

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY ONE

The Glory of God

2 Chronicles 26; Isaiah 42:5–8

To God alone belongs the glory—all the credit, all the attention, all the applause, all the honor, all the praise.

—Charles R. Swindoll

OCCASIONALLY, God interrupts this fallen world to reveal the weight of His glory, leaving observers jaw-dropped and jelly-legged. He did so to Uzziah, who puffed up his chest and swept aside God's rules for burning incense in the temple. God did not tolerate such high-handed impudence, as you will see, and unleashed His might before all bystanders in His response to Uzziah.

From this stark account, Uzziah has become a cautionary byword, exhorting us all to acknowledge *and* respect God for His glory, which He gives to no one else. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we examine 2 Chronicles 26 as Chuck Swindoll teaches us what it means to live practically in light of God's glory.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

If blindness struck every eye on earth, the sun would continue radiating its brilliant rays though we could not see them. If deafness plugged every ear on this planet, birds would continue chirping and waves lapping though we could not hear them. Likewise, if self-conceit enthroned itself in the human heart—darkening and distorting each person's knowledge of the Creator—the Lord would continue reigning in splendor, clothed with majesty.

Read Paul's statement about God's glory:



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If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

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. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:3–6)

The last verse highlights our goal for this study: to gain a deeper understanding of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore, take a moment to pray for the Spirit to illumine your mind as you dig deep in the Scriptures.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few moments to read [2 Chronicles 26](#). Do so slowly. The more read-throughs, the better. Using multiple translations? Perfect! Tune in to the characters, their motivations, the authorial commentary, and any statements about God.¹



Observation: Uzziah's Rise and Fall

Observation requires only your eager desire, focus, and a Bible. After all, God “rewards those who sincerely seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). So at this point, we simply read what the passage says, answering basic questions about its content in order to avoid making it say what it does not say. We'll see what happens as the enthroned king, adored and honored, allows power to skew his judgment, leaving him marred in form and reputation.



The Glory of God

2 Chronicles 26; Isaiah 42:5–8

The King Everybody Admired

In what ways did the author describe Uzziah's rise to power and fame in 2 Chronicles 26:1–15?

Describe Uzziah's relationship to God according to 2 Chronicles 26:4–5, 7, and 15.

The Man Nobody Respected

How did the author signal a transition in Uzziah's relationship with God in 2 Chronicles 26:15–16?



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How does 2 Chronicles 26:16 literarily relate to 26:17–23?

How did the Lord respond to Uzziah's fury against the priests in 26:19?

What lasting consequence did Uzziah receive after exalting himself over God (2 Chronicles 26:21)?

Being chosen by the God of glory is a result of His grace, not a cause for conceit.
—Chuck Swindoll

As Uzziah obeyed God, armies fought and won at the command of his voice, buildings arose at the wave of his hand, and foreigners paid tribute at the power of his presence. Then, as the success inflated Uzziah's ego, he walked where he should not have walked. For the rest of his days, the mirrors in his palace reflected the scars of his pride.



The Glory of God

2 Chronicles 26; Isaiah 42:5–8

God, the LORD, created the heavens and stretched them out.
He created the earth and everything in it.
He gives breath to everyone,
life to everyone who walks the earth. . . .
“I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not give my glory to anyone else,
nor share my praise with carved idols. (Isaiah 42:5, 8)



Interpretation: An Example We Should Always Remember

During interpretation, we want to discern the author’s meaning and intention for writing so we can determine timeless theological truths about ourselves and about our God. Consult your Bible study resources for this step. If you don’t have a Bible dictionary, we recommend *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. It’s Chuck’s favorite.

Since we are focusing on glory, look up the *term* in your Bible dictionary and note points of interest you find.

Why did Uzziah immediately contract leprosy, and how did Uzziah’s leprosy glorify God?



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In what way did God extend mercy to Uzziah even while making him a leper?

Regarding the Old Testament, Paul wrote, “These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age” (1 Corinthians 10:11). How did God make Uzziah an example for us today?

After Uzziah’s brazen defiance, he then endured the rest of his life as an outcast, a king with a crooked crown who learned that God will not share His glory with another. Graciously, we have been clued in to the divine secret that:

*at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow . . .
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10–11)*

Those who humble themselves now will enjoy the glory of His presence and His love for eternity.



Correlation: Shekinah Glory

God’s glory remains the same from eternity past to eternity future. But He has manifested that glory in various ways throughout salvation history—Jesus being the climax. Centuries before Christ, after the Israelites departed Egypt and constructed the tabernacle, God revealed His glory unlike He ever had up to that point. Exodus 40:34–38 recounts the story.



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Read *Exodus 40:34–38*, and summarize how God glorified Himself in the presence of the redeemed Israelites.

How does 40:36–38 reflect God’s grace and illustrate how God wanted His people to humbly respond to His glory?

God dwelled with His people. They saw the light of His presence beam from the face of Moses and then shine out of the tabernacle. A foretaste of the glory to come: “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).



Application: Warnings to Keep Us from Stealing God’s Glory

After reflecting on 2 Chronicles 26, Chuck provides five warnings to help us guard our hearts and avoid any attempts to steal God’s glory. Reflect on each of them. If you find one especially pertinent to your season of life, record how you can apply it and continue walking humbly with your God.



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First, beware when battles develop within rather than without. Combat internal battles like pride and vanity. Or, defend against battles within ministries like fighting over the budget or use of space.

Second, beware when more attention falls on one who is building his or her own kingdom instead of the Lord's. No one's agenda should take the driver's seat. The Lord holds the wheel.

Third, beware when the Lord's help is no longer considered essential. Watch out for the one who's always talking about best business practices, rarely opening a Bible, and praying as a last resort, if at all.



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Fourth, beware when reproofs and warnings are resisted instead of respected. Those who reject godly counselors will inevitably shipwreck their life and ministry.

Fifth, beware when the consequences of sin no longer bring fear. Uzziah knew to refrain from the sanctuary of the Lord's temple, but he didn't fear God. God seemed small, distant, and inconsequential. A healthy respect for God's power and commands accompanies humility.

The Lord fashioned us not for our own glory but for His. Vainglory has proven an ugly vice, destroying those intoxicated by it. But reflected glory—one that shines a divine and supernatural light—holds promise for this life and for the life to come. Thanks to the lessons learned through Uzziah's downfall, we can avoid pride's traps and live with a higher calling.



The Glory of God

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are my Creator who sent Your Son as Lord of the church, Head of the body. The preeminent One—the first and the last, who opens and no one shuts and who shuts and no one opens. I lower myself before You, confess how prone I am to pride, and ask You to stop me short when vanity creeps in to replace humility. Guide me as I shine Your glory to those who desperately need to see it. In Christ’s name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Chuck teaches us his Bible study method in his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*. If you do not have a copy, we recommend you grab [one](#) for your library. Chuck details how to perform four steps for learning and applying God’s Word. **Observation:** We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book. **Interpretation:** We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology. **Correlation:** We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics whether they be historical, theological, or applicational. **Application:** We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus’ commands, believing Jesus’ promises, and walking with Jesus always. We help you practice this process in each study. As you repeat the method from study to study, the steps will become second nature so you learn where to start, what questions to ask, which resources to use, and how you can implement what you learned.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY TWO

The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

It isn't spooky to talk about the holiness of God. It isn't so ethereal that you can't get your arms around it. It means God is separate from all the things that contaminate and aggravate and mark our lives. His being infinitely holy means that there is an infinite sense of purity.

—Charles R. Swindoll

HOLINESS—the trait of all of God's traits. The trait that exalts Him in glory and separates Him in purity. Theologian J. I. Packer describes it well:

When Scripture calls God, or individual persons of the Godhead, “holy” . . . the word signifies everything about God that sets him apart from us and makes him an object of awe, adoration, and dread to us. It covers all aspects of his transcendent greatness and moral perfection and thus is an attribute of all his attributes, pointing to the “Godness” of God at every point.¹

Few times in history has God pulled back the curtains of creation to unveil His raw, blazing holiness. Jacob saw the ladder to heaven (Genesis 28:10–17). Moses felt the heat from the bush (Exodus 3:1–17). Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration of the Son of God when “his face shone like the sun” (Matthew 17:2). In this study, we enter another one of those scenes which occurred nearly twenty-eight hundred years ago to the young, unsuspecting Isaiah, who saw firsthand in the temple what the fiery seraphim did not dare behold.

Chuck Swindoll walks us through the iconic passage Isaiah 6:1–8 that we, too, might see the Holy One of Israel as Isaiah saw Him.



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The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8



PREPARE YOUR HEART

We study the Bible that our minds might be renewed. We aim to think and live differently as God conforms us to the holy image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Like Paul said:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1–2 NASB)

But this cannot happen without the Spirit generating in us life in place of death.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (8:11 NASB)

In light of Paul's statements in Romans, pray for the Spirit to strengthen you and transform your mind through this study.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Searching the Scriptures requires effort. Sometimes, intense effort as well as patience and perseverance. As Chuck writes, "The Bible does not yield its truth to lazy minds!"²

But how rewarding once we excavate spiritual gems that prove more precious than the priciest rubies hewn from rock. "This habit is indispensable for life and ministry. There is no substitute! Searching the Scriptures yields a richness in life unlike anything else."³



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

God expects us to live a holy life, and by that, I mean separate from the thinking and life-style of our culture. We live in it, but we are not part of it. —Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Thinking like a Seraphim

Begin by mulling over *Isaiah 6:1–8*. Step slowly through the text. Don't run through it. Let Isaiah's shock and awe become your shock and awe.

When did Isaiah enter the temple, and why is this significant in view of his statement at the end of verse five? (Hint: notice what word is repeated.)

What did the seraphim do and say? How did their voices affect the temple (*Isaiah 6:2–4*)?

What did Isaiah confess as he witnessed such a magnificent scene? What happened after his confession (*6:5–7*)?



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

What did the Lord say? How did Isaiah respond (Isaiah 6:8)?

For the rest of his life, Isaiah lived as a new man. In his mind's eye, he could still see the long train of God's robe. Isaiah could still smell the divine smoke that filled the temple. He could still hear the antiphonal praise from the thundering, seraphic voices that shook the temple's foundations. By God's grace, Isaiah preserved what he witnessed so that we can say with him centuries later, "I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies" (6:5).



Interpretation: Thinking like Isaiah

King Uzziah died in 740 BC. Even before then, the spiritual vitality of God's people was eroding. They bowed before the idols that littered their land (Isaiah 2:8). The rich decorated their houses "with things stolen from the poor" (3:14). And instead of mourning over their sin, they danced and feasted on meat and drank wine (22:13). Soon, powerful nations would "roar like lions," pounce on God's people, and "carry them off" (5:29). They needed a fresh vision of God and His power and a new hope in God's plan to restore their land.

Isaiah entered the temple Solomon had built nearly two hundred years prior to Uzziah's death. Cross reference [1 Kings 6:2](#) and note the dimensions of Solomon's temple. How big do you believe the Lord's robe must have been to fill it?



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STUDY TWO

The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

Look up *seraphim* in your Bible dictionary, and describe the appearance of these angelic beings. What does their appearance and response to the Lord indicate about His holiness?

What does Isaiah's response to seeing the Lord indicate about the Lord's holiness?

