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Scripture tells us of God's indulgence – His excessive leniency, generosity, and consideration. He gives us so much more than we deserve. In Eden, God provided Adam and Eve with everything, and even when they had sinned He was indulgent towards them, laying the seeds of their salvation. More recently we saw how Jesus, who is in very nature God, displayed His indulgence by reaching out to the stubborn Jews and welcoming the outcast woman. But no other story describes the magnitude of God's indulgence more than when God gave His Son to the world.

John 1 is not the traditional Christmas passage. There are no shepherds, angels, or wise men. But in 1:14, John says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us," telling us of the ultimate act of God's indulgence that we celebrate on Christmas.

The first aspect of God's indulgence is that the Word became flesh and ***dwelled*** among men. This is more than Jesus just becoming one of us. The word for "dwell" alludes to a very specific situation in the Old Testament. When the Israelites were being led out of Egypt into the Promised Land, the Lord instructed them to build a tenting of meeting, the Tabernacle, where God's presence could be among men. This indicated a unique relationship between the Israelites and the Lord. In like fashion, God came to be a man and "tent" with us forever. He took on the form of man, with all its weaknesses and frailties. This change was not temporary, but eternal. Jesus remains even today fully God and fully man as He sits at the Father's right hand in heaven.

Secondly, in verse 14, John writes that Jesus is the "one and only, who came from the Father." Again in verse 18 he writes, "the one and only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." John uses the Greek word for "one and only" several times to emphasize the length God went to show His indulgence towards us. Sin separated us from God as it created a gap that could not be bridged. Nothing we could do could reconcile us with God. But God gave His one and only Son to bridge that gap. John reminds us again and again just how precious this one and only Son was to the Father, for us to see just how much He values us. If God could have reconciled us with Him in any other way, He would have.

The idea of giving up your one and only son means more to me now that I have a one and only son, Zachary. When Cindy and I first decided to give our son up to a babysitter, we thought about all other options beforehand. We did not do it lightly. The idea of handing over my only son to a stranger was terrifying. When we first handed over Zac to the babysitter, I broke down crying. I gained a deeper understanding of what it means to be separated from your one and only son.

Furthermore, as we can see from John's usage of the word, he pairs every reference of "one and only" with a reference to God's love. We see this in the famous verse, 3:16, but perhaps even more clearly in 1 John 4:9, which says, "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." God chose to give His Son to save mankind, demonstrating for all to see how much He loves us. This was certainly nothing we earned, but came directly from God's indulgence toward us.

That Jesus came to "dwell" with us and that God gave His one and only Son shows the extent of His indulgence. Finally, we see one more time that Jesus makes God "known" to us. In the past, the Israelites had a relationship with God, but something was missing. They had never seen God truly. But Jesus makes God known to us. The word for "make known" in Greek is *exegeomai*. This means to draw out meaning and explain. Jesus exegetes God, so that we can see and know Him. Through the Son, you can have a personal relationship with the Father and be reconciled with Him.

Isaiah 9 says that Jesus is the "Prince of Peace." He brings eternal peace between man and God. Jesus came to be a man, to live a perfect life, die on the cross, and be raised so that we might be at peace with God. From the beginning in Eden God showed his indulgence. He is willing to forgive, even if you cannot repay your debt to him. And what more could He do to show His love for you than to send His one and only Son, Jesus? He could not do more than that.