



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

For many Christians, the gospel of John is a favorite book in the Scriptures. It is, in so many ways, an amazing book! Many believers cut their spiritual teeth on John and return to its pages time and time again to find reassurance, comfort in sorrow, and a place to refresh their skills in sharing their faith with those who've yet to believe.

John's gospel sits as the last in a set of four, each with its own specific aim and audience.

- Matthew wrote from the perspective of a Jew who converted to faith in Jesus. His aim was to present evidence to his Jewish audience that Jesus was their promised Messiah!
- Mark bore a practical mind and travelled as a young man with the famed apostle Paul before returning to his hometown. He wrote with an intense interest in the deeds of Jesus, highlighting the fact that Jesus came not to be served but to serve.
- Luke, a Gentile physician from Macedonia, wrote with an emphasis on the humanity of Jesus—that though fully God, He was also fully human and suffered untold physical suffering as part of accomplishing our salvation. He referred to Jesus as the Son of Man.
- But John wrote his gospel to put on display the wondrous power that Jesus possessed by featuring the miracles or “signs” He performed. John's goal was to present an intricate and intimate portrait of Jesus as God's Son with one impassioned aim: “that you may continue to believe” (John 20:31).

## Quotable

*John is one of  
the most priceless  
and precious  
treasures God  
has ever  
given us.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In this study, we’ll put into practice the basics of Bible study methods, beginning with observation.



### Observation: Taking a Closer Look

Observation answers the question, *What does it say?* As we observe the text, we look for words, names, places, events, repetitions, comparisons, and contrasts. The chart below shows the organization and key themes and features of John’s gospel. Take a few minutes to study the chart, noting anything that stands out to you. Be patient and make notes on a separate sheet of paper to help organize your thoughts.

## JOHN

	<b>Deity</b> “The Word was God.” (John 1:1)	<b>God-Man</b> “The Word became human.” (John 1:14) <i>Miraculous signs:</i> Turns water into wine (2) Heals official’s son (4)	<b>Ministry</b> <i>Miraculous signs:</i> Heals lame man at Bethesda (5) Feeds 5,000 (6) Walks on water (6) Heals blind man (9) Raises Lazarus (11)	<b>Discourse</b> <i>Private talks:</i> Servanthood (13) Heaven (14) Abiding (15) Promises (16) Prayer (17)	<b>Trials and Death</b> 	<b>Empty Tomb</b> <i>Private talks:</i> Appearances (20)	<b>Assurance</b> <i>Private talks:</i> Future (21)
	JOHN 1:1–13	JOHN 1:14–4:54	JOHN 5–12	JOHN 13–17	JOHN 18–19	JOHN 20	JOHN 21
<b>Stage</b>	Prologue	Acceptance	Conflict	Preparation	Crucifixion	Triumph	Epilogue
<b>Audience</b>	Public message			CHANGE	Private message		
<b>Time</b>	Three years			Several days			
<b>Jesus’ Seven “I Am” Statements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am the bread of life.” (John 6:35)</li> <li>• “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12)</li> <li>• “I am the gate.” (John 10:9)</li> <li>• “I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25)</li> <li>• “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)</li> <li>• “I am the true grapevine.” (John 15:1)</li> </ul>			
<b>Theme</b>	Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.						
<b>Key Verse</b>	John 20:31						
<b>Christ in John</b>	Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and He alone is the revelation of God and the salvation of people.						

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# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## “That You May Believe”

*Survey of John*

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STUDY

What stood out to you about how John organized his gospel? Use the space below to write down additional observations from the chart.

In broad terms, John offers us a portrait of Jesus' life and ministry with one expressed aim: that those who encounter Him and His miracles would believe in Him as God's Son and their Savior. John states this purpose in writing in two passages near the end of his gospel.

The first passage is John 20:26–31. Take some time to carefully read this scene; then answer the following questions about what you observe.

What details of this scene stand out to you? Who is with Jesus in this scene? What key words does John use? (Hint: look for words he repeats.)

How many times does John use the word *believe* or a form of it in these six verses? Who is the dialogue between? Is there a miracle that occurs? If so, what is it?

The second passage is John 21:24–25. Take a moment to read those two verses and respond to the following questions.



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What words does John use in these two verses that indicate he’s offering a summary statement of his gospel?

What words does John use to indicate that his gospel was written from the perspective of an eyewitness?

Now skim the book of John. Note where John uses language about “faith” and “believing” regarding Jesus’ miracles or other events. See how many instances you can find in just a few minutes. Write them down in the space below.



### Helpful Tools

Bible study tools make digging into the text easy. A Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, and concordance are available for purchase at the Insight for Living Ministries [online store](#). For a complete list of recommendations, read Chuck Swindoll’s online article “[Basic Bible Study Tools](#).”



Using an atlas of Bible lands or by turning to the maps section in the back of your study Bible, locate a map titled “Ministry of Jesus.” Take a few minutes to orient yourself to the area in which Jesus ministered during the period about which John was writing. What names, cities, or regions do you recognize from John’s gospel?

Keep this map nearby as you study John so you can quickly locate the places John mentions.

John opens his gospel with an intriguing invitation to “the Word” (Jesus!) who was “with God” and who “was God” (John 1:1). In that introductory section, John offers us an outline of sorts to help guide us through the story of Jesus, God’s Son, who . . .

- Came from the Father (1:1–18)
- Came into the world (1:19–12:50)
- Would leave the world again (13:1–19:42)
- Would go back to the Father (20:1–21:25)

Jesus came with a message that invited only one appropriate response: *belief!* But what does it mean to believe? What did John intend his readers to do, having encountered the miracles and message of Jesus? Let’s take a closer look to understand what it all means.



### **Interpretation: Finding the Meaning**

Now we’ll take the next step in Bible study: interpretation. Interpretation is digging for meaning. To do so, we’ll use an additional tool of Bible study: correlation—the process of comparing different passages of Scripture. Let’s look more closely at some passages within John’s gospel and in other places in the New Testament to help discover the meaning of John’s compelling words.



### What Is John’s Motive?

Learning the motive of the authors of Scripture helps us understand the meaning or intent of their words. Toward the end of John’s gospel, he adds that if everything Jesus did were written down, “the whole world could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25)! So John had to be selective in what he included. Read each of the following passages in John and make a note or two on how each strengthened his argument to prove the deity of Jesus.

John 1:33–34

John 3:16

John 6:66–69

John 10:34–38

John 11:1–4





### Application: Bringing Home the Lessons

The final step of Bible study is application: *What does all this mean to me?* Begin answering this question by returning to our initial comments about John’s passionate aim, “that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name” (John 20:31).

For John, the fundamental issue was *faith*. His desire was that all who read his account would ultimately put their trust in Jesus as God’s Son—their promised Messiah. This would be a good time to look up the word *faith* in a Bible dictionary. Here you will discover that the word comes from a Greek word, *pistis*, which carries the idea of “belief or trust—especially in a higher power.”<sup>1</sup>

Chuck Swindoll observes that by the end of John’s gospel a singular, powerful question emerges and awaits a response: *Who will believe the message?* The twofold answer to that question forms the foundation of two practical applications.

First, *anyone who is willing to acknowledge Jesus’ claims expresses that acknowledgment in faith*. After reading John’s account, the evidence becomes undeniable that Jesus Christ is no mere prophet or skilled teacher of the Scriptures. He is the one and only promised Messiah . . . the Son of God. He is God incarnate, who has come to set the world free from the penalty of sin.

*Have you acknowledged that fact personally?* You can do that by simply bowing in prayer and saying, “Lord Jesus, I believe that You are God’s Son and that You died on the cross for my sin. I receive Your gift of eternal life by faith, fully trusting in Your finished work.”

Second, *anyone who believes in Jesus as Messiah will commit himself or herself to Him without reservation*. Acknowledging Jesus as Savior and Lord demands an unswerving commitment to obey Him. *Will you commit yourself to Him without reservation today?* You can do that by simply praying, “Lord Jesus, I surrender the plans and purposes of my life, my entire will, to You. I make You Lord of my life.”



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for sending Jesus, Your only Son, to die on the cross for my sin and for raising Him from the dead. I entrust my life to You and to a life fully surrendered to Him. Use me for Your glory, Father, to be a witness to the world of what Jesus Christ has done for me. In His name I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, rev. and updated ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 396.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

“That You May Believe”

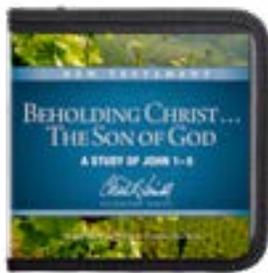
*Survey of John*

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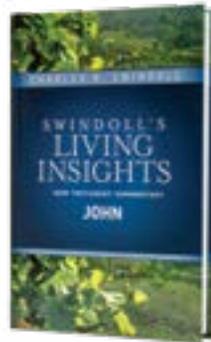
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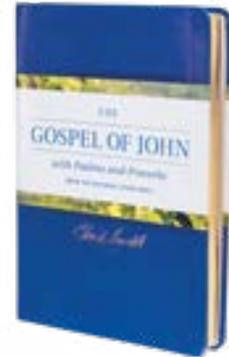
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts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



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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Like any great musical work, John's gospel opens with a lyric prelude preparing us for something wonderful to come. In fact, the first 18 verses of chapter 1 are *prelude* to John's symphonic unveiling of the deity of Jesus. As a prelude sets a melodic theme for the wider musical work, so John's opening words introduce a recurring motif: Jesus Christ is God. And John gives us four reasons why we can hold to such a belief.

Let's take a closer look at how John, the master composer, develops his theme of the deity of Christ.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You may wish to begin this study first by reading through the entire first chapter of John. As you do, watch for recurring themes and words that offer clues to John's deeper meaning.