According to Isaiah 6:7–8, why did Isaiah want to be sent as the Lord's messenger? Remember to consult a commentary if you need to.



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

Using a commentary or dictionary, explain the significance of the seraphim's triple utterance of *holy*. Why did they say it three times? Where else do we find this word mentioned three times in the Bible? For a helpful online resource, go to netbible.org and consult Constable's Notes on Isaiah 6:3.

Isaiah volunteered. He had received the vision, renewal, and forgiveness and wanted to take it to God's people. The Lord accepted. But the people had hardened hearts, plugged ears, and blinded eyes (Isaiah 6:9–10) and were incapable of understanding how "the whole earth is filled with [God's] glory" (6:3). They needed the Divine Healer to perform radical surgery to soften their hearts, unstop their ears, and open their eyes. Only when God intercedes in a person's life can he or she begin to understand God's holiness.



Correlation: You Shall Be Holy, for I Am Holy

Peter walked with Jesus—God in the flesh, holiness veiled in human likeness. Yet, at times, Jesus allowed people to see His true nature. For example, when He told Peter to let down his fishnets for one more attempt at a catch, Peter reluctantly obeyed. The nets nearly broke they were so full, giving Peter insight into Jesus' identity and leading him to say words similar to Isaiah's: "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man" (Luke 5:8).

Decades after Jesus resurrected, the veteran apostle Peter penned a letter to help Christians live in obedience to God. Look how Peter connected God's holiness to our own:

*So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."
(1 Peter 1:14–16)*



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

According to Peter, must Christians be holy to become God's children, or are they to be holy because they are God's children? What is the difference between these two concepts, and why is it important to distinguish between them?

What are some things that prevent Christians from being holy?

We are to be authentic in an inauthentic world. To be honest in a dishonest culture. To model a wholesome life in the unwholesome contexts where we find ourselves. To be free of corruption, addiction, and compromise in a corrupt, addicted, and compromising society.
—Chuck Swindoll



Application: Living as Obedient Children

God's holiness compels us to action. It instructs us how to live as much as it informs us about God. For this reason, Chuck gives principles to help us live holy lives in our minds, mouths, and morals.



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

In your mind, counteract depravity with godly thoughts. To paraphrase ancient philosopher Lao Tzu: thoughts become words, which become actions, which become habits, which become character.⁴ In what ways can you grow in holiness by maintaining godly thoughts?

In your mouth, free yourself from all unwholesome words. Slips of the tongue reveal the depths of the heart. That's what struck Isaiah as he heard the praises of the seraphim and then realized the filth of his mouth. What area or areas of life do you find yourself tempted to profanity or put-downs, lies or gossip, boasting or complaining? How can you better keep yourself free of unwholesome words (*Ephesians 4:29*)?

In your morals, guard yourself from every compromise. Political policies, business contracts, legal disputes—spheres of life where compromise finds acceptance. But not our character. We reflect and represent God Most High who is perfect and pure in all His ways. Do you already guard your character from compromise? If so, how? In what ways can you cultivate a pure character as God's image-bearer?



The Holiness of God

Isaiah 6:1–8

It does no good to hide our depravity, deny our weaknesses, or ignore areas that tend toward erosion. God knows us exhaustively and delights in restoring us, forgiving our sins, and transforming our hearts. When that happens, we find ourselves saying with Isaiah a natural and fitting response: “Here I am, send me.”



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study by incorporating Chuck’s three principles above into a prayer, expressing your desire for holiness to Jesus who alone is worthy of our praise and honor.

ENDNOTES

1. J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 43.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 17.
3. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 16.
4. Lao Tzu, “Quotable Quote,” goodreads.com, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8203490-watch-your-thoughts-they-become-your-words-watch-your-words>.



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STUDY THREE

The Love of God

Selected Scriptures

What we think about God is the most important thing about us. If we shape our thinking about God from the culture around us, our life will remain complicated and even become chaotic. But if we allow the Holy Scriptures to shape our thinking, God will emerge in our minds as He is—real, personal, meaningful, all-powerful, loving—and our worship will be meaningful and pure, satisfying and deep.

—Charles R. Swindoll

LOVE—the most known yet least understood of all God’s attributes. When some think of God’s love, they imagine Him as a white-bearded grandfather, distant and aloof, even apathetic to the events of this world. But God’s Word presents no such portrait of the Divine.

Rather, the Bible exalts God as our loving creator, vigorously passionate about what He has made—especially us, His representative image-bearers. In other words, He cares . . . about what we do, what we say, what we think, what we feel, what we plan, what we like. Because His plans are for His glory and our good, His love governs human history in order to bring it to His desired end, the renewal of all creation.

It’s for that very reason that, while God’s love indeed *receives* us as we are, God’s love by no means *keeps* us as we are. God doesn’t turn a blind eye to our sin, saying, “Do whatever you please, and I’ll overlook it.” That wouldn’t be love. Barbs of sin, that wound us and others, pierce His heart too. Love moves God to action against anything that might harm His beloved, making His love the most powerful force in the universe! In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, Chuck Swindoll teaches us the practical side of the active, self-giving, life-transforming love of God.



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In Romans, the apostle Paul wrote that God's Spirit pours His love into the hearts of His people. Through our faith, He showers His grace on us, giving us hope in which we can rejoice and strength by which we can endure (Romans 5:1–6). Such a majestic, albeit mysteriously wonderful truth. Ruminates on it for a few minutes, then pray that God would use this study to increase your understanding, strengthening you to believe in and walk in His love.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Since this study examines multiple passages from Scripture, we perform observation and interpretation on each passage before progressing to the next.

His love reaches out, seeks us, and desires us. His love tempers His justice and His righteousness. His love prompts His grace to us. His love must never be separated from His other characteristics. It is an attribute of our heavenly Father. Therefore, what we think about God's love is the most important thing about us. —Chuck Swindoll



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures

The Lord Has Chosen You
Deuteronomy 7:6–8

The new generation of Israelites camped with Moses at the plains of Moab on the brink of entering the new land. Forty years prior, God delivered the descendants of Jacob from the heavy hand of Egypt. But the first generation would not taste the milk and honey of God’s promise, disdain the heavenly manna and cowering in fear of the giant Nephilim occupying Canaan. So, the new generation needed a fresh encounter with the God who rescued their fathers and made them His chosen people. Answer the questions below about God’s love for Israel, the love preached by Moses to the new generation in Deuteronomy 7:6–8.



Observation



Interpretation

- 1a. Read *Deuteronomy 7:6–8*. What is the main point of the passage?

- 1b. What did not influence God in His choice of Israel as His people?

- 1c. Why did God choose Israel?

- 2a. What does this text teach us about God’s love? (Consult Netbible.org if you need help.)

It is the sovereign act of God to allow His mercy to overrule His justice. There was nothing all that impressive about the Israelites, and God had seen them at their worst, but He chose to love them. —Chuck Swindoll





The Love of God

Selected Scriptures

As Moses Lifted Up the Serpent
John 3:14–16

Nicodemus, a scholar and teacher in Israel, never thought he needed to learn the basics of God’s kingdom until he approached Jesus late one night. From that intimate conversation, Jesus uttered one of the most profound statements about God’s love for the world. He used a famous story from the chronicles of Israel found in *Numbers 21:4–9*. Read that story first to gain context for Jesus’ teaching.



 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. Now observe <i>John 3:14–16</i>. Why did Jesus say the “Son of Man” must be lifted up?</p> <p>1b. Verse 16 begins with “for.” What is the logical connection between 3:14–15 and 3:16?</p> <p>1c. What did the bronze serpent provide Israel, and how did they receive that provision?</p>	<p>2a. How does Jesus correlate with the serpent Moses lifted up?</p> <p>2b. How does one receive God’s provision through Jesus?</p> <p>2c. What does this text teach us about God’s love?</p>

God writes you a love note every day in a dozen different ways. With the world the way it is, we often miss it. So look to Jesus. Often, culture teaches that if life is going well, then God loves us. With God, whether life is going well or not, whether you feel loved or not, whether you deserve to hear about God’s love or don’t . . . it’s true. God loves you. He loves you. —Chuck Swindoll



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures

God Is Love 1 John 4:7–9	
<p>Near the end of his life, the apostle John penned a short letter to his children in the faith—about how he himself touched Jesus, looked into His eyes, experienced His forgiveness, and walked with the light of the world. John tasted the love of God in Jesus Christ and, after Jesus ascended into heaven, John spent the rest of his days helping others experience the same love.</p>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. Read <i>1 John 4:7–9</i>. Who knows and does not know God?</p>	<p>2a. What is significant about John’s statement, “Love comes from God” (1 John 4:7)?</p> <p>2b. What does “God is love” mean (4:8)?</p>

“Jesus loves me.” Say it to yourself. And will you please remember this: Even when you’ve gone home, you’re alone, nobody’s around, the sun has gone down, your mind begins to play tricks on you, and the enemy says, “You can’t believe that.” Believe it. Say it to yourself. You have never told yourself more truth than you have in those three words. —Chuck Swindoll



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures



Correlation: Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God

Now we will review three passages from the book of Romans that add even more weight to the truth of God's love. Think of Romans as the Christian constitution—the longest exposition and loftiest expression of gospel truth from the heart of God through the mind of Paul.

The Dark Truth—Romans 3:10–18

Read *Romans 3:10–18*. Why is the truth in this passage important for our understanding of God's love for us?

The Timely Truth—Romans 5:8

Paul wrote:

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.
(Romans 5:8)

How was Christ's death for us an act of love from God?



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures

The Eternal Truth—Romans 8:31–39

Read *Romans 8:31–39*. According to this passage, how and why is God’s love significant in the life of the Christian?

You are loved by God—far more than any one of us could ever love a spouse or a child.
—Chuck Swindoll

Application: Claiming the Love of God

Now that we have traced the deep, deep love of Jesus throughout the redemption story, it’s often helpful to still the body, quiet the mind, and bask our hearts in divine truth. Do that now. Don’t rush. Meditate on the hymn below if you want.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me!
Underneath me, all around me,
Is the current of Thy love
Leading onward, leading homeward
To Thy glorious rest above!

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Love of every love the best!
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'Tis a haven sweet of rest!
O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
'Tis a heaven of heavens to me;
And it lifts me up to glory,
For it lifts me up to Thee!¹

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Spread His praise from shore to shore!
How He loveth, ever loveth,
Changeth never, nevermore!
How He watches o’er His loved ones,
Died to call them all His own;
How for them He intercedeth,
Watcheth o’er them from the throne!



The Love of God

Selected Scriptures



A FINAL PRAYER

Write a simple prayer claiming God's love, thanking God for His work in your life, and requesting wisdom for expressing that love to others.

ENDNOTE

1. Samuel Trevor Francis, "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus," Indelible Grace Hymn Book, <http://hymnbook.igracemusic.com/hymns/o-the-deep-deep-love-of-jesus>.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY FOUR

The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

The remarkable thing about God’s grace is that it is not grace extended to just one of us who is not deserving but to all of us . . . even though all of us continue to operate our lives so often against His will. Divine grace is a whole different genre from human grace.

