

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY ONE

Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

A Survey of Philippians

From start to finish, Philippians is a letter that makes you smile!

—Charles R. Swindoll

ONE of the ancient proverbs from Solomon's pen addresses the value of joy in our lives:

*A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.* (Proverbs 17:22)

Joy prompts healing—both physically and emotionally. What an amazing gift from the Lord is this joy, supplied to all who know Jesus as Savior! In this poignant letter of friendship and faith, the apostle Paul advocated for a lasting joy to undergird the life of all believers.

This letter was originally addressed to a small pocket of Christians living in Philippi—a Roman colony located in Macedonia, a few miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Though writing during a time of his own house arrest, Paul urged his readers to rejoice in suffering and to trade their anxious thoughts for a sentinel of peace to guard their minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you begin this study, pause a moment for prayer and praise, offering a word of thanksgiving to the Savior of your soul!



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Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

A Survey of Philippians



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Like any love letter, Paul's letter to the Philippians is best read in one sitting, with eager anticipation. Open your Bible to this New Testament book and take a few moments to read it in its entirety. Consider even reading the book aloud to experience its beauty more fully.



Observation: A Summary of Paul's Philippian Letter

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you understand the setting and key ideas. Printed below is Chuck Swindoll's overview chart of the book of Philippians organized by chapter and theme. As you look over the chart, make some notes about what stands out as helpful in wrapping your mind around the larger message of Paul's letter.

Philippians: A Letter That Makes You Smile

Author: Paul Date: circa AD 62

There is	Joy in Living	Joy in Serving	Joy in Sharing	Joy in Resting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when we don't get what we want• in spite of circumstances• even with conflicts <p>Chapter 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• starts with right attitude• maintained through right theology• encouraged by right models <p>Chapter 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a warning• a testimony• a goal• a command <p>Chapter 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unity• peace• contentment <p>Chapter 4</p>
Christ	. . . My Life	. . . My Model	. . . My Goal	. . . My Contentment
Spirit	His Provision (1:19)	His Fellowship (2:1)	His Worship (3:3)	His Peace (4:7)
Positive Reaction	To Difficulty <i>Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. (1:12)</i>	To Others <i>Do all things without grumbling or disputing. (2:14)</i>	To the Past <i>Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (3:13–14)</i>	To the “Unchangeables” <i>Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (4:11)</i>
Tone	Warm, encouraging, affirming			
Key Words	“Rejoice,” “Christ,” “Mind,” “Act”			
Uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No major problem passages• “Joy” is found in each chapter• Not one quotation from the Old Testament		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christ mentioned over forty times• Most positive of all Paul’s letters, yet written while he was chained to a Roman guard	
Key Verse	“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)			

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A Survey of Philippians

Now you try! Take a few minutes to complete your own overview of Philippians. Assign each chapter a theme, and include key words and a key verse that bring each section into focus. Fill in the blanks below with your discoveries. You'll be amazed at how quickly you grasp the overall message and structure of this powerful New Testament epistle—and the results will make you smile!

Chapter 1	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Chapter 2	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	



Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

A Survey of Philippians

Chapter 3	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Chapter 4	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Now you're ready to make some decisions about Paul's overall meaning in this letter. This next step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is referred to as interpretation.



Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

A Survey of Philippians



Interpretation: Matters of the Heart

The process of interpretation ties all of your study together and offers a singularly powerful idea that must be embraced and acted upon in faith. For the apostle, his aim was threefold:

- To *encourage* his friends at Philippi (Philippians 1:3–30)
- To *warn* them about the dangers of false teachers and the risk of falling from their faith (3:1–4, 15–19)
- To *thank* beloved believers for their partnership in the spread of the gospel (4:14–16)

Paul wrapped his strong arms of encouragement around the Philippian believers in this letter of affection. And though not intended as a theological treatise, Paul's words flowed with rich doctrinal overtones (Philippians 2:1–11). In his message, Chuck makes this important interpretive statement:

The great love songs of the past were written for one person, most often . . . yet they have stirred the hearts of millions of other lovers to whom the song was not written. So it is with these great letters. I personally think we have fallen into the wrong pattern of thinking when it comes to interpreting them (the epistles) for today. They are letters to be read, understood, and applied personally. But to think of them as treatises, needing each verb or noun or adjective dissected, is to miss the point. That is especially true of Paul's Philippian letter. It is one to be enjoyed and appreciated not merely analyzed. You can sense Paul's deep sentiment in his opening greeting.