As we turn to this passage, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures*, explains these methods in more detail, and you can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries' [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary on John's gospel](#).



### Observation: The Divine Attributes of God's Son

John 1:1–18 develops a theological motif which carries readers through the entirety of John's gospel. John offers four clear aspects of Jesus' nature that can only be true of deity.

## Quotable

*May we, just  
like the readers of  
John's day, come  
to terms with our  
eternal destinies  
and determine  
that Christ alone  
is worthy of our  
worship and  
obedience  
and praise.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tools

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

1. He is eternal in nature:

*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. (John 1:1–2)*

John opens his gospel with one of Scripture's clearest statements on the eternal nature of Jesus. Jesus is the "Word" which John refers to here. In fact, the English article *the* does not exist in the original language. It was inserted for clarity much later. So John's expression would be more literally, "In the beginning . . . Word." What other things do you observe from verses 1 and 2 about how John describes the Word? What words are repeated?

In what ways do these two verses remind you of Genesis 1:1–2? What words and images do they share?



2. He is creator of all things:

*God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. (John 1:3)*

What words does John use in this verse to explain the power of Jesus as creator? What contrasting words does he use?

Take a few moments to meditate and reflect on what John reveals about Jesus in these three short verses. What thoughts come to your mind? Make some notes about how significant these truths may have been to John's first-century readers.

3. He is the source of all spiritual life:

*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 1:4–5)*

What key words emerge from these two verses? How are they related?



How would you describe the relationship between the life and light that Jesus brings? What action words do you see, and to what or whom are they connected?

4. He represents the Father as God in the flesh:

*So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. (John 1:14)*

John tells us that not everyone who encountered Jesus received Him as Messiah. But all who did received eternal life in His name through spiritual rebirth (1:10–13). John reveals Jesus as God in the flesh, which forms the New Testament doctrine of the incarnation. In your own words, how would you describe this important Christian doctrine?

Find the word *incarnation* either in your Bible dictionary or theological dictionary. Take a few minutes to read what is written about this foundational doctrine of the Christian faith.

In the space below, jot down some things you learned.



In John 1:14, what words does John use to describe the Word? How does John describe the Word's relationship to God the Father?

Using what John 1:1–14 reveals about Jesus, God's Son, write in your own words how you would describe what you believe about Jesus to an unbelieving friend?

Craft your observations into principles. For example, "Because God became human, we can trust Him to understand our struggles." What other principles do you glean?



### Helpful Hint

A *principle* is a statement of truth emerging from the biblical text that is as true now as it was in Bible times. Principles bridge the past to the present, the ancient culture to modern times. Although John wrote to a specific audience in his day, the principles we learn about the deity of Jesus impact us today.





### Interpretation: John's Prelude to Deity—Jesus as God

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this passage? For each phrase listed below, what do you believe John intended to convey?

*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)*

*God created everything through him. (1:3)*

*The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. (1:4)*

*So the Word became human and made his home among us. (1:14)*



### Correlation: John's Teaching Regarding the Deity of Jesus

In John's prelude he writes about the eternal nature of Jesus, His power in creating the world, His giving of all spiritual life, and His becoming human. Correlation helps us look at other passages in the Bible that support our interpretation of Scripture. Read the following Scripture passages and write a sentence or two about how each supports what John teaches about the attributes of God, which he and other New Testament writers ascribe to Jesus.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Prelude to Deity

*John 1:1–18*

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STUDY

Psalm 8

Psalm 90

Isaiah 53

Colossians 1:15–20

Hebrews 1:1–4

1 John 1:1–10



### Application: Taking to Heart the Lessons

If Jesus is in fact God in the flesh as John proclaims, what implications does Jesus' deity have for our lives? As you review the following principles about the nature of Jesus, God's Son, finish the sentence to form a personal application.



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Because Jesus is eternal, I am able to . . .

Because Jesus created all things, I must . . .

Because Jesus is the source of eternal life, I need to . . .

Because Jesus is God in the flesh, I am able to . . .



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I praise and thank You for sending into the world Your one and only Son, Jesus. I worship Him as the Creator and Provider of all things. And I surrender my life to Him by faith. Make me more and more like Him as I follow Him in obedience. May His glory shine through my life today and in the days to come. In His wondrous name, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Prelude to Deity

John 1:1–18

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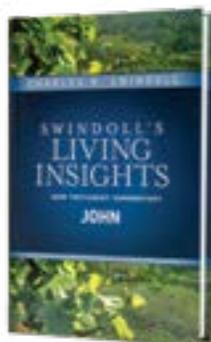
STUDY



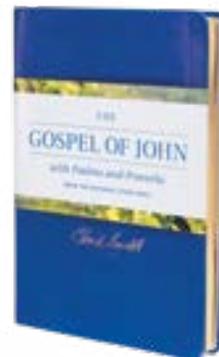
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Chuck Swindoll observed, “It would be an understatement to say John the Baptist swam upstream.” He broke with all religious convention—not only in his message but also in his methods. Yet what genuinely marked him was his rare humility. John emerged on the scene as an enigmatic prophet in the wilderness, prior to Jesus beginning His ministry, and as a self-described “fore-runner” of Israel’s promised Messiah.

John’s parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth, both elderly people whom God graciously surprised with a baby, lifting the shame of barrenness and bestowing blessing instead (Luke 1:5–25). Luke reveals to us that, from John’s boyhood until the day of his public ministry, John lived in the deserts (1:80). During that time, he was clothed in camel’s hair, wore a leather belt, and ate a steady diet of locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6). He offered a fire-and-brimstone call to repentance to prepare the way for Jesus (Matthew 3). We will look closely at this fiery preacher and proclaimer of Jesus. Together, we’ll learn the value of genuine humility as a precursor for releasing the power of Christ through us.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In this study we’ll put into practice the basics of Bible study methods, beginning with observation.



### Observation: Taking a Closer Look

Observation answers the question, *What does it say?* As we observe the text, we look for words, names, places, events, repetitions, comparisons, and contrasts. A single entry on John 1:20–21 from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, for instance, provides an excellent example of the value of observation:

Interestingly in response to their [the Pharisees’] questions John’s answers were progressively shorter: “I am not the Christ” (v. 20); **I am not** (v. 21); **No** (v. 21). He did not want to talk about himself, for his function was to point to Another.<sup>1</sup>

## Quotable

*Humility is the rare quality found in those individuals who willingly surrender all personal ambition to champion the significance of others.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



This compelling observation becomes the foundational interpretive key to unlocking the meaning of the entire narrative.



### Helpful Hint

To orient yourself geographically, take a few moments to locate a map titled “Ministry of Jesus” or something similar. You can usually find such a map in the back of your study Bible or in a Bible atlas. These are excellent tools to keep by your side or to have open online as you search and study the Scriptures.

Locate on a map the city of Jerusalem, about a third of the way down, near the center. Draw your finger to the east and find the Jordan River. Move a bit farther east of the Jordan and you’ll see an area that looks like desert terrain, mountainous and rugged. This is likely where John the Baptizer was preaching his message.

What observations can you make about this location that help you understand the context of John the Baptist’s ministry? Can you determine how far in miles it would be from Jerusalem, the religious center of that day? Make as many observations as possible and write them in the space provided.



### Helpful Tools

Bible study tools make digging into the text easy. A Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, and concordance are available for purchase at the Insight for Living Ministries [online store](#). For a complete list of recommendations, read Chuck Swindoll’s [online article](#) “Basic Bible Study Tools.”

John the Baptist, in the gospel writer’s mind, serves as the first witness to Jesus being God’s Son—the Word made flesh—God with us. He includes a variety of descriptions of this enigmatic prophet that help us understand his significance.





### Interpretation: Finding the Meaning

Now we'll take the next step in Bible study: interpretation. Interpretation is digging for meaning. To do so we'll use an additional tool of Bible study: correlation—the process of comparing a passage of Scripture to other passages of Scripture to unearth John's original intent. Although this man sent from God, John the Baptist, was unique in many ways, his name was quite ordinary. But he himself was the most uncommon of men.

**He was human, but not ordinary.** *“God sent a man, John the Baptist . . .”* (John 1:6).

The original Greek is translated, *God sent a man named John*. Read through the first chapter of John again. Pay attention to how often the writer mentions John the Baptist. Make some notes in the space below about how the apostle John describes John the Baptist.

What do you feel is John's purpose in highlighting the ministry of John the Baptist? How do you think it contributes to his desire to prove the claim that Jesus is God's Son?

**He was a bearer of light, but he was not the Light.** *“. . . to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light”* (1:7–8).

What is the relationship between John 1:5 and 1:6 regarding John's use of the metaphor *light*?



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## A Man Sent from God

*John 1:6–8, 15, 19–34*

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SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Read John 1:9. How would you explain the contrast between John’s reference to Jesus as *the light of the world* in verse 6 and John the Baptist telling people about “the light?”

Why do you think John felt compelled to make this distinction between Jesus, the light of the world, and John the Baptist, the witness to the light?

**He was a voice, but not the Word.** “*I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the Lord’s coming!’*” (John 1:23).

How does John contrast Jesus as “the Word” (1:1–4) with John as “a voice” (1:23) clearing the way for the Word?

Why would one need to “clear a way” for the Lord? Read Isaiah 40:3 to see if that Old Testament passage offers any clues to the meaning of this expression. (Remember: correlation!) Make your observations in the space provided.



### Helpful Hint

When searching the Scriptures, consulting respected scholars by reading their commentaries can strengthen your ability to interpret the Bible. Having a good set of commentaries available is invaluable. (Many are available online.)