—Charles R. Swindoll

GRACE grabs our attention because it swims upstream against the flow of common interactions: “eye-for-an-eye” and “scratch-my-back-and-I’ll-scratch-yours.” Grace opposes entitlement. It rebuffs transactional relationships. When displayed, grace can bring tears to our eyes—even if we merely observe it in one person extending grace to another, like the strong to the weak. A single, simple expression of grace will often receive applause. Recipients relish its luster and feel the warmth of its bright shine in a world of moral gloominess.

Such an act we’ll study today in God’s Word. Chuck Swindoll teaches us about the grace David gave to Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth. Through King David’s act of grace, we’ll discover and cherish how God lavishes His grace upon us.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13



PREPARE YOUR HEART

B. B. Warfield defined God’s grace as His “free sovereign favor to the ill-deserving.”¹ Recall the grace of God in your life. Before engaging God’s Word, record a prayer below thanking God for His kindness to you and then request His guidance through His Word.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As king, David held a sacred position as the spiritual model and leader of ancient Israel, reflecting God’s character and ways to God’s people. Few acts in the annals of Israel’s kings better mirror God’s grace than that of David to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9, the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study.

Mephibosheth’s story can be traced to a vow that David made to Jonathan, Mephibosheth’s father. It was during the days when Jonathan’s father, King Saul, was trying to kill David because God had chosen David to become the next king. What was Jonathan’s vow, and how did David respond (*1 Samuel 20:12–17*)?



The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

For years, David was a fugitive on the run until Saul was killed during a battle with the Philistines. Tragically, Jonathan was killed too. In the frantic aftermath, every family member related to Saul fled for their lives, and young Mephibosheth was injured. What happened to five-year-old Mephibosheth (*2 Samuel 4:4*)?

Saul's dynasty came to an end two years later when Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was murdered by his own captains (4:1–8). Finally, at age 30, David was declared the rightful king of Israel (5:4). He moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem, which became known as the City of David (5:6–10). After some time passed, he remembered his vow to Jonathan.



Observation: Grace Illustrated

During observation, we take time to simply learn what the text says. What's the overarching topic? Who's mentioned? What's repeated? So, begin by reading *2 Samuel 9*. Do so carefully. Consider why the author chose to include this story while writing on the reign of David.

In one sentence, summarize what happened in *2 Samuel 9*.



The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

Why did David want to know if anyone from Saul's family was still alive? (Note the word repeated in verses 1, 3, 7, and 8.)

What was unique about Mephibosheth?

For the rest of his days, Mephibosheth dined with royals. As a man with a disability, he would have required more care than David's other sons. David understood that and decided to pay the price. Grace is costly for the one who shares it. Just as David made Mephibosheth his own, God, who realized the extreme cost, paid the price to make us His own.



Interpretation: Analogies of Divine Grace

Using your tools—*commentaries*, a *Bible dictionary*, or *web articles*—explain the reasons David wanted to extend grace to anyone in Saul's household.



The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

In verse 1, David stated that he wanted to show kindness, but then David defined the type of kindness he had in mind in his statement in verse 3: “God’s kindness.” In what way did David reflect God’s kindness in his treatment of Mephibosheth?

Chuck Swindoll provides six analogies worth remembering that correlate David’s kindness to Mephibosheth with God’s kindness to us.

- 1) *As David extended his love to someone viewed as a nobody, so God extends His love to us.* God does not have to love us. In fact, our transgressions assault God’s holiness, but because of His grace, He loves us and delights in doing so.
- 2) *As David sought and found Mephibosheth, so God seeks and finds us.* Despite our running away, God chases us to restore our relationship with Him.
- 3) *As David restored Mephibosheth to a place of honor, so God has restored us.* We are a kingdom of priests who have been given the crown of eternal life.
- 4) *As David adopted Mephibosheth into his royal family, so God adopts us.* God does not treat us as a faceless and nameless employee of a vast business empire. Rather, we’re family. He’s our father. We’re His children.
- 5) *As Mephibosheth’s disability constantly reminded him of David’s grace, so our sin constantly reminds us of God’s grace.* Indwelling sin humbles even the most mature Christians. For the softhearted, such obstacles become opportunities for repentance and gratitude.
- 6) *As there was no status or rank at David’s table where Mephibosheth ate, so there is no status or rank at Jesus’ table where we will one day eat.* Infighting plagues even the healthiest of families, but one day soon, God’s children will gather in perfection, sit at Jesus’ table, and enjoy the new world full of bliss.



The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

After reflecting on the six analogies above, choose the one most important to you in your specific season of life. Record below why it's significant to you.

God sovereignly, apart from anything from us—any goodness, any effort, any attempt to win His favor or friendship—in His grace, reaches down to lift us up, even while we fight Him in the process. Amazing. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Grace upon Grace

During correlation, we examine other biblical passages that address a similar topic to our own in order to better understand God's thoughts on the subject. In this case, we will explore three New Testament passages that complement what we have learned about God's grace so far. The first two passages, we provide. For the third, we ask you to do some digging!

The Word Became Flesh—John 1:1–18

Read [John 1:1–18](#). Summarize below what this passage teaches about God's grace.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY FOUR

The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

Rich in Mercy—Ephesians 2:1–10

Read *Ephesians 2:1–10*. Summarize below what this passage teaches about God’s grace.

Passage Three

List a third passage below and expand on its contribution to our understanding of God’s grace. If a third New Testament passage does not come to mind, do some hunting. For example, you can perform a search for the word *grace* in the New Testament of the New Living Translation. Read through the occurrences, find one that grabs your attention, and use it as your third passage.

After receiving such a wealth of knowledge about God’s grace, we can’t help but exclaim with Paul:

*So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.
(Ephesians 1:6)*



The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13



Application: Extending Grace

Begin application by thinking of someone who has shown you grace in your life. Describe the occurrence below, then plan to contact that person soon to acknowledge how he or she has been gracious to you and how much you appreciate him or her.

Often, we take for granted the relationships we have with those closest to us, and we begin expecting their graciousness in our lives or fail to extend grace ourselves. Pick one person you're closest with—spouse, child, or close friend, even colleague—and think of a meaningful way you can extend fresh acts of grace to him or her. Record below what you plan.

Lastly, think of an acquaintance or perhaps someone you have never met. A coworker five offices down, a new neighbor across the street, or a new member at church. Consider how you can show him or her God's kindness, in a small way, and plan to do that over the next week. Note below what person came to mind and how you can show him or her the grace of God.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY FOUR

The Grace of God

2 Samuel 9:1–13

After learning of God’s immense grace in our lives, we wonder how we ever lived without noticing it. But we have all experienced it. From the breath in our lungs, the food we eat, and the relationships we have, and most of all: our union with Christ. He who began a good work in us will complete it in His day (Philippians 1:6).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the work of grace in my life. Thank You for painting the picture of Your kindness so clearly in Your Word. Please continue opening my eyes and softening my heart that I may grow in my understanding of Your gracious works in our world. Give me wisdom and energy to reflect that grace each day. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Benjamin Warfield, in *Great Quotes and Illustrations*, comp. George Sweeting (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 133.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY FIVE

The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

Existing in unchanging deity of His essence, Jesus did not regard that position in heaven something He would hold on to and not release. Why? Because He is humble of heart. Because to come to our rescue, He couldn't remain in heaven. He let go of His privileged position where He received angelic praise, knew no pain, experienced no rejection. Unclutching His divine nature, Jesus, the second member of the Trinity, became a servant.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THROUGH eyes of love, Jesus saw the plight of self-destructive sinners, scarred by the burns of transgressions, and stretched out His hand to help us in our hopeless state. Because of grace, He overlooked our cosmic crimes against heaven and said to us, “I accept you.” In humility, Jesus donned the garb of a servant, carried a criminal’s cross, and paid the cost to heal us and reconcile us to God.

In the two prior *Searching the Scriptures* studies, we examined God’s love and grace. Now, we explore divine humility. At first, it seems odd to attach humility with God. How can the all-glorious One, the only One worthy of praise and honor, express perfect humility? Because God is triune—three persons, each truly divine, united as one God.

As Chuck Swindoll will teach us in detail through Philippians 2:5–8, the Son submitted His will entirely to the Father and endured a shameful death by the hands of His creation. In doing so, Jesus accomplished God’s redemption plan established in eternity past. Through it all, He displayed the greatest picture of humility human eyes would ever witness.



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The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Although the Bible contains human language written by human hands intended for human minds, the truth within its sixty-six books originated in the heart of God. The Spirit not only inspired every page of the Bible but ignites our understanding of it and belief in it. That's why it is always important to pray that the Spirit would help you as you read God's Word. Do that now before learning about the Divine Servant. Write your prayer below.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Chuck Swindoll teaches his Bible study method in his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*. We recommend you grab a *copy* if you don't own it already. In it, Chuck emphasizes the importance of examining what is written before and after the Bible passage in question. This process is called *checking the context*. He writes:

We understand a verse of Scripture better when we grasp its context—when we acquaint ourselves with the surrounding verses.¹

That proves vital for this study's passage, *Philippians 2:5–8*, which logically follows *2:1–4*.

So begin by reading *Philippians 2:1–4*, and in a single phrase, write the topic of this passage.



The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

In a single sentence, summarize Paul's intention for writing this passage.

With Philippians 2:1–4 in mind, we will now move to Paul's great hymn about the person of Christ.



Observation: Grace Illustrated

Read *Philippians 2:5–8*. Do so slowly and repetitively. Use multiple translations. Chuck's favorites are the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.

How does this passage logically follow Philippians 2:1–4?

How did Jesus regard His divine status with the Father according to Philippians 2:6?



The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

What did Jesus do that indicated He gave up divine privileges according to 2:7?

What four specific ways did Jesus humble Himself according to 2:7–8?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

As God, He became human. As human, servant. As servant, He obeyed unto death—reaching the fullest expression of humility.

For the first time ever—and never to be changed—deity became humanity, true humanity. No playacting. He wasn't part angel, sprouting wings, glowing with a halo. No. Jesus was a human being. Amazing. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Death on a Cross

After carefully focusing on what the text says, we dive deeper to better understand what the words mean and the author's intention for writing them. Above, we observed that Paul wanted the Philippians to live humbly with each other, looking out for each other's interests. Christ displayed that kind of attitude perfectly.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY FIVE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

First, using your resources, rewrite an expanded translation of Philippians 2:6. InterVarsity Press offers a helpful [commentary](#) on Philippians via Bible Gateway should you need it. We recommend adding Chuck's commentary *Swindoll's Living Insights: Insights on Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* if you do not already have it.

Jesus, equal with the Father, did not have to come to earth. He could have remained in heaven. But He didn't. He came to us. In the NASB translation, Philippians 2:7 begins with, "but emptied Himself." What does this mean?

What was Jesus' greatest expression of humility?



The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

Look up *cross* and/or *crucifixion* in your Bible dictionary. Take notes below—especially on the humiliation of crucifixion and the intensity of pain inflicted on those crucified. Afterward, record a short prayer of gratitude to Jesus for enduring God’s wrath on your behalf.

Jesus obeyed and died, but that wasn’t the end. The Father raised Him and:

*. . . elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)*



Correlation: Come to Me

With humility, Jesus came to us. Because of His humility, He also bids us come to Him. He said so in Matthew 11:28–30—our focus for correlation, the third step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process. Take a moment to read [this passage](#). Do so deliberately, concentrating on each word to let the spiritual lightbulbs illumine your mind.

