there. Let’s pick up just after Jesus said, “When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And *you know the way* to where I’m going” (14:3–4, emphasis added):

“No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (14:5–6)

Thomas was like a lost person in the woods who wandered off the trail. Reflect on Thomas’ question to Jesus for a moment. What does a lost person need most? What is a lost person’s greatest fear?

Now, let’s see what Jesus said to lost people like Thomas to meet their needs and calm their fears.



Observation: The Person and Work of Jesus

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 find the key words? What are the action words and descriptors?



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Circle the key words *where* and *how* in Thomas' question (John 14:5). Thomas wanted to know where Jesus was going and how he could get there. Jesus' answer wasn't what Thomas expected to hear. How did Jesus shift the focus of Thomas' question (14:6)?

What did Jesus say about His identity using "I am" statements?

What did Jesus say about His mission? A clue to spotting His mission is the sentence, "No one can come to the Father except through me" (14:6). Compare this verse with Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 1:15.

From a human perspective, Thomas' question made sense. He couldn't go to the place Jesus described unless he knew where it was and how to get there. Lost and confused, Thomas strained to find the way to the Father's home. Jesus, however, shifted Thomas' mind-set from human effort to faith, from trying to find his own way to, instead, trusting a Person to lead him. Jesus answered Thomas' *where* and *how* question with a *who* answer: Jesus, Himself! Thomas really did "know the Way" after all!



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Interpretation and Correlation: The Uniqueness of Jesus

Let's take a closer look at what Jesus meant as we interpret the passage. What is the significance of the definite article in Jesus' statements, "I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life" (John 14:6, emphasis added)?

Second, what crucial truth about Jesus do the words *no one* and *except* reveal (14:6)?

Correlation is a method of interpreting a passage by comparing it to another passage. How does Paul's teaching in Romans 10:8–13 help us understand Jesus as the *way*?

How does John 1:9, 14 (NASB) and 8:31–32 help us understand Jesus as the *truth*?

How does John 6:40, 53–54 and 11:25–26 help us understand Jesus as the *life*?



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Jesus doesn't just point the way to God, He personally ushers us into God's presence through His mediating sacrifice for our sins. Because we know the Way (Jesus), we are *never* lost. Because we know the Truth (Jesus), we are *never* in the dark. And because we know the Life (Jesus), we will *never* die!



Application: Trusting in Jesus

In his message, Chuck Swindoll described his view of the baby in the manger:

I love the baby in the manger, but that's not all. When Jesus was born, deity became humanity. He grew up, He called disciples, and they followed Him. He taught the truth and lived the truth and died for the truth. And He said in His dying, "If you will trust in Me, I will take over the controls of your life and I will lead you in a way that you could never find on your own. And when I get you to the Father's home, you'll be safe forever."

Close this three-part study of Jesus as God's gift of truth by inviting Jesus to "take the controls of your life and lead you." In what area, specifically, do you need Him to take control?

Thank the Lord for His gift of Jesus, who is the truth in bodily form. When He said that He was the way to eternal life, He was not lying. He could not lie! Now that you know more about the true meaning of Christmas, express your gratitude in a prayer of thanksgiving for the baby in the manger.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I acknowledge that Your Son is the way, the truth, and the life. Christmas is about more than a baby in a manger; it's about me accepting Your gift of Jesus into my heart and following Him. He offers me what I could never earn. He leads me to my heavenly home on a path I could never find on my own. Thank You for Your precious gift of Jesus! Amen.



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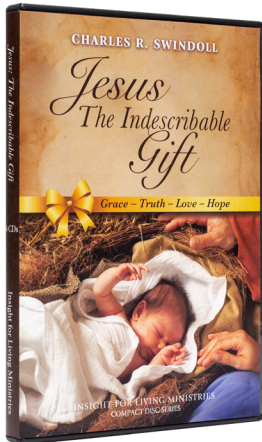
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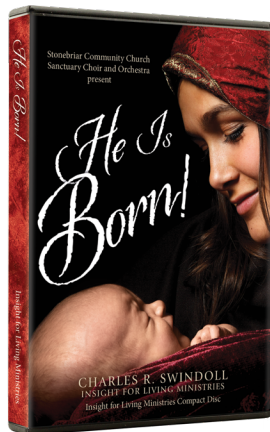
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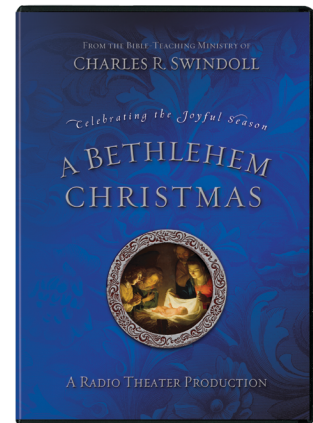
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's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



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