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For example, consider this commentary on the meaning of John the Baptist's quoting of Isaiah 40:

John's message was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 with reflections of Malachi 3:1. . . . Isaiah 40:3, however, refers to "highway construction workers" who were called on to clear the way in the desert for the return of the Lord as His people, the exiles, returned to Judah from the Babylonian Captivity in 537 B.C. In similar fashion, John the Baptist was in the desert preparing the way for the Lord and His kingdom by calling on people to return to Him.<sup>2</sup>

**He was useful, but not indispensable.**

*Then the Pharisees who had been sent asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?" John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal." (John 1:24–28)*

How would you describe John the Baptist's view of himself compared to the One of whom he preached?

Why do you think John, the gospel writer, chose to include this interchange between the Pharisees and John the Baptist? What point did he intend to emphasize?

Read John 13:1–17. How does this account compare to John 1:24–28? How are these passages different?



In what ways is the attitude of humility put on display?

### He was a witness, but not an object of worship.

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.’ I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’” (John 1:29–33)*

In your own words describe how this part of the story adds to the point that John the Baptist served to prepare people for the coming of God’s Son.

The apostle Paul wrote about this attitude of humility that ought to mark all who follow Christ. Read his words in Philippians 2:5–11. What strikes you as similar to John 1:29–33? How was John the Baptist displaying the mind of Christ in his responses to the Pharisees’ interrogation?



As John began his gospel, he wanted us to see that the “man sent from God” bowed to the One who came as God in the flesh. The forerunner needed God to reveal the One he was proclaiming. The water-baptizer pointed to the Spirit-baptizer, testifying boldly, “I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God” (John 1:34).



### Application: Bringing Home the Lessons

The final step of Bible study is application: *What does all this mean to me?* This brief section introducing the ministry of John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus, God’s Son, offers two compelling lessons about the nature and power of genuine humility.

1. ***Those sent from God exalt the One who sent them.*** How easy it would have been for John the Baptist to soak up some of the light shining around Jesus as He came onto the scene. Yet he resisted the glory and made certain that he only reflected Jesus’ light to those in spiritual darkness.

In what ways can you as a follower of Jesus make certain that your words and actions exalt Him and not yourself?

2. ***Those sent from God diminish the ones who are sent.*** Few early followers of Jesus modeled this rare level of humility like the apostle Paul. He declared: “You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

In what ways could you mistakenly “preach yourself” when attempting to minister to others? What can you do to make certain your attitude more reflects the humility of John the Baptist and the apostle Paul?





### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for including in Your Word living examples of what it means to exalt Your Son Jesus in words and in actions. Form in me, by Your Spirit, the mind of Christ and the humility that ensures that all the glory goes to Him and to Him alone. In His matchless name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty, New Testament ed.* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1983), 274.
2. Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 24.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## A Man Sent from God

John 1:6–8, 15, 19–34

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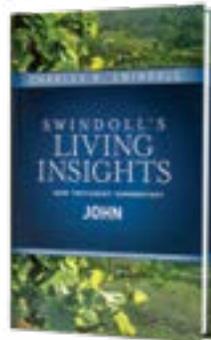
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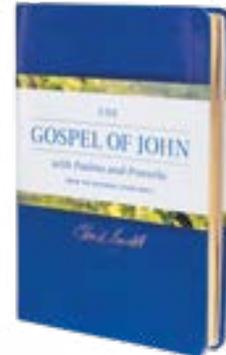
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

One encouraging aspect of John's gospel is his portrayal of not only the deity of Jesus but also the compelling accounts of the first few individuals who responded to Jesus' call for followers. Far from perfect, these men demonstrated a range of expression and authenticity in their responses. The outcome of each encounter with Jesus proves refreshing for anyone who believes God only uses perfect people. Early in John's opening chapter we discover that nothing could be further from the truth!

Let's listen in as the Master Disciple-Maker, Jesus, recruits five common individuals for an uncommon mission. And He shows them how faith in Him would make that possible!



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we turn to this passage, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures*, explains these methods in more detail, and you can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries' [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary on John's gospel](#).



### Observation: Taking a Bird's-Eye View

One approach to the observation process in Bible study is to take a bird's-eye view. In a sense, this approach highlights larger organizational patterns to help frame your study. That's what we will do as we begin our study of this final section of John chapter 1.

## Quotable

*There comes a time  
in all our lives  
when something  
sparks the need for  
change . . . when  
we ask ourselves,  
“Will I continue  
living as I have  
been living, or will  
this day mark a  
change in direction  
for my life?”*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### Time

Read John 1:29–51. What words or phrases indicate time parameters? Write down as many as you observe.

How do these time indicators keep the story moving forward? How much time would you say John covers in these few verses?

### Structure

Read 1:29–51 again. Do you notice any structural patterns? Look for repeated conversations, words, or transitions. Write down your observations.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Five Who Followed in Faith

*John 1:35–51*

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How would you describe the setting of John's story? If you were to divide these several verses into separate episodes of a television series, how many would there be? Write down each one, and give them each a creative title.

If you could choose a one- or two-word theme for this section of John 1, what would it be? Why?

### Characters

The next aspect you can study in your bird's-eye view of verses 29–51 is *whom* does John introduce you to in the story. Identifying people and names is an important part of observation that provides helpful clues to the author's meaning.

Once again, read verses 29–51 and identify all the individuals and their names. Write down each name as it appears in the passage. Include next to the name any details that John offers about the person.

What phrases or patterns does John repeat as he introduces each man? Based on your observations, write a brief description in your own words of each person with whom Jesus interacts.



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### Helpful Hint

This would be a good time in your study to consult a Bible dictionary. Look up the names of each individual John mentions in this passage. Make some notes about what you discover.



### Interpretation: Jesus' Calling of the Five

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this passage? Because Jesus' focus was on people, John's emphasis here on how these five men first encountered Jesus is extremely important. Let's take a close look at each encounter and see what John perhaps wanted us to learn. He includes details about Jesus' *approach* to each person. Then he follows with a description of their *responses*. For each one, make some notes about what John reveals.

#### Andrew and John

*The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. (John 1:35–37)*

#### The Approach

How would you describe the approach used to attract these two individuals to Jesus? What is the context of their situations when responding to John the Baptist's witness?

#### The Response

How did these two men respond? (We know from verse 40 that they are Andrew and John.)



### Simon Peter

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter"). (John 1:40–42)

### The Approach

How would you describe the approach used to reach Simon Peter? How is it different from the approach used with Andrew and John?

### The Response

How did Andrew's response impact Simon Peter's response? In what way are they related?

### Philip and Nathanael

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown. Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied. As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity." "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you." Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!" (John 1:43–49)



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Five Who Followed in Faith

*John 1:35–51*

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### *The Approach*

In both Philip's and Nathanael's case, how would you describe the approach to introducing them to Jesus? How are they the same? How are they different?

### *The Response*

How did Philip respond? What was the immediate impact of his response to Jesus?

How did Nathanael respond to Philip's initial witness?

How did he respond to meeting Jesus personally?



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### Correlation: The Impact of Following Jesus

Correlation helps us look at other passages in the Bible that support our interpretation of Scripture. The lives of the five men who followed Jesus in faith would never be the same. In fact, later in the New Testament we encounter these same individuals impacting others with the message of Jesus. Read the following Scripture passages and write a sentence or two about how each demonstrates the longer-term impact of encountering Jesus.

#### Acts 3:1–6

Who is the disciple mentioned here? What is the context?

What is the approach?

What is the response to Jesus?

#### Acts 8:26–40

Who is the disciple mentioned in this story? What is the context of the encounter?

What approach is used to share about Jesus?



What is the response to Jesus?

In your own words, how would you summarize the relationship between the encounters described in these two passages in Acts and what John describes in the passage we've been studying from John chapter 1?



### Application: Bringing Home the Lessons

By studying how Jesus encountered and responded to these five men, we can learn much about how He desires we approach people.

What was Jesus' attitude toward each man He encountered and ultimately called to follow Him?

How much is your attitude toward people shaped by Jesus' evident love and care for them? In what ways do you view the potential in people as Jesus did in these five men?



Think of someone in your life whom you feel is most unlikely to come to know Jesus. Based on what you've learned in this study, how might you approach this person in a way that reflects the love and grace of Jesus?



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I thank You that You considered me worthy of the grace and love of Your Son, Jesus. Help me to see others as You see them—with love and grace, not judgment and indifference. Use me to draw someone closer to You today—and ultimately to a knowledge of Your Son, Jesus. In His name I pray, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Five Who Followed in Faith

John 1:35–51

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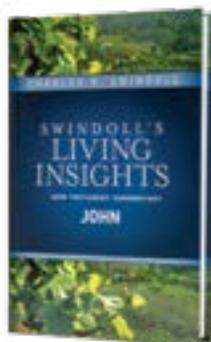
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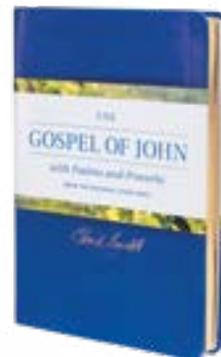
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Do you recall the reason John wrote his gospel? If not, review for a moment John 20:30–31. Remember? He clearly desired to show in those few words that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. John's method for accomplishing that simple plan involved his recording of selected miracles (called "signs") performed by Jesus during His ministry. John explains that the miracle at Cana "was the first time Jesus revealed his glory" (John 2:11). In other words, we're only getting started with the miracles!



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we turn to this passage, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, explains these methods in more detail, and you can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries' [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary on John's gospel](#).



### Observation: Looking All Around

One approach to the observation process in Bible study is to observe major chronological, geographical, and organizational themes that help you understand the flow of a passage. Time segments, geography, and even weather are used by the biblical writers to communicate their message. It can be an exciting aspect of your observation stage of searching the Scriptures. Let's take a closer look at some of the chronology, geography, and other aspects of John 2 as we begin this second chapter.