Whom did Jesus want to come to Him?



The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

Ancient farmers would attach a harness of bent wood around the necks of animals to connect them together so they could pull the plow in unison. The device was called a yoke. Sometimes kings used yokes to link slaves. Eventually, the word developed as a metaphor for connections in general. In this case, Jesus compared His yoke—His teaching about God and how to follow Him—with those of the religious teachers of His day.²

How did Jesus describe Himself and His yoke, and how are the two logically connected? Why is this significant for us today?

He did not come as a robed king, a rich merchant, or a political sage. He came as a servant, offering Himself to us with the very humility that brought Him to us.

Without releasing any of His deity, He took on all the limitations of humanity. More specifically, He voluntarily set aside the independent use of His divine attributes when He became man. Undiminished deity in true humanity: one person. The Incarnation. —Chuck Swindoll



Application: Adopt the Mind of Christ

Our application for this study will follow Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2:1–4. It's about having the attitude of Christ, so begin by reflecting on your own attitude toward others. How would you describe the way you typically esteem other people compared with how you esteem yourself?



The Servant Who Came

Philippians 2:5–8

In what ways, or in what particular contexts, can you grow in your habit of looking out for the interests of others? For example, some find it easier to serve people in their homes rather than at work or vice versa.

The Divine Servant—such an astounding image of the Son of God painted by Paul. What remarkable humility. As we follow in the same path of obedience and humility, the world will see a living picture of God’s nature in us.



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study by recording a prayer below.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 85.
2. Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Yoke,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry and others (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), n.p.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY SIX

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Remarkable things occur when you stop fighting God's will. A surprise plan unfolds when you accept His purpose. When you don't resist it. One of the benefits of being crushed, of surrendering to God, is that you learn slowly but surely that there's a better plan and that resisting it is not a good thing.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WRITERS have models like William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, or Fyodor Dostoevsky. Golfers have Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods. Leaders, Abraham Lincoln or Florence Nightingale. We see what greatness looks like in a particular domain, and it draws our interest. It attracts us like a lightbulb attracts a moth. Then, we determine to pattern our lives after such models in hopes of achieving similar success—whether in business or politics, painting or cooking, acting or parenting.

This is similar for Christians in the spiritual domain. Jesus' suffering and death, caused by the Sanhedrin's condemnation and performed by Rome's brutality, not only paid the price God required for human sin but set the pattern of devotion for Christians to emulate. We follow God no matter the cost because a greater victory always lies at the end of obedience's road.

Jesus defined His suffering as *the cup* the Father gave Him, the focus of this study. Chuck Swindoll takes us to John 18:1–11, where the redemption plan unfolds as Jesus submits perfectly to His Father's will.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Read how Jesus prayed the night He was betrayed:

“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” (Luke 22:42)



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The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Jesus knew the pain that awaited Him, but He obeyed the Father rather than reject the suffering. Why? “For the joy set before Him [He] endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2 NASB). Take time now to record a prayer to God, asking Him to teach you His good purposes through personal suffering and to embrace His will even if it causes personal suffering. As we’ll see, with every cup to drink, a triumph awaits.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

When the Spirit moves a person’s heart, opens eyes that have been blind, and enlightens a mind formerly darkened to spiritual truth, the miracle of faith occurs. In a supernatural moment, a believer is born. Immediately, the new Christian inherits the benefits Christ purchased by His suffering and death on the cross.

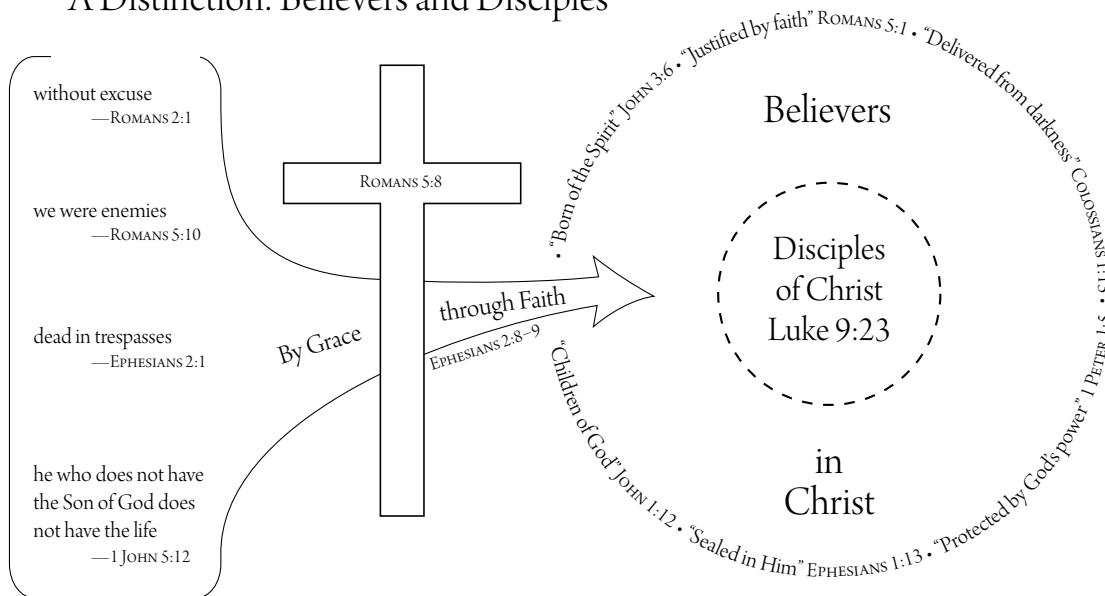
Yet, Christians do not *fully* conform to His image in that single moment. That process occurs slowly, throughout a lifetime. During this lifelong transformation, a Christian steps into discipleship and, as inconvenient or uncomfortable or painful as it may be, into the will of the Father. Chuck’s chart on the next page illustrates this process.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1-11

A Distinction: Believers and Disciples



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Have you ever considered the process above? Do you find any of it surprising or comforting or illuminating? If so, why? Also, consider why it is important to understand our spiritual growth in this way. Record your answer below.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11



Observation: The Ideal Example

Whenever we study a passage of Scripture, we always begin with observation. Observation requires no source other than your Bible. Observation simply entails reading the passage. Slowly. Attentively. Repetitively. We want to see what it says. Practice that now with *John 18:1–11*.

Where did this scene in the gospel of John take place (John 18:1)?

What role did Judas play in this scene, what intention drove him, and who accompanied him?

What did Judas' cohort carry with them (18:3)?

They expected a fight. What they didn't realize was that the fight was over. Jesus accepted the cup, but they didn't know that. —Chuck Swindoll



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

What name did Judas' cohort use to describe Jesus? _____

What happened to Judas' cohort when Jesus responded to their first question?

Compare and contrast Jesus' and Peter's responses to Judas' accomplices. Record your answer below.

“Let these others go”—both Jesus' love and authority shone through as the disciples left the scene scot-free while the Great I Am let His hands be bound, His body arrested, and actions judged by the authorities of this world.



Interpretation: A Surprising Question

After applying our reasoning and imagination to the world of the passage, we determine the passage's significance, focusing on why the author wrote the text the way it's written and what the passage teaches us about God. During interpretation, we consult our resources to help us dig deeper into the text.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Take a moment to reread John 18:4. The apostle commented on Jesus' thoughts to illuminate His intentions. Describe what this verse teaches us about these intentions.

In John's first seventeen chapters, Jesus called Himself the:

- Bread of Life (6:35)
- Light of the World (8:12)
- The Gate (10:9)
- The Good Shepherd (10:11)
- The Resurrection (11:25)
- The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
- The True Vine (15:1)

In chapter 18, Judas' cohort referred to Jesus as the "Nazarene." Why did John include their description of Jesus? What truth or truths did the apostle enhance by contrasting their description with Jesus' self-descriptions? Also, cross-reference their description with *John 1:9–12* and *1:43–46*.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Next, explain the significance of Jesus' question to Peter in John 18:11. Look up *cup* in a Bible dictionary or reference a *commentary* on John if you need to. If you do not already own Chuck's *commentary on John*, we recommend you add it to your Bible study library.

Peter, out of control, fought with his sword as the Roman soldiers and temple guards expected. But Jesus, in control, commanded Peter to sheath his sword after Peter slashed Malchus' ear. Luke wrote that Jesus healed Malchus' ear with a touch (Luke 22:51). Even to the end, Jesus expressed complete submission to and confidence in the Father's will.



Correlation: Jesus' Call to Discipleship

Jesus' perfect obedience to the Father has become our model for all Christians to follow. Jesus Himself called His followers to such obedience. A short passage in Luke teaches this. You'll miss the point if you're in a hurry. Take time now to observe it: *Luke 9:22–23*.

How does Luke 9:22 correlate with John 18:1–11?



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

How does Luke 9:23 logically follow 9:22?

Delineate and define the three marks of discipleship according to Jesus in Luke 9:23.

Now, what does it mean to become a disciple? It means becoming a close follower of Jesus Christ. It's a process. Listen to the process: I denounce all lesser loyalties. I become a disciple of Christ when my love for Christ is greater than my love for my wife and for my children. I become a disciple of Christ when my goal is to please Him more than to please my parents or my parents' best wishes or someone else who has high expectations of me. It's the transfer of that drive. It includes the submission of my will to His will. It involves self-denial and unwillingness to pursue my own way, and to go God's way, to please Him.
—Chuck Swindoll



Application: Embracing the Cup

To help us apply God's Word, Chuck provides four principles. These principles help us walk the path of obedience to God's will and look to the rewards that accompany it.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

For every disciple, there is a purpose to fulfill. God has a specific plan for your life. For some, He reveals a clear plan early in their journey. For others, the plan unfolds gradually. Consider your life. Record the purpose to which He has called you. That plan could be lifelong or tailored to your current season of life.

With every purpose, there is a cup to drink. We cannot complete His purpose on our schedule. We must fulfill God's purpose according to His way in His timing. That's the cup to drink. In what way must you embrace God's cup?

In every cup, there is a pain to accept and endure. Settle it now in your heart, that the cup will not necessarily be joyful or convenient. Though we'd rather avoid the pain, it is best to endure. What pain comes with your cup? Plan now how you plan to persevere through it.



The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Through every pain, there's a victory to claim. Now look ahead. See the golden tape flapping at the finish line. Consider the rewards and let them empower you through the pain to the end. What reward awaits you? Even if you can't visualize it now, trust our Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children.

Ultimately, the joy that awaited Jesus, which led Him to endure the cross, will be our joy—eternity in the exhilarating presence of our loving Savior with bodies as new as His: incorruptible and immortal.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for that divine love that pervades, encompasses, and envelopes me, for the love that invaded this earth in the person of Your Son, perfectly personifying love before us all for the first time. Thank You for the cup that He drank, leading to my deliverance and connecting me with You. Please create in me the same heart of surrender to Your will, so that whatever the cup, I may drink it, whatever the cross, I may bear it, enjoying the sweetness of Your presence and fullness of Your provision. In Jesus' name, amen.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY SEVEN

The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

We no longer come to an altar and sacrifice animals, as happened day after day after day on the Jewish altars. We come to our Savior, who is our Passover, and in Him is forgiveness. In Him alone, there is purpose and reason to go on with our lives. The Christ our Passover has been sacrificed and never needs to be sacrificed again because the work is finished. It is done. Paid for. Paid in full. Completed. The Lamb of God took care of that which had forever plagued humanity.