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. (1:7–8)

In each of the following passages from Philippians, write down how Paul's great theme of Christian joy relates to the experience of the Christians to whom he wrote:

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. (1:3–5)



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A Survey of Philippians

Joy was the motivation behind Paul's _____ for the Philippian believers.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. (Philippians 2:1–2)

Paul felt great joy (complete happiness!) when the Philippian believers committed themselves to _____ wholeheartedly with each other, _____ one another, and worked together with one _____ and _____.

Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. . . . Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. (2:25, 29)

Paul urged the Philippian believers to welcome his special envoy, Epaphroditus, and to do so with an attitude of Christian love and great _____!

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. (3:1)

Paul made clear that Christian joy comes from _____, and the joy that flows from our confidence in Him provides a necessary safeguard for our _____.

What power and value there is in this virtue of Christian joy! Yet as important as joy is to the Christian life, it's not something that can be mustered up on our own; joy is formed in us by the Spirit of God.



Correlation: How Joy Is Formed in Us

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. When Paul wrote to the Christians at Galatia, he revealed the fruits of a vibrant, Spirit-filled life. Not surprisingly, joy makes the list!

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things! (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).*



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A Survey of Philippians



Application: Finding Joy in Our Relationship with Christ

Chuck offered four basic principles on the experience of joy based on this overview of Philippians:

1. *For living in joy, I need the best model: Christ* (Philippians 1:21). How would you fill in the blank on the following statement? “For to me, living means living for _____, and dying is even better.”
2. *For serving with joy, I need the right attitude: the attitude of Christ* (2:5–11). In what ways can you demonstrate the mind of Christ in your ministry? Your relationship to your spouse or children? Toward those with whom you disagree?
3. *For sharing a life of joy, I need an eternal goal: life with Christ* (3:14). In one sentence, how would you summarize your life goal or mission?
4. *For resting in joy, I need God’s peace, which comes from trusting Christ* (4:6–7). What anxious thoughts are robbing you of God’s peace and joy?

What keeps you from bringing these worries to Jesus in prayer?



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A Survey of Philippians



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, that in Your presence is fullness of joy and that in Your right hand are pleasures forevermore! Please do whatever needs to be done to form that joy in me by Your gracious Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY ONE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

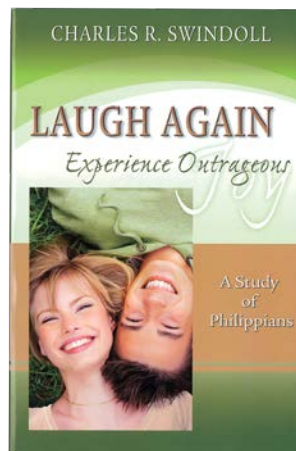
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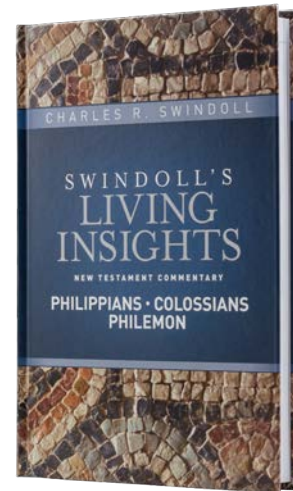
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY TWO

Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

Joy is an attitude determined by confidence in God—that He is at work and in control, allowing all things to happen for one ultimate purpose: His greater glory.
—Charles R. Swindoll

THE art of penning a personal letter has all but vanished in our high-tech, digital world. In ancient days, however, letters were a primary means of communicating information as well as deeply personal expressions. That is certainly true of the New Testament letters, called epistles, and most pointedly true of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

As we study this letter with Chuck Swindoll, we will do so with care so that we note the information Paul communicated and let this very personal letter move through our minds and into our hearts. After all, it is through these New Testament epistles, like Philippians, that we can connect with the heart and mind of Jesus.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take some time to contemplate all you know and appreciate about the book of Philippians. Perhaps there is a favorite verse or passage that comes to mind. Offer an expression of gratitude to the Lord for the wonderfully encouraging gift of Philippians!