## Quotable

*How easy it is to become enthralled with the miracles and lose sight of the One who performed them . . . to be in awe of Christ's words, but miss the wonder of His presence.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### Chronology—Observing Aspects of Time and Sequence (John 2:1–12)

Read John 2:1–12. What words or phrases indicate time parameters? Write down as many as you observe.

How does this scene, for instance, relate to the last story covered at the end of John 1?

What did Jesus do *after* the wedding day in Cana? What chronological clues help you answer that?



By the way, this is a good occasion to use your imagination! Take a few moments to think through how you and perhaps Jesus and His family might feel after a long wedding weekend. What emotions might Jesus have felt? How do you think He may have felt physically? In what way does the chronological clue in John 2:12 indicate His desire for rest? Remember: Jesus is human!

### Geography—Observing Aspects of Places and Spaces (John 1–2)

If you were to map out the first two chapters of John's gospel, you'd determine that Jesus' early ministry took Him to multiple towns and areas within a geographic region.

Take a few moments to survey both John 1 and 2. Write down in the spaces below the names of towns, areas, and regions that you observe. For each, be sure to note any details that John includes.

John 1—Towns, Places, and Regions

John 2—Towns, Places, and Regions



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Wine . . . Coins . . . and Signs

*John 2*

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Now, take a few moments to locate either in the maps section of your study Bible or in a Bible atlas a map titled “Ministry of Jesus” or something similar. Locate on the map each of the locations you identified above. What observations can you make about where they are located? In what general geographic location are they found?

Take a few moments to consult a Bible dictionary (preferably one that covers the New Testament) and look for an entry on Jewish weddings. Read through the information provided. What do you learn about those early customs? How does what you discover relate to what John describes about the wedding in Cana in John 2?

The second story in John 2 covers Jesus cleansing the temple in Jerusalem—quite a different scene than the wedding at Cana. Read through this account in John 2:13–22. Make some observations like the ones you made from the passage describing the wedding at Cana. Use both chronological clues and geographical indicators to organize your thoughts.

### **Chronology—Observing Aspects of Time and Sequence (John 2:13–22)**

What chronological clues do you observe in John 2:13–22?



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What is the relationship in time between this story and the wedding at Cana?

What did Jesus do in between these two events? What significance is there to this in-between period?

### Geography—Observing Aspects of Places and Spaces (John 2:13–22)

Read again John 2:13–22, and make some notes about the geography of this story. Where does this take place? What clues do you observe?

Where in relationship to the wedding does this story take place? What are some obvious differences between the two settings? How might you imagine the surroundings impacted Jesus' actions?





### Interpretation and Correlation: Finding John's Original Intent

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand these two stories? Why would he include them back to back in the same section, for instance? Correlation—the *Searching the Scriptures* process that shows how one passage relates in meaning to another—also helps to bring clarity to our own interpretation. Let's use both interpretation and correlation to come to some important conclusions on why John selected these two encounters with Jesus in his gospel.

### Turning Water into Wine—Understanding Cana (John 2:1–12)

John describes a compelling scene where Jesus' presence and actions turned an otherwise natural experience into something supernatural!

What was the occasion that prompted Jesus to respond? Who approached Jesus? How would you explain His initial response (John 2:3–4)?

What do you think Jesus means by “My time has not yet come” (2:4)?

What finally moved Jesus to perform the miracle of changing the water into wine (2:6–10)? What was the result?



According to John 2:11, what does John reveal about the meaning of this miracle? In other words, why did Jesus perform it?

Let's correlate John 2:11 with some additional New Testament passages. Write down how each passage relates to the miracle at Cana.

How does Matthew 5:14–16 relate to John 2:11? What is the primary issue?

How does 2 Corinthians 4:5–7 relate to John 2:11? What is the primary issue?

### Coins in the Temple—Understanding the Temple Scene (John 2:13–22)

Though a very different scene than the wedding at Cana, Jesus proves Himself to be both authoritative and powerful in effecting real change in the lives of those who encounter Him. Let's take a closer look and see what this passage means.

Read again John 2:13–22. How would you describe the setting? What potential conflicts are present?



John mentions the Jewish Passover celebration. What is the significance of that celebration to this story?

What caused Jesus to act so forcefully? What clues does John offer as to why Jesus did what He did?

How do Jesus' words in verse 16 help you understand the meaning of this passage? In other words, for Jesus, what is at stake?

Who is Jesus in direct conflict with in this scene? Why are they up in arms over His actions?

Compare John 2:18–19 with John 2:21. How do these verses relate? What is John declaring in verse 22 about the significance of what just occurred?

Now let's do some correlation. Read the following verses and write down how they relate to John's story of Jesus cleansing the temple in John 2.

Psalm 69:9



John 4:23

1 Corinthians 1:22–23

**Application: Bringing Home the Lessons**

As we step back from these compelling stories, we find that Jesus is the focal point of them all. In the changing of water into wine, Jesus' glory is in view (John 2:11). In the cleansing of the temple, we see His holiness (2:16). In His words about raising the temple after three days, we witness the wonder of His divine power (2:19). We, too, need to focus on Jesus in our lives. Complete the following sentences by way of personal application.

Because of Jesus' glory, I want to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Because of Jesus' holiness, I need to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Because of Jesus' resurrection power, I can \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**A FINAL PRAYER**

Father, thank You for showing me how much I need Jesus in my life. Please help me live in a way that brings glory to Him, walk in holiness before Him, and experience His power each day. I ask these things in His name, amen.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Wine . . . Coins . . . and Signs

John 2

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

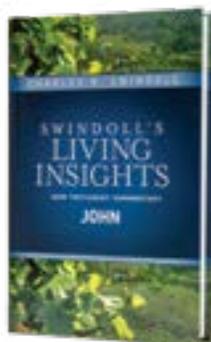
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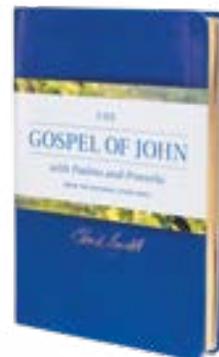
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Chuck Swindoll says that if he had only one message to declare to Christians, or to anyone for that matter, it would be to stop working so hard to be religious. The Bible teaches that God desires that we live our lives from a mind-set of grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). The passage we will study in this lesson includes one very well-known verse that points to what that really entails:

*“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”*  
(John 3:16)

Jesus spoke these compelling words during a conversation He had with a religious leader named Nicodemus about how to enter the kingdom. Listening in, we quickly discover that *religion*—human effort to reach God—is very different from *regeneration*—God’s effort to reach us. Nicodemus soon realizes that the way to salvation is not on the dead-end path of self-righteousness but through the way of perfect righteousness offered by the One standing before him: Jesus, God’s Son!



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we turn to this passage, we’ll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, explains these methods in more detail, and you can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries’ [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck’s commentary on John’s gospel](#).



### Observation: What Do You See?

Often in the Gospels, there is much to learn by taking a close look at personal encounters. That is especially true of conversations—or what may be more formally referred to as *dialogue*. In this story from John 3, we can observe much by “listening in” on a very famous conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus.

## Quotable

*Frankly, one of the most difficult individuals to lead to a knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ is a religious person.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Through observation we can begin to understand why John included this very compelling scene between one who was *religious* and the One who offered *regeneration*.



### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### The Conversation—Nicodemus and Jesus (John 3:1–4)

Religious people often can be difficult to reach for Christ. Read John 3:1–4 and jot down some clues that indicate Nicodemus may be a tough case.

According to John, what are Nicodemus' credentials (John 3:1, 10)? How is he described?

You probably observed that Nicodemus was a *Pharisee*. Write down what you know about this group of religious leaders. Based on what you know, what are some likely barriers Jesus would encounter in Nicodemus?



### A Theological Discussion (John 3:2–13)

In the dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus, the topic of salvation is discussed and becomes more theological in nature—meaning, it moves in the direction of wrestling with *how* someone enters the kingdom of God.

What preconceived notions does Nicodemus bring to this discussion?

What metaphor for entering the kingdom does Jesus use that initially confuses Nicodemus?

In John 3:5–8, Jesus contrasts physical birth and the new birth. What are the words and images used to develop this contrast?

What other example from nature does Jesus use to help Nicodemus understand the new birth?



How does Nicodemus respond to this explanation by Jesus?

### A Historical Illustration (John 3:14–15)

Sensing Nicodemus' continued confusion, Jesus pulls an illustration from Jewish history to clarify what He means.

What Old Testament story does Jesus use to illustrate how faith in Him brings about eternal life?



### Interpretation and Correlation: Finding John's Original Intent

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand these two stories? Why would he include them back to back in the same section, for instance? Correlation—the *Searching the Scriptures* process that shows how one passage relates in meaning to another—also helps bring clarity to our own interpretation. Let's use both interpretation and correlation to understand the meaning of this important encounter with Jesus.

### Belief and Unbelief (John 3:16–18)

At this point in the conversation, Jesus offers what has become the most quoted passage in all the Bible and explains that there are only two possible responses: *belief* or *unbelief*.



Read John 3:16–18. According to Jesus, what is the necessary requirement for anyone who desires eternal life?

When someone believes in Jesus, according to this passage, what is the result?

What is the result of unbelief, according to Jesus?

### Light and Darkness (John 3:19–21)

Another theological aspect of the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus illumines why some believe and others do not.

What reasons does Jesus give for why individuals refuse to believe in Him?



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Brainstorming the New Birth

*John 3:1–21*

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What is the primary way in which you can determine if someone resides in spiritual darkness?

How do you know someone has “come to the light” (John 3:21)?

Let’s do some correlation to help us deepen our interpretation of this passage. Look up the following passages, and in the space provided explain in your own words how each relates to Jesus’ explanation of belief versus unbelief and light versus darkness.

