

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY FOUR

Responding to the Redeemer

Selected Scriptures

Everything in the Scriptures before the birth of Christ is written in anticipation. Everything after is about responding to the One who has come.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ADAM and Eve's original sin plunged humanity into deep darkness. God warned them that if they ate the fruit from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" they would be "sure to die" (Genesis 2:17). But, wanting to decide right and wrong for themselves, they ate the fruit, and just as God warned, their sin "brought death, so death spread to everyone" (Romans 5:12).

In the darkness, however, God lit a flame of hope.

He promised that from the seed of the woman, a certain One would come to crush sin and death at its evil source. "He will strike your head," God told the serpent (Genesis 3:15), foretelling Christ's victory over Satan at the cross.

For centuries, Israel's prophets prophesied the coming of this One. The day finally arrived when Jesus was born, and the angel declared the good news of Jesus' birth. All the Scriptures written before looked forward to that day, but now the wait was over. *The Savior had come!* The question now was not, "When would He come?" It was, "Would people receive Him?"

This *Searching the Scriptures* study looks at the people who received Him with open arms, beginning with the shepherds who were the first to hear the news of His coming.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord “knows the secrets of every heart” (Psalm 44:21). He understands your hopes, heartaches, fears, and longings. So open your heart as you seek Him.

Father, I see myself in the faces of the people in Scripture. I have responded to You like many of them did—with joy, in quiet, sometimes wavering. I offer myself to You as I am today, willing and open. Reveal the wonder of Your Son as I see Him through the eyes of those who first saw Him. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let’s look at a sampling of people who encountered Jesus at different stages of His life—as a newborn, a child, an adolescent, and a man. In each stage, Jesus had an impact on those who came near to Him. Their responses to Him varied depending on their circumstances, backgrounds, and even their personalities. As we see the variations in their responses, we’ll gain insight and encouragement from their examples.



Observation: Through the Eyes of Those Who Saw Him

The first step in studying the Bible is to *observe* what the Scripture says. Be inquisitive as you read. Look for key words, repetitive patterns, and figures of speech. Put yourself into the scenes and imagine what it must have been like for each of the characters.



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The following chart lists people who interacted with Jesus. Read the passage about the encounter, and then write down a summary of what happened and the unique way each group or individual responded.

People	Summary	Response
Shepherds <i>Luke 2:8–20</i>		
Mary <i>Luke 2:18–19</i>		
Magi <i>Matthew 2:1–12</i>		
Rabbis <i>Luke 2:41–47</i>		
Disciples <i>Mark 1:16–20;</i> <i>2:13–15</i>		



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From infancy to adulthood, Jesus touched the lives of people from all walks of life. What common threads do you observe in these people's responses to Jesus?

What differences do you observe?

When the magi looked into the face of the Christ-child, they realized He was unlike any other child who was ever or ever will be born. This is Jesus, the Savior, and they worshiped Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Responses to Jesus

Interpretation digs deeper into the Scriptures to uncover gems of meaning. The people in our passages illustrate the many ways to respond to Jesus.



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The *shepherds* witnessed the night sky explode with an angelic revelation from God. Not your everyday experience! No wonder the shepherds couldn't stop talking about what they had seen and heard, "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20). What principle can you glean from their example about sharing a spiritual experience with others?

In contrast, *Mary* quietly "kept these things in her heart and thought about them often" (2:19). Her reflective response was just as real and valid as the shepherds' response. What do you learn from her example?

As we would expect, the *wise men* demonstrated wisdom. They perceived Christ's star in the night sky and dauntlessly sought its meaning. They appropriately honored Christ and willingly obeyed God's warning "not to return to Herod" (Matthew 2:12). What guidelines do you discover in their example?



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Instead of shooing off adolescent Jesus, the *rabbis* in the temple interacted with Him for three days, “amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:47). What characteristics of responding to Jesus did they model?

The *disciples* represent our final example. The shepherds eagerly talked about Jesus; Mary treasured every moment she had with Him; the magi worshiped Him; the rabbis were mesmerized by Him—but the disciples *followed* Him. Let’s focus on Jesus’ call of His disciples and examine their response in more detail.

Jesus said, “I’ll give you a call that you’ve never imagined. I’ll change the whole direction of your life.” Immediately, they left everything and followed Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Jesus’ Magnificent Call

Read Luke’s extended version of Jesus’ call of Peter, James, and John in [Luke 5:1–11](#). What fascinating details did Luke add about Jesus’ interaction with Peter?



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Can you identify stages in Peter's emerging faith? What insight does this give you into how people respond to Jesus?

When Jesus called Peter, what vision did Jesus cast that sparked a blaze in Peter's heart?

Jesus issues a call to all those who follow Him. What has been Jesus' call in your life?

Have you found and are you fulfilling the central purpose of your life? God's call includes a sense of drive, intensity, and eternal purpose that has little to do with things like amenities, perks, salary, and image. Those are the "nets" we leave behind. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Responding to Your Redeemer

Which of those we studied do you most identify with—the eager shepherds, devoted Mary, the searching magi, the studious rabbis, the committed disciples? Perhaps characteristics of them all? Write down how you respond to Christ.

Jesus gave Peter a clear sense of his calling. He said, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” (Mark 1:17). Do you know your calling—the eternal purpose God has for you? Responding to Jesus begins with trusting Him as your Savior, but it goes on to following Him and obeying His purpose for your life.

Consider the following factors that make up who you are, and then ask the Lord to guide you in discovering your calling.

Spiritual gifts: _____

Natural talents: _____

Areas of interest: _____

Personality type: _____

Leadership style: _____



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Write a prayer inviting the Lord to give you a life mission—a calling that defines your purpose based on the way He has made you and the gifts He has given you.

If you have an idea of your calling, write it down in the space below.

God has crafted you into a unique and intricate person to join Him in building His kingdom. You'll be amazed at what Christ will do through you as you follow His call.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, like the shepherds, I am humbled that You revealed to me the truth of Your Son. Like Mary, I treasure Jesus in my heart. Like the magi, I worship Him and give Him my all. Like the rabbis, I seek wisdom and truth from Him. And like the disciples, I willingly leave everything to serve Him as my Master. Show me the unique purpose for which You have designed in me, and help me fulfill my life's calling in the power of Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.



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SEARCHING
THE
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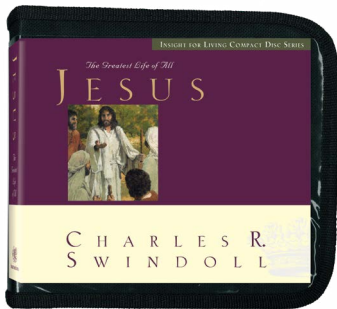
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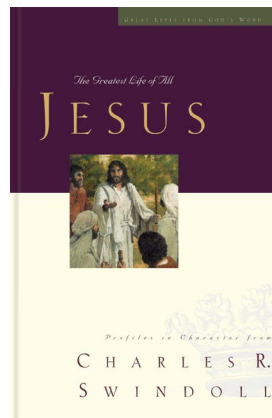
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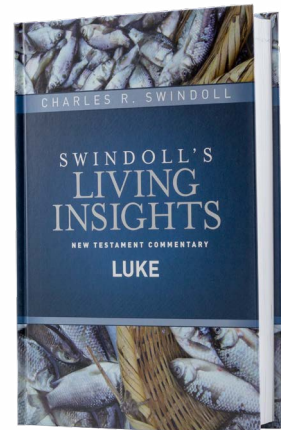
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