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Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Few New Testament epistles communicate such personal affection or levels of personal sentiment as Philippians. Before you begin this study, read Philippians in its entirety. As you do, imagine yourself in a group of first-century Christians in Philippi. You're huddled around a small chimney fire listening with great interest as Paul's words are read aloud. As you read, underline, circle, or highlight words or expressions that feel deeply personal to you.

This would be a good time to locate *Philippi* on a Bible map and orient yourself to its location. Find the map titled "Paul's Missionary Journeys" or something similar. Philippi lies on the north shore of the Aegean Sea and on the eastern boundary of Macedonia. Once you've located the city on a map, look up *Philippi* in your Bible dictionary and read about the importance of this New Testament city. For an online resource, read the article "*Philippi*" in the Encyclopedia of the Bible on BibleGateway.com. Make some notes below on what you learn.



Observation: A Heartfelt Greeting—Philippians 1:1–11

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you start to understand the setting and key ideas. Paul's greeting to the Philippian church is filled with deep expressions and rich language.

From whom does Paul say the letter originated (Philippians 1:1)?

In the eyes of the Philippians, Paul and Timothy were probably greater-than-life heroes. In Paul's eyes, however, he and Timothy were much different than that. How did Paul describe Timothy and himself?



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

Paul highlighted three groups of individuals to whom he wrote in Philippians 1:1–11. Locate each group and list them below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What phrase did Paul use to describe the Christians at Philippi (Philippians 1:1)?

Paul closed his brief introduction with a traditional blessing, commending to the believers at Philippi two powerful gifts from God the Father. What were those gifts (1:2)?

_____ and _____

Joyful Thanksgiving

Following the opening greeting, Paul described in affectionate terms how deeply he and Timothy felt about the Philippian believers. His words were centered on his commitment to pray personally for them.

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. (Philippians 1:3–9)



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

With each ensuing expression, Paul shared his intense love and affection for the Christians at Philippi. Under each passage below, write out a one or two-word description of the sentiment expressed:

Paul expressed _____ for the Philippian believers (Philippians 1:3).

Paul experienced _____ each time he prayed for the Philippian believers (1:4).

Paul showed _____ in God and in His work in the lives of the Philippian believers (1:6).

Paul wanted the Philippian believers to know that they held a _____ in his heart (1:7).

Paul expressed both his great _____ and _____ for the Philippian believers (1:8).



Interpretation: Paul's Desire for the Philippian Church

Based on Paul's deep affection for the church at Philippi, he desired that each believer experience both a sense of partnership with him in the gospel and a deepening of their experience with Christ. By studying the meaning and significance of a few key words, you can develop an overall interpretation of Paul's opening message to those beloved followers of Christ.

By identifying himself and Timothy as “slaves” of Jesus Christ in Philippians 1:1, Paul demonstrated his desire to model a servant's attitude for the Philippian believers.

The Greek word *doulos* used in verse 1 carries the idea of an individual bound to the service of another. If you have a Bible dictionary, look up the word *slave*, and read about the cultural significance of slavery, particularly in New Testament times. For an online resource, take a look at the note attached to “*slaves*” in the New English Translation at lumina.bible.org.

How would Paul's willingness to enslave himself to Christ demonstrate his level of commitment to the Philippian Christians?



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

Paul also expressed a confidence in their spiritual growth that was rooted in the power and goodness of God (Philippians 1:6). Ultimately, Paul desired that their spiritual maturity be “finished” or completed in Christ. The word Paul used, translated “finished,” is a form of the Greek word *tetelestai*—the same word Jesus used just moments before His death when He declared, “It is *finished*!” (John 19:30, emphasis added).