John 8:12

2 Corinthians 4:4



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Ephesians 1:18

1 John 1:5

### Application: Bringing Home the Lessons

Thankfully, like any good storyteller, John doesn't leave us in the dark regarding the outcome of the encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus. There really is a wonderful ending to this story: Nicodemus believes!

After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea requested His body from Pilate that he might provide Jesus with a proper burial. A man who assisted Joseph in that solemn act of worship was a former religious poser named Nicodemus. Only this time, Nicodemus had left the darkness of unbelief and gladly associated with Jesus in the full light of day (John 19:39–40).

So what will be the end of your story? Will it be a sad tale of regret and sorrow, having lived your whole life in the darkness of unbelief? Or will you stand before Him, clothed in the shining righteousness of Jesus?

There are only two possible responses to Jesus: *belief* or *unbelief*. How will you respond today?

### A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord, I believe! I put my trust fully and wholly in Your Son, Jesus, as my Savior and my Lord. Thank You for loving me so much that You would send Him to earth, to suffer and die in my place, that I may have eternal life. I worship and adore You. In the matchless name of Jesus Christ, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Brainstorming the New Birth

John 3:1–21

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THE  
SCRIPTURES

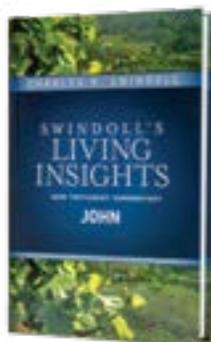
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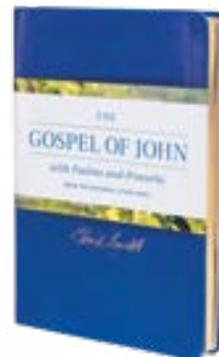
### Tools for Digging Deeper



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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). Such words you’d expect Jesus to have conferred on Moses, a man determined by God to deliver His people from the bondage of Egypt . . . or upon David, Israel’s shepherd king, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), the one who fought the mighty giant, Goliath! Instead, those remarkable words fell like a garland around the neck of an unsung hero named John. Unconventional, to say the least, John the Baptist was that enigmatic prophet living in the wilderness, proclaiming an uncompromising message of repentance to prepare the hearts of God’s people for the Messiah.

God had uniquely prepared this uncommon prophet to represent His Son as His forerunner and to accomplish three primary tasks: *clear the way . . . prepare the way . . . and GET OUT OF THE WAY!* In this study, we will learn the secret to John’s ability to get out of the way and to exalt Jesus! And perhaps we’ll also be inspired to live our lives that way too.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we turn to this passage, we’ll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, explains these methods in more detail. You can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries’ [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck’s commentary on John’s gospel](#).



### Observation: What Do You See?

Often in the Scriptures, there is much to learn by taking a close look at how a person is described, either by the narrator or the person himself or herself. That is certainly true in this story of John the Baptist. Both John the gospel writer and John the Baptist offer important clues as to who this uncommon prophet was and what made him tick. You can also see other clues in the story about the setting and why John the Baptist’s ministry was so crucial to launching the public ministry of the Messiah.

## Quotable

*John’s greatness  
was in his  
unwavering resolve  
to decrease so  
that Christ—  
whom he boldly  
proclaimed—  
could increase.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### A Biography of John the Baptist—He Must Increase (John 3:22–30)

Read John 3:22–30. As you do, note what is happening in this scene. Who are the main characters? What is the focus of this story?

How would you describe the conflict that emerges? How do you know there is an issue?

What element does John the author use to introduce the conflict?



### *Geography . . . What Is the Setting?*

Where does this story take place? What significance is there to Jesus leaving Jerusalem and going to the Judean wilderness?

Using your study Bible or Bible atlas, find a map titled “Ministry of Jesus” or something similar. See if you can locate the area in which this story took place. Make some notes about what you discover.

Jesus’ ministry had been in Galilee up to this time. Now He moved into the area where John the Baptist preached. That proximity likely contributed to the tension that arose among the disciples of John the Baptist. Let’s see what we can observe about the nature of the conflict.

In John 3:25, what sparks the conflict regarding John the Baptist’s ministry versus Jesus’ ministry?

What is the main complaint that John the Baptist’s disciples bring to him? (John 3:26)

How does John the Baptist respond? (3:27–30)





### Interpretation: Finding John's Original Intent

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this story? What principles or theological truths emerge that help us understand the meaning of this amazing story about the forerunner of the Messiah.

### Reaction of the Forerunner (John 3:27–30)

John the Baptist's response, as you just read, throws cold water on his inflamed disciples, quenching any further conversation as well as their competitive spirits.

Read again John 3:27–30. Based on what John the Baptist says to his disciples, what is the basis for his remarkable response?

What cultural metaphor does John the Baptist employ to illustrate his point?

Where else in Scripture is this metaphor used? (Put on your Bible thinking cap!)



What is the primary principle John the Baptist points to here in explaining his response?



### Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Let's do some correlation to help us deepen our interpretation of this passage. Look up the following passages, and in the space provided explain in your own words how each relates to John the Baptist's principle of humility.

Numbers 11:26–29

Psalms 75:6–7

Proverbs 18:12



2 Corinthians 4:5

Philippians 2:3–4

### A Doctrinal Declaration—What It Really Means (John 3:31–35)

In John 3:31–35, this humble forerunner delivers his doctrinal statement on the person of Jesus Christ:

*“He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands.”*

There are times in Scripture, when an author provides explicitly the meaning of the text. This is an excellent example of one such declaration of meaning, minimizing the need for interpretation.

How would you summarize John the Baptist’s doctrinal declaration in your own words?



**Application: Bringing Home the Lessons**

John the Baptist's rare humility provides lessons for all of us who genuinely desire to follow Christ and help prepare people's hearts for Him! After each principle below, write down one or two personal applications.

*God is always in charge, not people (John 3:27).*

Application \_\_\_\_\_

Application \_\_\_\_\_

*All work is significant, but only one work is preeminent (John 3:28).*

Application \_\_\_\_\_

Application \_\_\_\_\_

*Joy comes from being obedient, not from getting the glory (3:29).*

Application \_\_\_\_\_

Application \_\_\_\_\_

*Genuine humility calls attention to Christ, not self (3:30).*

Application \_\_\_\_\_

Application \_\_\_\_\_

Are you ready to lay low and exalt Christ today? Make that commitment to Him in prayer.



**A FINAL PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, I want You to increase in every aspect of my life today. Show me areas where I continue to exalt myself or have a view of myself that is overriding my thoughts of You. Be exalted in my thoughts, in the attitude of my heart, and in all I do, say, and think. In Your name I pray, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## The Preacher Who Lost His Congregation

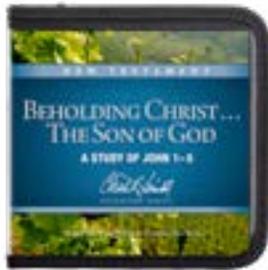
John 3:22–36

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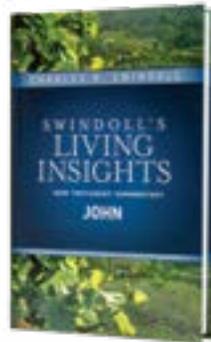
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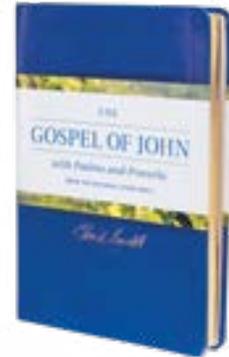
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

In this section of John's gospel, we'll watch Jesus as He offers living water to a sin-parched woman at a Samaritan well. With all the tenderness and care of a loving father, Jesus engaged and listened to the woman's deepest needs. What began as a simple request for a much-needed quenching of physical thirst resulted in this woman's drinking in a full gulp of grace and truth from the Source of living water—Jesus! With one sip of faith, her deepest thirsts were quenched in Him. Let's journey back in time and stop and rest with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and learn from the Master Provider of the water of life.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we turn to this passage, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, explains these methods in more detail. You can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries' [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary](#) on John's gospel.



### Observation: What Do You See?

Often in the gospels, we can learn much by taking a close look at personal encounters. That is especially true of conversations—or what may be more formally referred to as *dialogue*. In this account from John 4, we can observe much by “listening in” on a very famous conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Through observation we can begin to understand why John included this touching scene and learn from Jesus the tender art of offering living water to those parched by the dryness of sin.

## Quotable

*Jesus Christ,  
though weary, a  
reputable Jew,  
and the holy Son of  
God, took time to  
notice and listen  
to one who had only  
known rejection  
and scorn.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### The Setting (John 4:1–6)

The scene in John 4 opens with Jesus on a journey from Judea toward Galilee. On the way, He passes through Samaria (4:4). What prompted Jesus to take this journey with His disciples? How do you think Jesus and His disciples would have been feeling at this point in their trip?

Using a map titled “Ministry of Jesus” or something similar located either in the back of your study Bible or in a Bible atlas, trace the route Jesus and His disciples traveled from Judea to Galilee. (Also, look online at <http://insight.org/general/bible-maps>.) How long of a trip did they take? What kind of terrain do you think they encountered? Where is Samaria in relationship to Judea and Galilee?

Find a Bible dictionary and locate the entry for *Samaria*. Make some notes on what you learn about this region of Palestine. What strikes you as significant to this story?



Read John 4:6. What details does John include that provide additional information about the setting of this story?

What time of day did this occur? What do you know about the setting of a water well in ancient times? (Hint: Consult the commentary notes associated with this passage included in your study Bible.)

### The Conversation (John 4:7–26)

In this tender dialogue, we learn much about how to engage someone seeking spiritual truth. In fact, Jesus used six separate appeals to the woman He met at the well.

Notice, Jesus first appeals to her kindness. What does He say in John 4:7?