—Charles R. Swindoll

CAMPAIGNING politicians would never want to be called a “lamb of a leader.” No sports team would vote for a lamb as its mascot. Lambs do not inspire intimidation nor exude strength nor garner much serious attention. While they have fluffy white fur, cuddly little bodies, and cute innocent faces, they offer little to impress us. Instead, most of us would prefer to admire and imitate a lion.

We live in a lion’s world, esteeming lionlike personalities who roar their way to respect and wealth, power and fame. That is why Jesus’ first coming two thousand years ago as the Lamb of God shocked the world as it shocks us today. But why a *lamb*?

Chuck Swindoll answers this question by taking us to the passage in Isaiah that speaks of the One who “was led like a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7). The Father made no mistake sending Jesus as our Lamb. He did so intentionally and from His example, we learn the truth of another oracle from Isaiah:

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.
“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.
For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (55:8–9)*



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The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The text we examine in this study gives us the divine lens to help us understand the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death on the Roman cross. More occurred there than meets the eye. Before we learn of it, however, first pause. Pray that God would prepare you to receive the truth of this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. Record your prayer below.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Isaiah penned his grand work around 700 BC. He prophesied during the reign of four kings of the southern kingdom of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah saw the downfall of the northern kingdom, Israel, by the sword of Assyria and foresaw the downfall of the southern kingdom by the hammer of Babylon who forced the Israelites into exile.

Exalted, poetic prophecies of the Holy One of Israel thread through the book of Isaiah—including warnings, encouragement, and promises of the coming Davidic King, the Jewish Messiah. It is no wonder that the New Testament writers quoted Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book.



Observation: God's Lamb on Earth

Isaiah 53 contains a messianic prophecy known as *The Suffering Servant*. Using your observation techniques, read *Isaiah 53:3–7*.



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

How did the “we” of the passage behave toward the man of whom Isaiah spoke (Isaiah 53:3)?

It's a picture of shunning. They had nothing to do with Him. They discounted His importance. They hid their face from Him. You do that when you are shunning another individual. You turn away from him or her. You discount the person's presence, his or her life. You do not esteem the individual. —Chuck Swindoll

How did the “we” of the passage perceive God's action toward the despised one (53:4)?

What was the accurate perception of the servant's suffering (53:5)?



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

Isaiah used the imagery of sheep with two references in this passage (Isaiah 53:6–7). Who were the references, and how were each like a sheep?

Isaiah loaded each phrase with a mountain of meaning that leaves us as surprised and astounded at God's redemption plan as those bystanders who saw it unfold before their eyes outside the gates of Jerusalem.



Interpretation: God's Lamb in Our Place

At the heart of this passage, we find the core of the gospel message: Christ died in our place. It's called *substitutionary atonement*. God forgave our sin and removed our guilt by making Jesus “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB). As our guilt offering, Jesus “bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds [we] were healed” (1 Peter 2:24 NASB). God gave Jesus, who lived perfectly, what He didn't deserve (judgment) to give us, who live sinfully, what we don't deserve (forgiveness). *How remarkable!*

We use the word *atonement* to capture a biblical concept. So, using a Bible dictionary or commentary on this passage, record below how atonement relates to Old Testament sacrifices and the idea of a substitute.



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

Next, look up *lamb* in your Bible dictionary. What significant imagery does a lamb carry throughout the Bible?

According to Isaiah 53:7, how then was the Suffering Servant like a lamb? Why did Isaiah use this imagery?

Isaiah 53:4–6 captures the substitutionary nature of the Suffering Servant. Read each verse carefully and explain how each of the three verses portrays the Servant as our substitute. Why was there a need for a substitute? What was the outcome for each party in the act of substitution?

No other death would pay our debt to God. No other lamb would be qualified, for all the others are spotted and blemished. Jesus is the spotless Lamb. Scripture makes that clear in three statements: He knew no sin, had no sin, and did no sin. The spotless Lamb of God took our place. —Chuck Swindoll



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7



Correlation: The Lamb Who Conquered

As you probably read in your research for interpretation, a lamb functions as a key theme from Genesis through Revelation. Below, read a few passages of Scripture and summarize how each further develops the concept of the Lamb of God in the biblical canon.

Exodus 12:1–14

1 Corinthians 5:6–8

Revelation 5



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

Revelation 19:6–9

The divine portrait of God's Lamb fills us not only with awe but with hope as we look forward to the day when we will partake in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let's end correlation with one more passage—the words of Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, who eloquently captured the significance of the Lamb of God.

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

(1 Peter 1:18–22)



Application: Lamblike Qualities Worth Emulating

God does not call His children to strut and push, roar and claw like the lion-obsessed world we live in. Instead, He calls us to imitate the Lamb of God. For this reason, Chuck emphasizes four character traits to help us walk by the power of God, emulating a lamb instead of a power-hungry lion.

- 1) *A life of dependence.* Lambs understand their vulnerability. Likewise, we must acknowledge the truth that we depend upon God to take care of us and cultivate in us hearts that trust Him.
- 2) *The assurance of approachability.* You can pet a lamb, pick up a lamb, play with a lamb. Not so with a lion! God's children not only interact with the world but live with a level of approachability, so people see that we are not lions that will harm them if they approach us.
- 3) *A heart of innocence.* We carry no duplicity, sly agendas, or friendly involvement with the impurities of the world. Wise and discerning regarding evil? Yes. But innocent as lambs.



The Lamb That Was Slaughtered

Isaiah 53:3–7

- 4) *The spirit of sacrifice.* In ancient Israel, lambs existed to be sacrificed. The Lamb of God came to give His life as a sacrifice. We walk in the same steps of sacrificial obedience that this old world might taste new life.

Reflect now on your ways in this lion-filled world. Do you find it easy to live like a lamb, or do you walk too comfortably with the paws of a lion? After considering your life and the four lamblike traits above, record below how you can better embrace these qualities and imitate the Lamb of God.

In startling fashion and with undeniable clarity, Isaiah 53 has taught us the true meaning of God's statement—that His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts different from our thoughts. Like we read in Revelation 5, how might the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David conquer? By becoming the Lamb who was slain.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You that Your Son, the Lamb of God, is also my Shepherd who guides me because I am so prone to wander. Thank You for laying my iniquities on Him because I could have never paid the debt of my sin. I glorify the name of Jesus and live for Him alone. Amen.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY EIGHT

The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

You will not drift from the truth if the cross remains your focus. By that I mean all that the cross represents, all that it symbolizes. It will reduce your pride to zilch, to nothing. It will lift up the person of the Savior, and your whole life will be transformed, and you will again run in the right direction.

—Charles R. Swindoll

FOOTBALL enthusiasts the world over will forever remember Roy Riegels' flub in the 1929 Rose Bowl. The play began, and the ball fell to the grass, but Riegels snatched it up. Then, unknowingly, he ran in the *wrong direction!* He helped the opposing team and earned the name "Wrong Way Riegels."

Christians can do the same. In the stress of the moment, we can take our eyes off the goal of living for Christ and go the opposite way—the way of the world instead of the way of Christ. What should we do when we've turned the wrong direction? We should follow the simple advice of the ancient proverb: No matter how far you have gone on a wrong road, *turn back*.

"Turn back!" is what Riegels' teammates were yelling at him, and it's the message Paul wrote in bold script to the wayward Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5, Paul corrected the Corinthian church who took their eyes off the cross of Christ and were running the opposite direction. Let's dig into this passage and discover the course-correcting principles the Lord has for us.



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The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the passage of this *Searching the Scriptures* study, Paul urged the Corinthians to return to the cross after they were swept up in the world's values. Use this time to pray for the Spirit's empowerment through this study—that He would fill you with confidence in and reliance upon God's power through the cross.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Prior to 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5, Paul addressed the Corinthian factions. Each group treated its spiritual teacher like the famous Greek rhetors. “Apollos is the best!” “No, Paul is better!” They used spiritual teachers to brag, to splinter the church of God, and to exalt themselves.

It will help to grasp the thrust of Paul's argument by first reading *1 Corinthians 1:11–17*. Summarize Paul's concern below.



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

According to 1 Corinthians 1:17, what would cause the preaching of the cross to lose its power?

Next comes one of Paul's most forceful discussions on the power and centrality of the cross in ministry and in our lives.



Observation: The Foolishness of the World

In our first step of Bible study, we start with the text. We observe it. We don't go straight to the commentaries or what our favorite teacher says about the passage. We go to the passage alone. Ideally, we use multiple translations. As we read, we utilize our observation tools to look for key components in the text such as what's emphasized and the logical flow of thoughts.

Begin by reading *1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5*, carefully tracing Paul's argument.

Understand the Significance of the Cross

What did Paul emphasize in 1 Corinthians 1:18–25? How did he convey this emphasis?



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Consider the Truth of Your Calling

What emphasis did Paul make in 1 Corinthians 1:26–31? How does 1:26–28 logically connect with 1:29–31?

This congregation is not made up of the brightest and the best in the world's eyes. I get the idea that it would be helpful for us to realize that we represent, in the world's eyes, that which is foolish, that which is weak, that which is base, and that which is despised.
—Chuck Swindoll

Hear the Honesty of Paul's Confession

After asking the Corinthians to consider their own experience with Christ, Paul told them to consider how he ministered among them. What did Paul emphasize in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5?

Paul, although as capable as a silver-tongued Greek orator, chose to express the gospel simply. Paul wanted the Corinthians to focus on the facts of the message, not his manner of speaking.



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5



Interpretation: The Wisdom and Power of God

During interpretation, we determine what the author intended his audience to understand and do. We want to know the theological foundations of Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians and what error the Corinthians made that led them to go in the wrong direction.

Contrast what the Jews and Greeks sought which led them to misunderstand the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:22–23).

How does the cross teach us about God's power and wisdom?

First Corinthians 1:18–2:5 logically follows and expands Paul's statement in 1:17: "For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power." The Corinthians valued what Paul considered worthless. Research and explain what that was. How would clever speech have emptied the cross of power had Paul relied on it?



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

If you are among the ranks of the young and up-and-coming preachers in the making, hear this message: Your job is to declare the cross forcefully and courageously and consistently, so that no one will boast before God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Remain in Me

Above, we learned how Christ's death on the cross does more than offer us forgiveness from sin. It offers a free ticket for us to ride the train of God's wisdom and power. Jesus' statement in John 15:1–17, on living by the power of God, complements Paul's statement to the Corinthians. Read [John 15:1–17](#) and explain how we are to remain in Jesus and bear spiritual fruit.

Say it with me: "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. We will continually run the wrong direction, score for the wrong side, and operate in the flesh if we shift from His power to ours. —Chuck Swindoll

As Christians, we never move beyond the fact that Jesus laid down His life for us, shaming the wisdom of this world and proving stronger than human strength. Through Jesus, God has triumphed over the way determined by this world and placed Christians on a new track entirely, and that track leads in only one direction: toward the cross of Christ, the power and wisdom of God.



Application: Run the Right Way

From Paul's correcting the Corinthian church's errors, Chuck Swindoll derives three application principles to help us internalize the truth of the passage. Think of application as the process of our Bible study where we set the diamond in the ring prepared for it. This step is vital in completing our encounter with God in His Word. The Spirit empowers us to live new because He has made us new.



