

WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

STUDY NINE

Cultivating Humility

John 1; 3

How unusual to meet someone as committed and gifted as the Baptizer, yet in no way interested in getting the attention or grabbing the glory. If you have had the pleasure of having a person in your life play a significant role known for humility, you are thrice blessed, because you've been around a rare individual. In fact, humility is a subject you will rarely, if ever, hear in the public square, so where could be better source to learn about cultivating humility than the Word of God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN thinking over the rewards of humility, one might wonder why so many neglect this godly virtue. Humility inspires us to:

- Lend others a listening ear
- Work hard to do the job correctly
- Keep our mouths from opening too much
- Put down the hammer of criticism
- Act on the best ideas even if they're not our own
- Draw nearer to Jesus



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Cultivating Humility

John 1: 3



PREPARE YOUR HEART

John the Apostle wrote the following in his prologue before introducing John the Baptizer, the one who would prepare God's people for the arrival of God's anointed: Jesus the Messiah, the Word.

*In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1–5)*

As you meditate on the passage above, bask in the glory of Christ—the One before whom John the Baptizer humbled himself. Ask God to reveal the splendor of His Son to you through this study—for only in the presence of true glory is true humility formed.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

John the Baptizer lived a unique life. Scarcely there'd be a church that would hire him in our day. He dressed in camel's hair, ate honey, stayed in the Judean wilderness, and spoke against the Jewish elite—all to prepare for the One who would baptize not with water but "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11; see also, [Joel 2:28–29](#) and [Malachi 3:2–5](#)).

In this study, the observation and interpretation steps of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method are combined for each passage to help you trace John's mission and humility. Make sure you perform observation before moving to interpretation.¹ Also, if you haven't recently added a resource to your library—Chuck recommends you add about one a month—grab a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on John*.



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The Responsibilities and Their Temptations

John 1:29–42

In the previous passage, John spoke to the skeptics—those Jewish leaders who sought only intrigue and inquiry. In this passage, John spoke to those who knew, trusted, and followed him. John’s relationship with his followers proved yet another show of humility.



Observation



Interpretation

1a. Observe *John 1:29–42*. How did John identify Jesus and describe His purpose?

1b. How did John’s disciples respond to John’s testimony about Jesus? (*John 1:35–37*)

2a. In what way did John display humility in this scene?

2b. What did John mean when said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:1–8; 2:1–4*)?

2c. What did John mean by calling Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the world’s sin (*1 Peter 1:18–19*)?

“I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals.” John really believed that. That is humility. He didn’t say it to impress anybody. We don’t see a hint of pride in John’s pointing his disciples to Jesus. Not a glimmer of self-promotion. The more you study the Baptizer, the more impressed you will be of his authentic humility.

—Chuck Swindoll



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This Joy of Mine Is Now Complete

John 3:22–36

As Jesus' ministry waxed, John's ministry waned. Jesus journeyed north after John baptized Him. John remained south in the Judean countryside. Now, we discover what happened as Jesus returned south and their ministries crossed paths.



Observation



Interpretation

1a. Observe [John 3:22–36](#). What sparked John's statements in this text?

2a. What statements from the Baptizer illustrate his continued humility?

1b. In one sentence, summarize how John identified himself.

2b. John elaborates on Jesus' identity from chapter 1. In what way did John do so ([John 3:28–29, 35](#))?

“He must become greater and greater; I must become less and less.” Talk about a statement worth memorizing. That’s not phony baloney. That’s the real thing. What a wonderful and humble attitude of John to be filled with the joy of Jesus’ success. —Chuck Swindoll



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Application: The Key That Unlocks Humility

“He must increase, I must decrease.” This punchy line from John the Baptizer forms the foundation of our humility. Chuck provides four thoughts for applying this verse personally.

- 1) *Commit to two goals: decrease self, increase Christ.* We exalt Christ, letting Christ steer our lives so that His eternal luster shines brighter.
- 2) *Both goals must occur together.* You can't have one without the other for true humility to blossom. Self-exaltation prevents Christ's increase in our lives.
- 3) *We must permit both goals to happen internally.* True humility cannot be external only. Eventually, pride and arrogance will show their ugly faces. True humility begins inside, then works its way out.
- 4) *These goals require our full commitment.* Our decrease and Christ's increase is not optional. It's essential to true humility just as true humility is to true joy.

Ponder the course of your life and the attitude of your heart. How do Chuck's application points above relate to your spiritual life this season?

Choose one attitude you can embrace or action you practice to allow Christ to increase in your life.



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John had the single-mindedness to prepare people for Christ's ministry on earth. Once Christ arrived, John the Baptizer, in his joy, directed people to follow the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because John beheld Jesus in true glory, John could exude true humility—and so can you!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I pray that You vanquish any vanity in me and tune my heart to sing the praises of Your Son. Only by Your Spirit's work in my heart can I live a truly humble life exalting the Light of the World. Thank You for showing me that light. Please help me to continue walking in it. In the strong name of Jesus I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. We recommend you purchase Chuck's *book Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* if you do not already have a copy. You can also read Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* introductions on sts.insight.org.



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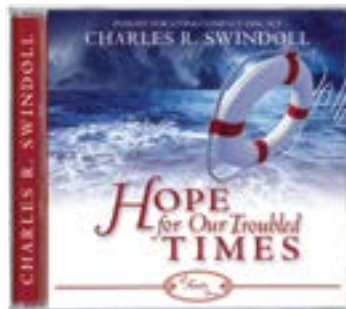
John 1; 3



Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 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.