How does the woman respond? How would you characterize the nature of her response (John 4:9)?

Second, Jesus appeals to her curiosity. How does He do that? What idea does He introduce in her mind (4:10)?



How does the woman respond to Jesus' words about God's gift and the "Giver" (John 4:11–12)? Why do you think her response is significant?

In John 3:5–8, Jesus contrasts physical birth and the new birth. What are the words and images He uses to develop this contrast?

Jesus then follows up by appealing to her desire. How does He do that? What theological concept does Jesus bring into the conversation at the end of 4:14?

How does she respond in 4:15?

Next, Jesus appeals to her personal interest (4:16). How does Jesus do that?



What is her response to Jesus' suggestion that she go get her husband (4:17)? Why do you think Jesus took that approach?

Jesus then appeals to the woman's conscience (4:18). How does He do that?

How does she respond (4:19–20)?

Finally, Jesus appeals to the woman's will (4:21–24). How does Jesus do that?

What contrast does Jesus employ that directs the woman's focus to more spiritual matters?





### Interpretation and Correlation: Finding John's Original Intent

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? Correlation—the *Searching the Scriptures* process that shows how one passage relates in meaning to another—also helps bring clarity to our own interpretation. Let's use both interpretation and correlation to understand the meaning of this important encounter with Jesus.

### The Reaction (John 4:27–42)

In John 4:26 Jesus declared Himself to be the Messiah. Soon after, His disciples return from town where they had gone to get food and other supplies for the remaining journey. Let's look closely at the conversation between Jesus and His disciples after they find Him talking to the Samaritan woman.

How do the disciples react to seeing Jesus talking with the woman at the well?

What does John tell us the Samaritan woman was doing at that time (John 4:28–29)? What does she say to the townspeople that helps us understand her response to meeting the Messiah?

How does Jesus' interchange with the disciples about physical food compare with His discussion with the Samaritan woman regarding water (John 4:31–34)?

Jesus makes a clear appeal to the disciples about the urgency of declaring His message to countless others like the Samaritan woman. What metaphor from nature does Jesus use to illustrate His point (4:35–38)?



Read Matthew 28:18–20. How do Jesus' words to His disciples in this passage *correlate* with what He says to them in this story?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:6–7. How does this passage relate to Jesus' words about the importance of a spiritual harvest?

How does the response of the Samaritan people prove Jesus' teaching about the harvest being ripe?

### **Application: Bringing Home the Lessons**

Obviously, Jesus' vision of fields ripe for harvest is still very applicable today! So many people are waiting to be engaged in discussion on matters of truth and eternity. And if what John teaches in this story is true, seeds of God's truth have already been sown in the hearts of people who have yet to believe.

What are some of the barriers that keep you from connecting with unbelievers around you?



What so-called “necessities of life” might keep you from noticing the deeper needs in your own life or in the lives of others?

How might procrastination or fear play a role in preventing you from engaging people with the truth of the gospel?

In the space below, write down the names of three individuals you’d like to talk to about their need for Jesus Christ.

1.

2.

3.

Now take a few moments to bring these names to the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to prepare their hearts for an initial conversation. Then ask Him to provide an opportunity for you to share what you believe. He will be faithful.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord, thank You for sending someone into my life to share the love of Jesus with me! Give me the courage and the desire to speak to someone today about what You have done for me in Christ. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Water for a Thirsty Woman

John 4:1–42

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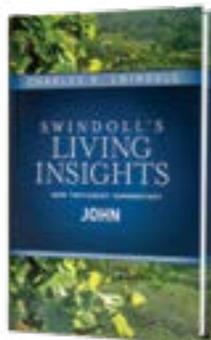
STUDY



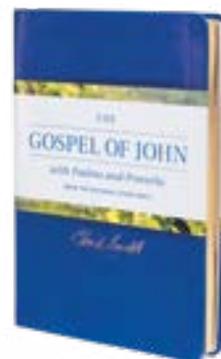
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

There are few deeper bonds on earth as those between fathers and their children. Watching a son or daughter struggle against a debilitating disease or manage the painful transition from adolescence into adulthood changes you. The story for today will move you like that.

Our author, the apostle John, weaves a penetrating historical narrative of a once self-reliant man who, desperate to find a cure for his son's terminal illness, received that and so much more in the person and presence of Jesus! While this remarkable drama unfolds, as Chuck Swindoll would say, "Try to stay in your seats!"



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In this lesson, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, explains these methods in more detail. You can [purchase a copy](#) at Insight for Living Ministries' online store. Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary](#) on John's gospel.



### Observation: What Do You See?

There is much to observe in John's vivid portrayal of this tender scene in which Jesus healed a father's dying son. Let's look closely at the details John included, to understand and hopefully embrace some powerful lessons revealed as the weakness of the human experience meets the limitless power of Jesus.

## Quotable

*John wrote his gospel so people would believe . . . and he included episode after episode of Jesus, God's Son, performing miracles. Each was a monumental display of Christ's deity.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

### The Occasion for the Miracle (John 4:46–47)

Read John 4:46–54. Write down some initial observations about the occasion and setting of this story. Try to find at least ten helpful observations.

If you recall, this is the town in which Jesus performed His first recorded miracle—turning water into wine. How might that previous miracle have prepared people for the miracle Jesus performed in this account?

Who were the main people involved in the story?





### Getting to the Root

The Greek word used to describe the “official” in this story is *basilikos*, which means “the king’s man.” In other words, this individual who approached Jesus was likely one of Herod’s high-ranking appointees. It would have been no small matter for him to have swallowed his pride and humbled himself before this Miracle-worker from Galilee.

What need did the official present to Jesus?

What emotions was the official likely experiencing? How might those emotions have impacted how he approached Jesus?

How did John describe the physical condition of the official’s son (John 4:46–47)?

Physical infirmity can be one of the strongest magnets to draw people to the Savior. Keep that in mind as you study the conversation that prompted Jesus to demonstrate His supernatural power on behalf of this high-ranking official.



### The Conversation That Prompted the Miracle (John 4:46–50)

Roman officials had full authority to take charge of a crisis and manage it directly. That mind-set no doubt affected the way in which this man approached Jesus with his personal crisis. Though he pleaded with Jesus out of desperation, he did so in a two-fold request that fell just short of a command. What two things did he want Jesus to do?

How did Jesus respond initially (John 4:48)? What issue did Jesus raise in response to the man's request?



### Interpretation: Finding John's Original Intent

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this story? What principles or theological truths emerge that help us understand the significance of this wonderful miracle?

### The Reaction to the Miracle (John 4:50–54)

John made a point to describe the desperateness in which this father appealed to Jesus, not only to come to his town but to heal his son. So here was an unbelieving government official, brought to a place of desperate need, begging God's Son for a miracle.



Yet Jesus immediately shined the light on the issue of faith (John 4:48). How does Jesus' response relate to John's purpose for writing his gospel (20:31)?

Read John 4:50–54. Trace the development of faith from the time Jesus declared, "Your son will live!" to the end of verse 54. What resulted from Jesus' words?



### **Correlation: How Does It Relate?**

This story resonates with a similar scene that occurred much later, during the period of the beginning of the church chronicled in the New Testament book of Acts. Read Acts 16:25–34. Make some notes about how this story is like the story of the government official's faith.

What resulted from this jailer's faith in Jesus?



### **Application: Bringing Home the Lessons**

The story of this father's desperate plea on behalf of his son, which resulted in him believing in Jesus, provides several specific applications for all of us. Here are a few:

1. *When we turn to the Lord, we must surrender our independence and admit the depth of our needs* (John 4:46–49). This father sought help when faced with a critical situation. He wasn't afraid to admit his own inadequacy or to ask for help publicly. How vulnerable are you with others? How transparent are you about your needs with your friends? With your spouse and children? With yourself?
2. *We must be alert to the genuine physical and spiritual needs of those closest to us—especially those under our care.* It's important to guard against becoming so consumed with our careers, our education, or our ministries that we neglect the genuine needs of those who depend on us for care. That's especially true if you are a parent.
3. *We must not allow pride to hinder our willingness to believe God's Word* (John 4:50, 53). Perhaps, at this moment, you are separated by distance from a situation or person you are very concerned about. Will you trust God to be there? Does your faith in His power compel you to pray boldly and fervently?
4. *We must not allow logic to prevent us from walking by faith.* Do you consider yourself a pacesetter in spiritual matters? As a father or mother or caregiver, are you faithfully shepherding those in your care to pursue the Lord and walk by faith?

What hinders you today from believing in God? Are you ready to surrender that hindrance to Him and lead your family to a greater experience of His power and provision?



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Heavenly Father, I give You my life, my future, and my family today. Please help me even in my unbelief. Remove those things that are keeping me from experiencing Your limitless power and wonderful grace. In Your Son's gracious name I pray, amen.*



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Healing at a Distance

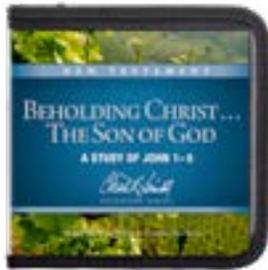
John 4:46–54

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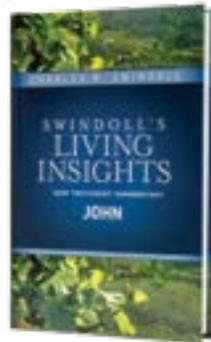
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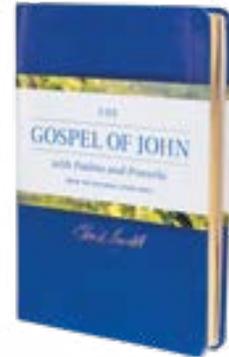
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# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## An Exposé of Legalism

John 5:1–18

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SCRIPTURES

STUDY



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

John 5 opens with Jesus back in Jerusalem—a city alive amid the festivities of one of the Jewish holy days. Like most urban centers today, the place was home to countless broken people afflicted by disease, trapped in poverty, and haunted by the injustices of a society that shunned them. You'd think that Jerusalem would be a sanctuary for the desperate to find much-needed compassion. Not so! The place was steeped in legalism—an oppressive brand of Judaism that considered physical afflictions to be God's penalty for sin (John 9:2).