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Principle One

Remember the pit. Paul told his readers to remember their state when God had first called them. Not many were wise, powerful, or rich. We no longer boast in zip codes or bank accounts, degrees or acclaim because once Jesus brought us to the land of the living, we found those things to be pits of death.

In what did you formerly boast, or what do you currently feel tempted to boast in? How has this passage taught you to boast only in Christ?

Principle Two

Refuse the praise. Show courtesy as applause comes, but don't let it inflate your ego. Christ determines your breath and brainwaves. He deals out His Spirit and your faith. All comes from Him, and all the praise goes to Him. In what situations do you receive praise? What does it look like for you to graciously and humbly accept praise while ultimately directing the honor to Christ?



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Principle Three

Rely on the power. Sophisticated wisdom of the world, far-reaching influence, and awe-inspiring skill do not contribute to our spiritual growth nor that of others. The cross has the power. The Spirit channels it. We get our flesh out of the way in order to display God's power and wisdom. In what areas of life do you believe the Lord is prompting you to rely more on His power?

Each day, as we study passage by passage, we come to marvel at the mystery of God's ways. Such ways were not always obvious, logical, or inevitable to people in the Bible, nor are they always obvious to us. But we can know without a doubt that God sent Jesus in apparent weakness and foolishness to save the world according to His divine strength and wisdom. He used a scandalous object of torture and death—the cross—to make all things new.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the cross. In Jesus' name, amen.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY NINE

Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power *Selected Scriptures*

I've discovered when you get serious about spiritual things, you not only get serious about the church, you get serious about God. So far, we have spent time getting to know God the Father and God the Son, the attributes of the Father and the cross of Christ. Now we come to the tougher part, the invisible third person of the Godhead, God the Spirit.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT comes to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit? Do you imagine a phantom lingering in high ceilings of dark cathedrals? Or a ghost hovering over cemetery plots? The Holy Spirit proves more difficult to mentally grasp simply due to His invisible, nonbodily, immaterial nature.

The Father's glory we can imagine. The Son's human form we can picture. The Father planned salvation from eternity past, and Jesus implemented it at the right time in history. But the Spirit? He's like wind bending trees. We can only see His effects and feel His presence.

Yet, that we have trouble imagining Him does not mean He's any less significant than the Father or the Son. *He's God!* So, we will spend another four *Searching the Scriptures* Bible studies wrapping our heads around the Spirit's empowerment. Chuck Swindoll begins by blowing away the fog surrounding the third person of the Trinity so we can discover who the Spirit is and what He does.



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Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures



PREPARE YOUR HEART

To help us prepare our hearts, let's read a passage from Romans 8 in which Paul explains how the Spirit helps us pray.

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. (Romans 8:26–27)

Take time now to still your heart and mind before God. Request the Spirit's strength. Pray for His guidance in this study.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

First, Chuck wants you to simply see what the New Testament says about the Spirit, so we will rely heavily on observation techniques in this study. Remember that we observe a biblical text by examining:

1. The who, what, where, when, why, and how
2. What you can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell
3. The logical connections, flow of thoughts, and range of subjects
4. What's repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike
5. What's written before and after the passage



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures

After Jesus ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, the Spirit multiplied the church into thousands of people. An important scene occurs from this fledgling community that captures the divine nature of the Spirit. Read [Acts 5:1–4](#) and describe how it portrays the Spirit as an equal member of the Trinity.

He is a spirit. He isn't an it. He's a He. He has personality, mind, will, emotion. He knows. He can be grieved. He directs. He instructs. He has the characteristics of a personality.
—Chuck Swindoll



Observation: The Spirit's Activity

The Spirit applies to our lives what Jesus accomplished. We cover four such activities below.

The Holy Spirit Regenerates Us

Read the passages below and record what they teach about the Holy Spirit's activity of regeneration. Remember to use your observation skills!

John 3:1–8



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power
Selected Scriptures

Titus 3:3–7

The Holy Spirit washes us clean of inward evil and gives us new power to love righteousness and obey God.

The Holy Spirit Baptizes Us into the Body of Christ

Paul explained how the Holy Spirit unifies the church. Read *1 Corinthians 12:12–13* and record what it says about the Spirit's baptism.

You will perhaps find some who teach that you need to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to be baptized in the Spirit. Never once are we commanded to be baptized in the Spirit. It happens to us, within us but not because of what we decide. Coming to Christ includes the Spirit of God placing us into the body of Christ and also placing us into Christ Himself. —Chuck Swindoll

As a newborn baby relates biologically to its mom and dad, brother and sister, so a newborn Christian relates spiritually to the family of God.



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures

The Holy Spirit Seals Us

In his majestic letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul explained the permanence of the Spirit's work in us. Read [Ephesians 1:13–14](#) and [4:30](#). What did Paul teach about the Spirit's activity in these passages?

The Holy Spirit Illuminates Truth for Us

When God gave truth to the biblical authors, we say He *revealed* it. We call it *special revelation* because it conveys truth more powerfully about the person of God than *general revelation*, which we observe in creation. Then God continued His work in the process of *recording* the truth to preserve it. We call this *inspiration*. Read [2 Timothy 3:16](#) and [2 Peter 1:20–21](#), and record how the Spirit conducted the process of *inspiration*.



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures

Both *special revelation* and *inspiration* have ceased. God has nothing more to reveal to humankind beyond what's written in the Bible. But that does not mean the Holy Spirit is now retired. No, He still moves in each believer to *illuminate* God's Word. *Illumination* occurs when the Holy Spirit gives us understanding of Scripture. How do Paul's statements in *1 Corinthians 2:4–16* describe illumination?

Also, observe *John 16:12–15*. How does this passage add to our understanding of the Spirit's work of illumination?

The Spirit illuminates for our benefit. Knowing the truth gives us an edge in the world in which we live. It gives you an edge not only to survive but to thrive. You're guarded against the teaching of cults. You are instructed in the truth so that you are equipped to handle whatever comes to you. Whatever impacts you. —Chuck Swindoll



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures



Interpretation: The Comforter

Now take time to reflect on the passages you observed above. They contain truth you will find nowhere else—truth that comes from God for your sake, for your good, not your harm. After thinking over the passages, write a summary paragraph of how the truths above benefit our lives today.

Chuck notes three benefits of the Spirit's activity in this message.

1. *The Spirit gives us the permanent presence of God.* While our sense of His presence increases and decreases, God always says, "I am with you."
2. *The Spirit supernaturally enables us for the work of God.* We have the power to spread the fragrance of life wherever we go because of the Spirit's empowerment.
3. *The Spirit sufficiently instructs us in the will of God.* God is not like a mean teacher who causes us to fail a test by withholding information. God wants us to succeed and thrive in His will. The Spirit guides the way.

Which of the benefits above holds special meaning in your current season of life? Record below how and why it does.

When you relate to the Spirit of God, you're relating to One who has it all known, has it all understood, and His major role is to communicate it to you in bite-sized chunks that you can take and apply. That's His role. —Chuck Swindoll



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures



Application: Maintaining Intimacy

For many, certain barriers keep us from enjoying the Spirit's presence and benefits. They prevent us from allowing the Spirit to fortify our faith in His power. Before applying the truth from this *Searching the Scriptures* biblical study, Chuck identifies three such barriers to tear down.

1. *The fence of the invisible and unknown*—a barrier of fear—keeps us from pursuing the Spirit's presence and relying on Him in prayer. Sometimes, we simply need to be still and wait for Him.
2. *The wall of traditional resistance*—empty, unbiblical doctrine—either contorts the Spirit's role or shoos Him off altogether. But He is a person whose personality will not be stifled or manipulated. We must receive Him as He is in order to have a thriving relationship with Him.
3. *The hurdle of personal excuses*—peer pressure, constant coming-and-going, or technology-filled downtime—keeps us from enjoying a heightened sense of the Spirit's presence.

Did you find that any of the barriers above hinder your current relationship with the Spirit of God? If so, how can you remove the barrier and find more delight in the Invisible One?

What is an encouraging new insight from our study of the Spirit that you can take with you today?

So we have journeyed from checkpoint to checkpoint in the divine forest of New Testament truth. How *vital* the Spirit is in our lives . . . the personal, powerful, presence of God!



Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power

Selected Scriptures



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study with a prayer, giving thanks for the Spirit's work in your life and requesting continued guidance in the days ahead.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY TEN

What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21

Our Father and our Savior have not left us without a Comforter. Though the work of the Holy Spirit is not as well-known or well-articulated or defined as the work of the Father and Son, we do need to be aware of what the Spirit of God does and the role He plays—including the all-important subject of His filling.

—Charles R. Swindoll

A gas-powered car won't drive without fuel. No matter how new its engine, glossy its paint, or state-of-the-art its design; to achieve its purpose, fuel must power the engine to rotate the wheels and move the vehicle from point A to point B. Same with steam engines and heat. No heat—whether from coal or wood or oil—means no movement.

Just as humans designed these engines to run on fuel and heat, God designed people to run on fuel—physical *and* spiritual fuel. Water and food power our fleshly bodies. But what about our spirits? That's where His Spirit comes in.

Relying on our own energy, we can't drive ourselves in the way God intends. Rather, we must depend on fuel only He can give. While the “mind of Christ” shapes our perspective (1 Corinthians 2:16), the presence of the Holy Spirit abides with our spirit, *enabling* and *empowering* us to love as God loves (Romans 5:5).

The New Testament describes this spiritual combustion as “being filled with the Spirit.” Chuck Swindoll teaches us what this means as he walks through one of the most important biblical passages for living out the Christian life practically: Ephesians 5:15–21.



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What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Many think the Spirit’s sole responsibility is to perform miracles, like when Peter commanded the paralyzed man to walk or when Paul touched a handkerchief that then healed any who grazed it. But these miracles do not occur in the everyday lives of most Christians. Instead, the normal activity of the Spirit comes in the form of divine enablement so you can live like Jesus every day.

With that in mind, take a moment to pray for the Spirit’s enablement during this study—that you may profit from what you learn and use it to glorify Jesus in your life.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before examining Ephesians, let’s review two of the Spirit’s activities in our lives based on two New Testament statements.

You Will Receive Power—Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21

We don't receive just any power. We receive the kind of power rooted in a unique source and purposed for a specific end. What did Jesus communicate in this statement about the Holy Spirit's power in our lives?

He Will Give You Another Advocate—John 14:16–17

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.”

According to Jesus' words above, where will the Spirit dwell and for how long once He resides there? What will He do?

Above, we read how the Spirit comes to us and empowers us to enjoy Jesus' presence and share Jesus' message. Below, in Paul's epistle to the church in Ephesus, he explores how the Spirit helps us follow in Jesus' footsteps.

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.
(Colossians 2:6)



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21



Observation: Not with Wine

In the first half of Ephesians, Paul’s theology opens the curtain of eternity past and paints a vision of eternity future. God planned our salvation through Jesus Christ as well as our eventual glorification with Christ—all for the purpose of bringing praise to God (Ephesians 1:3–14). But what about the present? What should we do after we are saved and before we enter glory? Paul answered that question in Ephesians 4–6. Read what he teaches in *Ephesians 5:15–21*.