What do you think is the relationship between the *finished* work of Christ and Paul’s confidence in God’s ability to *finish* His work in the lives of the Philippian Christians?

Not only did Paul express great confidence in God to accomplish His work in the lives of God’s people at Philippi, he also expressed a remarkable depth of personal affection for them as well (Philippians 1:7–8).

God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion [affection] of Christ Jesus. (1:8)

The word Paul used to express this deep love for the Philippians is *splanchnon*, meaning “the inner part.” Paul felt a deep, inner love and compassion for these people to whom he wrote this heartfelt letter—a compassion drawn from the heart of Christ Himself (Matthew 9:36; 14:14).

Read back through Paul’s words in Philippians 1, and highlight or underline in your Bible the words or phrases he used that expressed this deep love and sentiment.

What impact would such loving expressions have had on these Christians?

According to verse 9, what relationship did Paul draw between his love for the Philippians and his desire for their spiritual growth?



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

What did Paul express as his ultimate goal for the believers at Philippi (Philippians 1:11)?

Just as Paul believed the work of Christ in the Philippian believers' lives issued as affection toward each other, he commanded the believers in all the churches he founded to love one another with that same godly affection.



Correlation: The Joy of Expressing Godly Affection

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. Read each New Testament passage below and write a sentence or two explaining how each relates to the words Paul wrote to the church at Philippi.

Philippians 2:1–4

Romans 12:9–13

Galatians 5:22

2 Timothy 1:3–4



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11

Summarize a central truth that emerges from comparing these verses with Philippians 1:1–11.



Application: Finding Joy in Our Relationship with Christ

Chuck closed his message on this passage with three guiding principles that flow from Paul's passionate words:

1. *Confidence brings joy when you focus on the things and people for which you're thankful* (Philippians 1:3). In the space below, list three things or individuals from your Christian experience for which you're thankful.
2. *Confidence brings joy when you let God be God* (1:6). What situation or concern in your life or who in your family do you need to entrust to the Father's care and purpose? What is keeping you from letting go and allowing God to accomplish His work?
3. *Confidence brings joy when you share the love of Christ with others* (1:9). What are some practical ways you can express godly love and affection for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?



Set Your Sails for Joy

Philippians 1:1–11



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the gracious work You started in me. Thank You also for the affection You showed me in offering forgiveness and grace through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Show me how to outdo my brothers and sisters in Christ with godly affection and love. May You complete Your loving work in and through me, for the praise and glory of Your name. Through Christ, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY TWO

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Set Your Sails for Joy

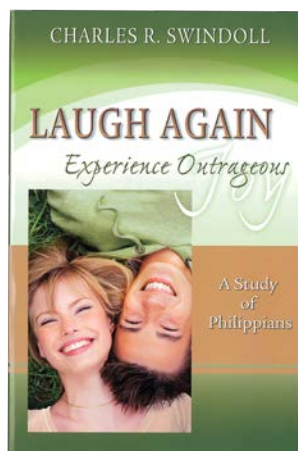
Philippians 1:1–11



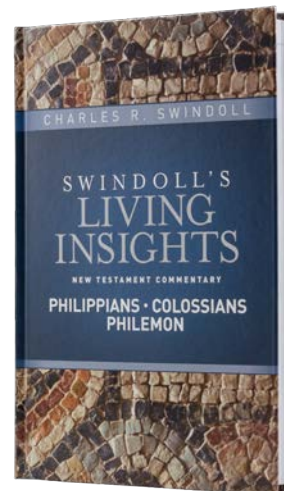
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY THREE

What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit formed in us when we believe the promises of God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

FOR to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better” (Philippians 1:21). Paul learned that circumstances are forever changing. Like the tide, the world’s economy rises and falls. Like the morning fog, happiness rolls in and then disappears.