This harsh interpretation of the Law was promoted primarily by the *Pharisees*, a highly influential group of religious leaders who overloaded people with unbending rules rather than lifting them from despair. Enter: Jesus! The Word, full of grace and truth, who became human and who entered our sin-wrecked world (1:14).

Chuck Swindoll offers us a balanced perspective:

Law and grace are opposite living standards. But this is not saying that there was no grace for those who lived under the Law . . . nor that there are no laws for those of us who live under grace. The New Testament mentions *law*: “the law of the Spirit of life” (Romans 8:2 NASB), “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2), “the perfect law . . . of liberty” (James 1:25 NASB), and “the royal law” (2:8). The New Testament “laws” are the direct, specific instructions—stated commands—expected of the believer today who wishes to live in obedience to Jesus Christ. Grace never means nor promotes a do-as-you-please philosophy nor a loose life of selfishness, sinfulness, and license. Romans 6:12–18 confirms this fact.

### Quotable

*We need to understand legalism before we can really see it for the evil that it is.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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The major differences, however, between living under law and living under grace have to do with the *recipients* of the commands and the *motivation* prompting obedience.

	Recipients	Motivation
<b>Under Law</b> (not for today)	<i>The Israelites</i>  Over 600 stated commands found in the Mosaic Law	Basically: “I have to”  Prompted by <i>fear</i> . . . empowered by the <i>flesh</i>
<b>Under Grace</b> (for today)	<i>Believers in Jesus Christ</i>  Hundreds of equally specific principles and commands found in the New Testament	Basically: “I want to”  Prompted by <i>love</i> . . . empowered by the <i>Holy Spirit</i>

\*The preceding paragraphs and chart were taken from a hand-out Charles R. Swindoll provided to the congregation of the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, California as part of his series on the Gospel of John originally preached in 1975.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before you begin your study, take a moment to seek the Lord in prayer; ask Him to open your mind and heart to His Word. Be willing, even in this time of study, to pause, reflect, and honestly respond in obedience to anything He may ask of you. In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck offers us a helpful reminder.

We must never forget what the writer of Hebrews declares:

*For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. (Hebrews 4:12)*

The living Word of God must penetrate and probe our own souls before we present it to others.<sup>1</sup>

Now read John 5:1–20. Write down any initial impressions you have or something you read that speaks to you personally.





### Observation: What Do You See?

In this passage, John offers us a front-row seat to one of the most touching miracles in the Gospels—the story of Jesus healing the man by the pool of Bethesda.

Imagine the scene: Based on John’s description of the setting, what would you see? What sounds and perhaps smells might you experience?



### Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation helps us gain a broad view of the passage by identifying details the author includes about the setting of the story, the people involved, and the environment in which it took place. In narrative, for instance, authors provide indications of time of day, names of towns or regions, even weather conditions or geographic indicators, such as an “area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing” (John 1:28). Together, these clues provide a backdrop for interpreting the meaning of the passage.

What need was presented to Jesus in John 5:1–5? How was it presented?

What detail about the man’s condition did John share that demonstrates the significance of his physical need (John 5:5)?



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## An Exposé of Legalism

*John 5:1–18*

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What was Jesus' response (John 5:6)?

According to the sick man, why could he not be made well (5:7)?

How did Jesus respond (5:8)?

What happened next (5:9)?

Why did the religious leaders object to the man's physical response to being healed (5:10)?



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The religious leaders' response to Jesus' miracle epitomizes the harsh attitude of legalism. Refusing to acknowledge the wonderful miracle, they instead insisted on indicting the man who had been healed for breaking the Sabbath. John sets up a classic literary contrast between the response of Jesus to the man's need and the reaction of the legalistic leaders to a clear demonstration of the power of God.



### Interpretation and Correlation: Discovering the Meaning of the Story

At times, an author will use contrast as a literary device to point to the meaning of a passage. Embedded in the argument between Jesus and the religious leaders about His identity are important truths about the relationship between God the Son and God the Father and what should be an appropriate response to the ministry of Jesus.

Following the miracle, Jesus met the man He healed in the temple (John 5:14). The man then reported Christ's words back to the same group of religious leaders who had earlier chastised him for breaking the Sabbath command.

Describe a time in your life when you believed you were the victim of a judgmental attitude. How did it make you feel? What was your response?

Judgmental attitudes—when aimed at others—sadly cause undeserving people to feel harassed. How would you contrast Jesus' response to this man's desperate need with the response of the religious leaders?

How did Jesus respond to them? What did He claim in His response (5:17)?



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## An Exposé of Legalism

*John 5:1–18*

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What did Jesus say about His Father and Himself to support His claim to be the Son of God?

How did the leaders respond to Jesus, and what charges did they level at Him (John 5:18)?

Let's correlate this episode with another one like it later in John's gospel. Read John 10:30. What claim did Jesus make about the relationship between Himself and God the Father? What similarities do you see between this scene and John 5?

How did the people respond to Jesus' claim (10:31–32)?

Look again at John 5:10. What connection can you make between John's statement about Jesus in these verses and what occurred in John 10:31–32?



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### Application: Finding Yourself in the Story

Sometimes it helps to apply the truths of a Scripture lesson by thinking about where you'd fit into the story. In other words, in the account of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, with whom would you most identify? From the list below, circle the description that best represents who you would be in the story. Then write a sentence or two explaining your choice.

- One among the crowd of crippled and hurting people
- A religious leader holding people accountable to the “rules”
- An indifferent bystander choosing to remain quiet and observing
- One of the disciples, unsure of how to respond
- The lame man offering reasons why healing is not possible

Below are three principles that emerge from this story. Following each one, write in your own words how they can be applied to your life.

***To expose legalism, truth must emerge.***

How can truth expose the error of legalism in a church setting? In your home? In your relationship to others?



*To combat legalism, conviction must be employed.*

How does maintaining a conviction about the truth help you confront errors in spiritual teaching, such as legalism?

*To overcome legalism, grace must be embraced.*

How can you embrace a more gracious attitude toward people who are different from you or who are living their lives apart from the Lord?



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for approaching me with grace and kindness rather than judgment and condemnation! Please form in me the mind and attitude Jesus has toward others who do not yet know You or who are just beginning their walk of faith. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 210.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## An Exposé of Legalism

John 5:1–18

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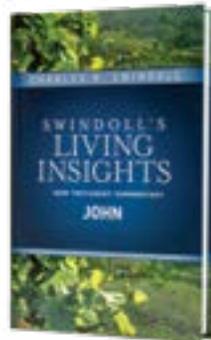
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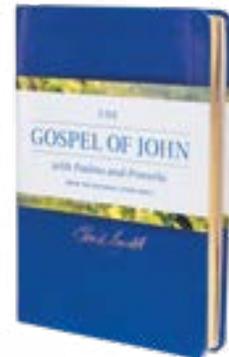
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# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## The Claims of the Christ

John 5:17–30

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

## STUDY



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

After Jesus healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, a storm of controversy arose over the Sabbath command. Who were the instigators of this tempest-in-a-teapot over tired tradition? The Pharisees! Those rascally religious leaders started harassing Jesus for breaking their interpretation of the Sabbath law. His response, in which He claimed equality with God the Father, incurred a whirlwind of religious wrath.

Remarkably, in the calm eye of this gathering storm of criticism and treachery, Jesus began a discourse that is still today life-changing in its implications. Jesus boldly offered a stirring defense of His own *deity* that continues to cause one either to hurl at Him arguments of disbelief and ridicule or to fall at His feet in humble praise!



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

It's very possible that you've read this passage from John chapter 5 many times. You've likely heard multiple sermons on these verses and perhaps even sat as a student and listened carefully to someone else's teaching. To overcome the pitfalls of overfamiliarity when searching the Scriptures, Chuck Swindoll suggests reading the Scripture passage as if for the very first time. That means you mentally set aside any preconceived notions and approach the passage with a new perspective.

Put on some fresh observation lenses as you read John 5:17–30 in preparation for this lesson. Then in a sentence or two, write down anything you had not noticed in the past.

## Quotable

*The words and claims of Jesus were never meant to be mere decorative sayings framed on the mantels of our homes but powerful truths that transform our lives.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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### Observation: Looking Closely at the Scene

John 5:17–30 is chock full of details about the setting, the context, and the message of this encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. This passage is made up primarily of Jesus' own passionate speech in defense of His identity. Using your well-honed skills of observation, write down as many details as you see under each general category below.

The setting: Think about the *where* and *who* of the passage.

The context: Think about the *why* and *when* of the passage.

The message: Think about the *what* of the passage. (Identify the main details of what Jesus said in response to the Pharisees.)



### Interpretation: Discovering the Life-Changing Meaning of Jesus' Claims

Whenever Jesus spoke He delivered eternal, powerful, living truth. How important then for us as Bible students to discover the meaning of His words! Not only will He provide deep theological insight into His own identity but, when embraced and believed, His expressions offer to our dry, sin-parched souls a much-needed balm for healing and transformation. Let's take a close look at six declarations Jesus made about Himself and try to determine what each one means.



**Claim #1:** *“I am equal with God the Father”* (John 5:18–20).

Read back through Jesus’ words in John 5:18–20. In what ways did Jesus claim equality with the Father?

How did Jesus describe His relationship to the Father? What aspect of that relationship did He emphasize in verse 20? Why is this significant?