What did Paul exhort his readers to avoid?

What did Paul exhort his readers to pursue?

During observation, we look for contrasts, like you did above. Exhortations provide clear contrasts: “Don’t do this. Instead, do this.”

Because I have the Spirit of Christ, I have within me the controls to handle my flesh.
—Chuck Swindoll



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21

We now lay out two main clauses with their subordinate clauses to visualize how Paul’s ideas connect.

Consult the New American Standard Bible for this segment of observation, as it more clearly conveys Paul’s flow of thoughts.

First, Ephesians 5:15 contains a main clause with a command and 5:16 a subordinate clause with a participle. (A participle is an “-ing” word that functions like an adverb.) The main clause conveys *what*, and the subordinate conveys *how*.

5:15 Main Clause—*do what?* _____

5:16 Subordinate Clause—*how: by* _____

Second, Ephesians 5:18 contains a main clause, and 5:19–20 includes four subordinate clauses with participles.

5:18 Main Clause—*do what?* _____

5:19 Subordinate Clause One—*how: by* _____

5:19 Subordinate Clause Two—*how: by* _____

5:19 Subordinate Clause Three—*how: by* _____

5:20 Subordinate Clause Four—*how: by* _____

Yet, Ephesians 5:20 does not contain the last subordinate clause of 5:18. In fact, 5:21 in Greek has the same verb form for the phrase *be subject* as the four subordinate clauses above. So we should be filled with the Spirit by *being subject* “to one another in the fear of Christ” (5:21). See how it all connects? We can summarize Paul’s flow of thought with this theological principle: *The Spirit gives us a grateful heart that praises God and a humble attitude that serves others.*

That’s the reason we observe the passage slowly, to discover God’s truths through which we can more clearly see our world and our role in it! Paul’s theological spectacles become our theological spectacles.

The Spirit of God fuels us with power to live as authentic Christians with a joyful attitude.
—Chuck Swindoll



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21



Interpretation: But with the Spirit

For interpretation, we break down just one verb in Ephesians 5:18 because of its significance for our walk with Christ. In his sermon, Chuck explains four characteristics of the verb form of *pleroo*, translated *be filled*, as in “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

1. *Command*: The verb *pleroo* is not a philosophical suggestion nor magazine advice. It’s an imperative, necessary for our obedience to Christ and enjoyment of Him.
2. *Present tense*: This verb implies consistency. We are baptized by the Spirit once at our salvation (Romans 6:3–4; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13).¹ But we seek to be filled by the Spirit daily! Hourly, even. At home and work, while running errands and doing chores, in the ordinary activities of life.
3. *Passive voice*: We can’t fill ourselves with God’s Spirit. We call upon God to enable us through His Spirit to do what we could never do on our own: live like Christ. Our job is to yield our will to His, seek Him in His Word, praise Him in our songs, and step out in faithful obedience.
4. *Plural*: We don’t grow in the Christian life when we isolate ourselves from other Christians as if we were on a remote island. God brings people together. Being filled with the Spirit occurs in community. Not alone.

Put in your own words what it means to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). How would you explain the concept to someone else?



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21

After reflecting on the four characteristics of *being filled* with the Spirit, record below why these themes are significant for Christians today. What do we lose if we neglect these truths?

What is the normal Christian life? It is the authentic. The real. The enablement to live a life that those without Christ can't even imagine. The power to control your tongue. The ability to clear and clean up your thoughts. The ability to guard yourself against temptation. Being filled with the Spirit offers you hope beyond the normal drag of the flesh.
 —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Fruit of Being Filled with the Spirit

Paul, in his letter to the churches of Galatia, exhorted his readers to gaze upon the tree of virtue, sprouting spiritual fruit when irrigated with divine waters. Galatians 5:16–26 correlates well with Ephesians 5:15–21 because it adds color to the meaning of *being filled with the Spirit*. It, too, is a passage of contrasts. Watch for them as you carefully read [Galatians 5:16–26](#). Fill in the chart below, contrasting desires of the flesh’s sinful nature and the fruits of the Spirit.

Desires of a Sinful Nature	Fruits of the Spirit

The flesh and Spirit are always in opposition to one another. Think of them as such. The flesh life; the Spirit life. The carnal walk; the spiritual walk. —Chuck Swindoll



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21



Application: Two Considerations

Chuck gives two thoughts for us to reflect on as we consider how to apply this text.

1. *The world is looking for the authentic, not the amazing.*
2. *The church needs daily enablement, not monthly miracles.*

The Spirit provides each of us the ability to give the world what it’s looking for and what the church needs: authenticity and daily enablement. Now consider your relationship with the Spirit. How do you normally cultivate your dependence on the Spirit? In what way can you improve upon this? How would you be different if you did so?

Do you sense the Lord leading you to depend on His power as you step out in faith in a certain area of your life? Tell the Lord your desire to yield to His will and allow the Spirit to fill you with His divine enablement.

In Christ we have the key. With the Spirit, we have the fuel. His energy works far better than our own. Above, we discussed how that power flows through us and why it’s so vital that we rely on the Spirit every day. Because the world needs it and our joy depends upon it.



What Does Being “Filled with the Spirit” Mean?

Ephesians 5:15–21



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study by incorporating into a prayer what you have learned.

ENDNOTE

1. For more detailed information on all the ministries of the Holy Spirit, listen to Chuck Swindoll’s ninth message in the *How Great Is Our God!* series, “Getting Reacquainted with the Spirit of Power,” and read the *Searching the Scriptures* study that corresponds with this message.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY ELEVEN

Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures

There are times that the only way God can communicate to us—whether it is through conviction or assurance or direction or encouragement—is through unidentified inner promptings. I ask us to stop calling them intuition or coincidence or hunches and to identify them as the work of the Spirit.

—Charles R. Swindoll

At times, we struggle to put words to our feelings. Your gut tugs you to go this way, not that way. Or we experience an urge to perform a specific task, but we just can't explain why. Simply, in our inner person, we are nudged toward one decision and have an uneasiness about another. Typically, we call such feelings *intuitions*.

At other times, we mentally grapple with a passage of Scripture without finding any glimmer of meaning or relevance. Then, without expectation or warning, the lightbulb flickers on. We've got it! The passage becomes clear, and we suddenly know how to put its truth into practice. Clarity usurps mystery. These moments we typically call *insights*.

Sadly, many Christians don't attribute intuition or insight to the Holy Spirit. We think of intuition or insight as random. However, Chuck Swindoll wants us to think differently, directing our attention to biblical passages that show that such unidentified inner promptings (UIPs) do not come by chance or serendipity. Rather, they come from God.



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Only God can truly help us benefit from our study of His Word. That's why we pray before we study it. His Spirit guides us and helps us profit from what we learn. So take a moment now to quiet your mind. Posture your heart toward Him, praying that He would guide you during this study.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Because we cover multiple passages of Scripture on the Spirit's UIPs, we'll use charts combining the observation and interpretation steps of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method. But first, why do we have such promptings? Humanity's beginnings recorded in Genesis provide the key.

Read *Genesis 1:26–27* and *5:1–3*. What words are repeated in these passages that describe Adam and Eve's relationship with God as well as their relationships with their children (and the rest of humanity)?



There is an inner, secret chamber within our being because we have God's image. We call it our "heart," where the Lord speaks to us. He prompts us with inner promptings. He urges, He moves, He convicts, He directs, He stops, He guards, and He guides. —Chuck Swindoll

Our identity as God's image bearers, transmitted from Adam to us all, gives us a unique connection with God by which His Spirit can communicate with us in a way more sophisticated and intimate than any other creature in all creation.



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures



The Spirit Testifies to Our Spirit Psalm 139; Romans 8:14–16; 1 John 5:1–12	
A psalm and two passages from New Testament letters indicate how the Spirit prompts us inwardly, how the Spirit of God communicates with our spirit.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. Slowly read <i>Psalm 139</i> and simply note the verses that mention God’s inner prompting.</p> <p>1b. Now observe <i>Romans 8:14–16</i> and note below how it describes God’s communication with us.</p> <p>1c. Lastly, observe <i>1 John 5:1–12</i>. What verses in this passage indicate God’s inner promptings in our lives?</p>	<p>2a. What does Psalm 139 teach us about these UIPs? (See especially 139:1–2, 23–24.)</p> <p>2b. According to Romans 8:16, how does God’s Spirit teach us and confirm our relationship with God?</p> <p>2c. According to 1 John 5:9–10, how does God’s Spirit teach us and confirm the identity of Jesus?</p>

I want to suggest the statements in Psalm 139 reveal secret inner chambers within the capacity of humanity—hidden capacities within the spirit of human beings . . . providing for the reception and the understanding of divine information. All of this is foreign to the natural world, but Christians have an ability to perceive spiritual things so that we can detect the hand of God. —Chuck Swindoll



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures



<p>A Desperate and Lonely Prophet 1 Kings 19:1–18</p>	
<p>The evil and godless King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel did not like the godly and upright Elijah. Elijah removed false prophets, worshipers of Baal, from Israel and he challenged the authority of Ahab and Jezebel. They vowed to kill him, so he fled. Away and alone, desperate and exhausted, Elijah received a UIP from God. Read the story in <i>1 Kings 19:1–18</i>.</p>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. In 1 Kings 19:1–9, what indicates Elijah’s desperation, and how did God help him? Where did Elijah go?</p> <p>1b. In 1 Kings 19:10–18, how did God communicate with Elijah? How did the author emphasize this form of communication?</p> <p>1c. What did God’s UIP within Elijah convey to Elijah?</p>	<p>2a. According to 1 Kings 19:10–18, why did God give Elijah a UIP? How did it help Elijah?</p> <p>2b. Why is this story significant for our lives today?</p>

You know what I call it? An unidentified inner prompting. U-I-P. God got through to Elijah’s spirit, and He touched him in a way that nothing in Elijah’s sensory perception could have grasped. Earthquake, wind, fire—none of that moved Elijah, but there was this gentle rustling. The result was that Elijah wrapped his mantle around himself and walked toward God rather than from Him. Elijah began to pursue further and further God’s plan for his life as the UIP broke what had formerly paralyzed him. —Chuck Swindoll



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures

<p align="center">A Determined and Faithful Apostle Acts 20:16–24; 2 Corinthians 12:6–10</p>	
<p>Now let's turn from the Old Testament prophet Elijah to the New Testament apostle Paul. UIPs pop up throughout the narrative of Scripture. First, we examine Paul's last talk with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, exploring what the Spirit taught him through a UIP. Then we explore a short passage from his letter to the church in Corinth explaining what God taught him in his weakness through a UIP.</p>	
<p> Observation</p>	<p> Interpretation</p>
<p>1a. Begin by observing <i>Acts 20:16–24</i>. What verses in this passage indicate a UIP?</p> <p>1b. Next, observe <i>2 Corinthians 12:6–10</i>. In what situation did Paul receive a UIP? What did God teach Paul through it?</p>	<p>2a. According to Acts 20:16–24, what benefit did Paul receive when God gave him a UIP?</p> <p>2b. According to 2 Corinthians 12:6–10, what might have happened to Paul had God not given him a UIP?</p> <p>2c. Why are the two UIPs mentioned in this chart's passages significant for us today?</p>

I think this kind of inner prompting explains the courage of the first century and twenty-first century persecuted Christians. I think this explains how the Reformers could stand against the established church and the popular majority opinion and do so alone knowing they might face persecution. The Spirit of God gave them not only the awareness of danger but also the confidence that they could bear it. —Chuck Swindoll



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures



Application: Discerning Your Own UIPs

Often, UIPs from the Spirit come to us in quiet, in the stillness of the moment while we are alone, like Elijah's experience. Therefore, reflect on your habit of abiding with God. Do you enjoy being alone with Him to still yourself before Him? What about these alone times do you find difficult, and what could you change to make your alone time with God more effective and meaningful?