**Claim #2:** *“I am the giver of life”* (5:21).

In this statement, Jesus claimed equal power with the Father. What did He use as an example of that power? Why would this have been significant at the time?

Why would claiming resurrection power be an essential aspect of Jesus’ identity?



**Claim #3:** *“I am the final judge over all humanity”* (John 5:22–23).

Jesus included a startling detail about the nature of final judgment. What did He claim?

How does this remarkable claim by Jesus provide further evidence of His deity?

What relationship did Jesus draw between honoring Himself and honoring His Father?

**Claim #4:** *“I hold the destinies of every human in My hand”* (5:24).

According to Jesus, what guarantees eternal life and an assurance of no condemnation for sin?



What dynamic did Jesus highlight regarding His relationship to God the Father?

How did this claim challenge the attitude of the Pharisees toward Jesus and the miracle He had just performed?

**Claim #5: “I will raise the dead” (John 5:25–29).**

Jesus revealed that the power of His voice could raise the dead; first, He must have been speaking about His literal voice (11:43–44), but He also spoke of a future resurrection when followers of Christ will be raised from physical and eternal death to eternal life because they believed His eternal Word.

Read carefully John 5:25–29 and as you do, circle or underline in your Bible each time Jesus mentions “resurrection” or “rise.”

What connection did Jesus make between the sound of His voice and resurrection?

How did Jesus relate His power to raise the dead to His relationship with God the Father (5:26)?



**Claim #6:** “*Everything I do is the will of God*” (John 5:30).

Just as a human shadow does not move on its own initiative, so Jesus cannot move out of step with His Father. How did Jesus describe this relationship to God the Father?

What connection did Jesus make between His authority to judge and His claim that He is always doing the Father’s will?



### **Correlation: How Does It Relate?**

Jesus never intended His words about Himself or His deity to only remain cleverly displayed on coffee mugs and T-shirts. Rather, He desires that the truth of those claims bring us new life and make us into new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Read each passage below, and in the space provided write a sentence or two about how each one supports the claims Jesus made about His deity in John 5.

John 11:23–25

Romans 1:16



1 Corinthians 15:22

Philippians 3:10

Colossians 1:15–20



### Application: How Will You Respond?

Once confronted with the claims of Jesus, you have only one of two options in response: You embrace them by faith and receive eternal life, or you reject them outright and face certain judgment.

Here's how Chuck states it:

Stop for a few moments and seriously consider these six claims. Think of the best person in all of history (other than Jesus Christ), living or dead. Imagine him or her standing before you to make a speech having these six points:

- I am equal with God the Father.
- I am the giver of life.
- I am the final judge over all of humanity.
- I hold the destinies of every human in my hand.
- I will raise the dead.
- Everything I do is the will of God.



How would you respond?

Of all the great philosophers, teachers, artists, and statesmen who ever lived, none would dare make such claims unless he or she were either completely insane or shamelessly evil. Not unless He was indeed God in human flesh.<sup>1</sup>



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I thank You for sending Jesus, Your Son, to die on the cross for my sin. Please don't allow me to carelessly overlook these truths of His deity and oneness with You. Help me to know Him more and more and experience the power of His resurrection today. In His exalted name, I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on John* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 124.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## The Claims of the Christ

John 5:17–30

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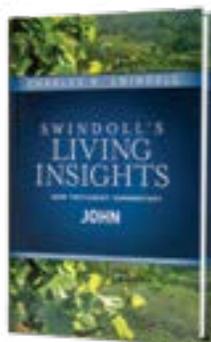
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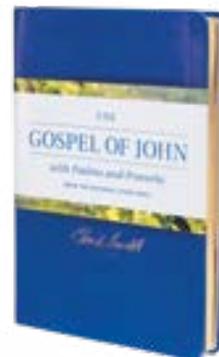
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### LET'S BEGIN HERE

The fifth chapter of John provides us with three scenes. First, a miracle where a man who was paralyzed for nearly 40 years was instantly healed by Jesus. Second, a series of claims where Jesus testified that He is God's Son and equal with God the Father. Third, we read a defense of Christ's deity where five distinct witnesses each verified these claims as truth. In this lesson, we will study the testimonies of the key witnesses and come to our own verdict.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before studying a passage of Scripture, it's helpful to read the entire chapter in which it resides. As you read John 5, make mental notes about what begins to emerge as an overarching theme—for instance, circle or underline key words or phrases that offer clues, or simply make notes in the margin about what stands out to you. Fill in the blanks below with your results.

Theme of John 5:

Major character(s):

Key word(s):

Other observations:

Key verse(s):

### Quotable

*We will be jurors in  
the jury box today,  
as we listen in on  
the testimony of  
credible witnesses  
for the deity  
of Jesus.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Observation: Zooming in on Details

Now that you've observed John 5 with a wide-angle lens, try to zoom in to see how verses 31–47 fit into the whole. Read John 5:31–47 looking for words or ideas that are emphasized. In this passage, we have the continuation of a speech given by Jesus but with a different emphasis. Let's try to discover the reason for the change in focus.

In John 5:31, what reason did Jesus give for providing witnesses to His identity?

Read the passage again carefully. See if you can identify all the witnesses Jesus mentioned. Write them below along with the corresponding verses for each.

What single word or idea is emphasized in this section?

Perhaps by now you're starting to grasp John's reason for including Jesus' long speech. Jesus presented five individual witnesses who each testify to His identity as God's Son. Let's take a closer look at each and try to discover their importance.



### Interpretation: Understanding the Impact of the Witnesses

Jesus deliberately mentioned these five witnesses to His identity as God's Son and meant to deliver one powerful truth. Yet in each case, there are interpretive clues that bring us to a point of decision. Based on credible witnesses, what Jesus claimed is true; therefore, it must be believed. Let's examine each witness carefully and see how collectively they provide one powerful truth: Jesus is God.



### Witness #1: God the Father (John 5:32, 36–38)

In his commentary on the gospel of John, Chuck Swindoll makes this important interpretive observation about verse 32:

John, translating the Aramaic words of Jesus, could have chosen either of two Greek words for “another,” *allos* [243] or *heteros* [2087]. The two words are basically synonymous with a slight nuance. Whereas *heteros* means “another of a different sort,” *allos* means “another of the same sort.” This “another” is, of course, God the Father (5:36–37).<sup>1</sup>

Why is the word Jesus used, which is translated “someone else,” important to understanding His meaning?

According to Jesus, how did the Father testify that Jesus is His Son (John 5:36–37)?

How did Jesus view the attitude of the Pharisees toward God the Father (5:37–38)?

### Witness #2: John the Forerunner (John 5:33–35)

Next, Jesus called John the Baptist to the witness stand. In a sentence or two, how would you summarize John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus?



Initially, the Jewish leaders apparently looked favorably upon John’s ministry (John 5:35). Do you think it was because they believed his message? Why, or why not?

### Witness #3: Jesus’ Own Works (John 5:36)

The defense moved from verbal evidence to visual evidence. What did Jesus offer as greater evidence of His deity than the witness of John the Baptist?

What examples of His works could you list based on what John the gospel writer highlighted in the first five chapters?

### Witness #4: The Scriptures (John 5:39–44)

What witness did Jesus refer to in these two verses?

What did Jesus mean by “the Scriptures”?



How did Jesus describe the Pharisees' attitude toward this witness of His deity (John 5:40)?

In what way would honoring Christ as God be honoring the Scriptures (5:41–44)?

### Witness #5: Moses (John 5:45–47)

Jesus seemed to save the most compelling witness for last, regarding His Jewish jury. What is the significance of Moses' testimony, according to Jesus (John 5:45–46)?

What connection did Jesus make between the Pharisees' willingness to believe the writings of Moses and their rejection of Him?

Why is this significant (5:47)?





### Correlation: How Does It Relate?

These hardcore religious elites could not see Jesus as the Messiah because God's Word had not yet penetrated their hearts. Moreover, God's Son had not become the object of their faith or their hearts' devotion. Yet the Old Testament Scriptures echoed through the ages with the news of the coming Messiah (Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 8:30–35). Read the correlating passages below and write a sentence about how each relates to Jesus' words in John 5:45–47.

Deuteronomy 18:15, 19

Luke 13:34–35

Acts 3:18–23



### Application: How Will You Respond?

Application always considers our response to truth revealed in the Scriptures. In this passage from John 5, compelling truths are revealed by the testimony of five very credible witnesses. Yet the Bible was not given to us simply as a legal dossier to bring about an intellectual verdict. Rather, God has revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son to draw us to Him (John 12:32).

In what ways has this study of five witnesses of Jesus' deity drawn you closer to Him?



How might you make certain that your study of the Scriptures not remain a mere intellectual exercise but instead a time of worship that opens the doors of your heart to a deeper relationship with Jesus?

If you were brought to trial and accused of being a devoted follower of Jesus, what evidence would exist to prove it? Who would witness your devotion to Him?



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I desire my life to be a living testimony to the power and presence of Jesus Christ, Your Son. Continue the work You started in me to make me more and more like Him. For the praise and glory of Your name, I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on John* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 128–29.



# BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

## Witnesses for the Defense

John 5:31–47

SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES

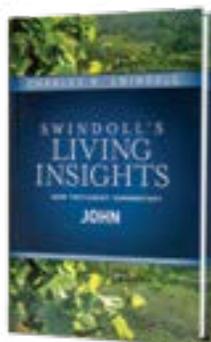
STUDY



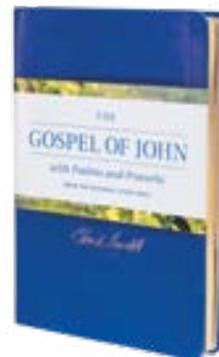
### Tools for Digging Deeper



**Beholding Christ . . .  
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A Study of John 1–5**  
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with 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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