Not all our inner promptings come from God. It takes discernment to know which UIPs come from God and which do not. *Know that every inner prompting you receive from God will align with His Word.* God does not contradict Himself. Therefore, if you are unsure an inner prompting comes from God's Spirit, Chuck encourages you to *back off*. Take time. Return to Scripture. Think through the situation. Pray. Seek counsel. Record a time below when you have had to back off like this. Do you need to do so now?



Those Unidentified Inner Promptings

Selected Scriptures

Lastly, if you are certain the Spirit is prompting you, Chuck encourages you to *stand strong*. Do not waver in doubt or unbelief or fear or dwell on “what if” scenarios. Move forward with conviction, trusting that God is your ever-present help in times of trouble. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Have you had to stand strong lately? How so? Do you need to now?

Indeed, you are fearfully and wonderfully made. God knew you while you were being formed in your mother’s womb. He made you with a specific plan in mind and enjoys lavishing His love upon you, communing with you through His Spirit, and guiding your decisions with those inner promptings. Don’t forget to stay tuned-in to the Spirit. We never know when we’ll need His quiet whisper.



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study with a prayer below. Reflect on the passages you learned above and include the truths from them in your praise and petition to Jesus.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD! STUDY TWELVE

The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

In the counsel of divine decrees, before there was ever time on earth, before there was ever matter, before there was sun, moon, or stars, the Godhead planned salvation. In the plan of salvation, it was ordained that this angel be sent on this particular day to this particular woman in this particular place. The details of Mary's virginal conception are left to our imaginations. Nothing in Scripture covers that epochal moment, the Spirit's overshadowing of Mary. Nevertheless, it's the Spirit's most significant mission.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE apostle Paul wrote a profound statement about the first-century arrival of Jesus Christ, the God-man. In his letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul said, “But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4).

God could have sent Jesus during Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten's monotheistic renaissance, or during Babylon's militaristic dominance, or at the height of Athenian political and cultural flourishing, or closer to our time during the industrial and technological revolutions of the West. But God didn't. Instead, He chose the setting for His Son's first coming in a rather simple, agrarian Jewish culture, suppressed by the Roman Empire. God the Father sent Jesus to be born from an obscure teenaged virgin girl, already betrothed, living in a small, out-of-the-way village. Why? Because, according to God's sovereign plan for His creation, it was the right time.

Such a momentous event could happen only when God's celestial clock chimed the precise hour. The climactic moment had come to launch the Messiah's redemptive mission, and the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary so that she was found with child. A child both truly divine and truly human. Chuck Swindoll walks us through the incredible sequence of events as recorded by doctor Luke.



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The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin this study by preparing your heart to receive God's Word. Internalize Chuck's prayer below, and let it be your desire before God.

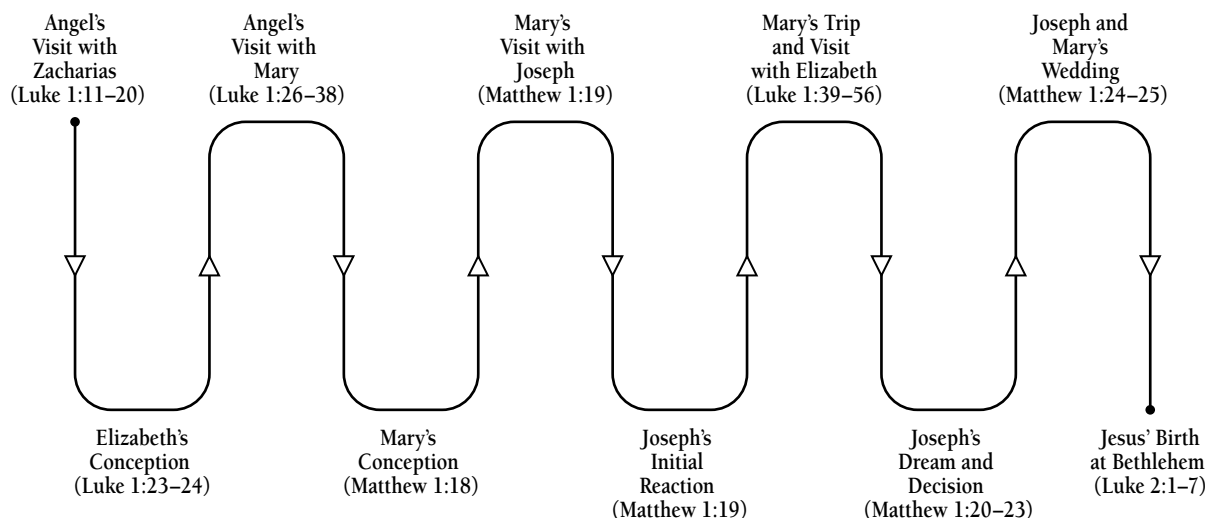
Father, thank You for the first time when we realized the meaning and significance of deep and abiding worship, when we were delivered from the feeling that we needed to be entertained. Now we come before You, Holy God, to hear Your truth, to sing Your songs, to pause in quietness and let in the wonder of Your presence. When all else was wrong in the world, You sent Your Son, gave Him to us, and for that we thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.
—Chuck Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Both Matthew and Luke recorded the happenings surrounding Jesus' birth. Take a moment to review the chart below that outlines what occurred and when.

Important Events Leading to Jesus' Birth



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The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores the third event, the angel's visit with Mary, in Luke 1:26–38 to which we now turn.



Observation: The Angel's Message

Begin by carefully observing *Luke 1:26–38*.

When and where did the event take place (Luke 1:26–27)?

What names are mentioned in verses 26–38, and who are the two main characters? (Note the main characters by how much narrative space is given to them.)

Summarize Gabriel's message to Mary.



The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

What you must understand is that you will never, ever unravel the puzzle. You can't because it's a miracle. God comes. God makes the announcement. God lets Mary wonder what it's all about, but God doesn't back off. Nothing will be impossible with God.
—Chuck Swindoll

Summarize Mary's response to Gabriel.

That short conversation between the young woman and angel ignited events that would turn the world upside down through the birth of just one individual. The divine power that sparked His conception would set the stage for Jesus' divine life. His heart would exude divine love, His Words convey divine truth, and His death and resurrection accomplish a divine mission.



Interpretation: The Virgin's Response

The Spirit required both an angelic messenger and a humble recipient of the message. The Spirit saw the heart of such a recipient in the young and tender Mary who opened her hands to accept whatever God willed for her life.

Notice how Gabriel addressed Mary in Luke 1:28. What did he call her, and how did he explain the reasoning for her title? How does this statement begin to prepare her for further revelation about the virginal conception?



The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

How did Gabriel describe to Mary the forthcoming virginal conception in Luke 1:35?

How did Gabriel connect Jesus' miraculous conception to Jesus' identity (Luke 1:30–33, 35)?

What does Mary's response to Gabriel (1:38) indicate about her character? How is her response instructive for Christians today?

Mary did not go on and on with questions seeking more information even though she surely had them. The Bible does not say she avoided Joseph even though she probably wondered how he would respond. Mary gave no argument or resistance to Gabriel's plan even though she certainly could imagine the inconveniences her pregnancy would bring. She accepted Gabriel's words. She said of herself that she was nothing more than a servant of God.



The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38



Correlation: Following Mary's Example

Mary, in Luke's scene of Gabriel's visit, portrays one of the most astonishing portraits of humility recorded by the biblical authors. So, in correlation with this theme, we turn to Peter's exhortation concerning the importance of humility, so we might discover its benefits and how to attain it.

First, read *1 Peter 5:5–7*.

Whom did Peter address in his command to be humble? _____

What reasoning in verse 5 did Peter give for his command?

What do we receive if we humble ourselves before God according to verse 6?

We rest in His promise when we humble ourselves. God will reward this kind of attitude: "Lord, I don't understand it. I'm not necessarily in agreement with it. I don't have enough of the facts to feel peace about it, but I trust You. And, as a result, I will be exalted at another time." —Chuck Swindoll



The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

How does 1 Peter 5:7 logically follow 5:5–6?

We find the embodiment of Peter's commands in Mary's acceptance of God's words. At the end of her angelic conversation, Mary uttered the holiest and noblest of prayers any Christian can pray: "Your will be done, O Lord." A prayer worth emulating.

Application: Following the Spirit's Leading

God has likely placed you in one of two positions at this moment in your life. On one hand, God might be calling you to be a Gabriel, to deliver a Spirit-empowered message to one who needs to hear it. Or God might be calling you to be a Mary who is currently sensing a direct and clear message from God and needs to receive it humbly and confidently. Which one do you sense you are and why?

If you're a Gabriel, what is God calling you to speak and to whom? If you're a Mary, what is God saying to you, and how should you respond?



The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

Luke 1:26–38

This fourth study on the Holy Spirit closes our twelve-part series on the greatness of our God. We learned about the attributes of the Father, the cross of Jesus Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Hopefully, you have come to appreciate the practical side of trinitarian theology and have gained a deeper understanding of our God who is most worthy of our adoration and worship. Close this study and series with the hymn below. Make it your song, and let it express the feelings of your heart for all that Christ has done for you. He loves you and enjoys spending time with you.



A FINAL PRAYER

How Great Thou Art¹

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r thro'out the universe displayed.

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

When thro' the woods, and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And see the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

Refrain

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim: my God, how great Thou art!

Refrain

ENDNOTE

1. Stuart K. Hine, "How Great Thou Art" in *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (n.p.: Word Music/Integrity Music, 1997), hymn 147.



HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY TWELVE

The Spirit's Most Significant Mission

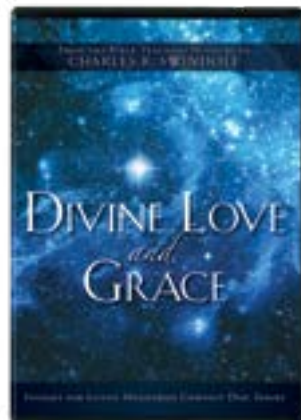
Luke 1:26–38



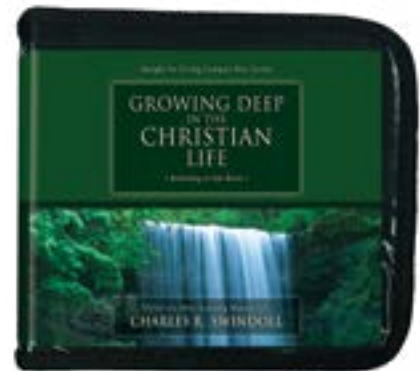
Tools for Digging Deeper



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Divine Love and Grace
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CD series



**Growing Deep in the
Christian Life**
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For the 2019 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