Yet, as you will discover in this study, Paul offered a way to live beyond the limitations and uncertainties of circumstances. Such an existence has been designed by God for His people who live a life centered in His Son, Jesus Christ. Put simply, a Christ-centered life is the only way to live!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In this moving section of Paul’s letter to the Philippian church, we learn that Paul not only taught about the power of a Christ-centered life, he was also living it. Before moving on to the next step in your study, pause for prayer. Ask the Lord to open your heart to what He has for you in His Word. Praise Him for whatever circumstances you face that are drawing you to rely more fully on the presence and power of Christ.



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What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Let's face it, many of us search desperately for circumstances that will make us happy while others have determined to live above their circumstances and find their fulfillment in Christ. Choosing the right mind-set becomes key. If contrasted, these two approaches might look something like this:

Negative Mind-Set	Positive Mind-Set
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those who need certain <i>things</i> to be joyfulThose who are dependent on <i>others</i> to be joyfulThose who see joy as being . . . “out there”—always in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those who require virtually <i>nothing</i> tangible to give them joyThose who create their <i>own</i> reasons for joyThose who choose to experience joy <i>now</i>—making it a present reality

As you read and study Philippians 1:12–21, think about each mind-set described above. Be mindful of Paul's circumstances and think about the ways in which he determined to live above his circumstances and experience the present joy of knowing Christ.



Observation: Chained for Christ

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you start to understand the setting and key ideas.

Paul: A Classic Example of How to Live—Philippians 1:12–14

Following a loving greeting, Paul unpacked his chosen way of life, teaching how he rose above his circumstances. Look closely at the passage and do some observing about how Paul's way of life was possible. What clues did Paul include in this text?



What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21

As a victim of an unjust imprisonment, Paul first demonstrated his confidence in Christ. What did Paul reveal to be the reason for “everything that . . . happened” to him in Rome (Philippians 1:12)?

Paul wrote not only about his imprisonment but also about the people around him. Who does Paul refer to as being impacted by his ministry during the time he was writing?

What was the result of Paul’s encountering these individuals?

Paul used a word translated “because” or “because of” in describing his circumstances. How many times did he use this expression in these three verses?

*I am in chains because of _____. And because of my _____,
most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear (1:13–14).*



What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21

Read through the remaining verses from Philippians 1:12–21. Note each time Paul used the word *because* or the phrase *because of* to describe his circumstances. Underline each expression in your Bible where he referred to his situation.

Joyful despite Others—Philippians 1:15–18

In verse 15, Paul contrasted two groups of people that surrounded him during his ministry. What did Paul describe as being the motive of the first group?

What about the second group of people?

Paul spared no words in describing the motives of certain individuals around him who, because of their attitude, could have become a source of sorrow and frustration rather than joy. List the words or phrases Paul used to describe these pesky people in verses 15–18.

-
-
-
-
-



What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21



Interpretation: Paul's Secret for Rising above Circumstances

Just reading Paul's description of his situation when he wrote this letter—being in chains for the gospel and surrounded by envious rivals who challenged everything he did—it's a wonder he was able to maintain such a joyful, positive mind-set. But clues in the text help us grasp the meaning of Paul's words, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21 NASB). His readers, then and now, can discover how such joy is possible when their mind-sets are rooted in both a hope in Christ and a contentment with their circumstances.

Hopeful Regardless of Uncertainties—Philippians 1:19–20

With the gospel spreading and people proclaiming Christ all because of Paul's imprisonment, Paul was greatly encouraged. And this helped him continue trusting in God instead of focusing on the uncertainties of his circumstances:

For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. (Philippians 1:19–20)

Paul's hope was rooted in two things: one natural and the other supernatural. What two things did he center his hope on for his deliverance (1:19)?

The natural:

The supernatural:

What did Paul fully expect and hope to be the outcome of both his life and his death (1:20)?



What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21

Contented Because Christ Is in Control—Philippians 1:21

Paul then declared the most self-evident of all truths concerning his life, his determination to rise above his circumstances, and the One who made all that possible: *“For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better”* (Philippians 1:21). For Paul, the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment was the pursuit of Christ; that’s the secret of joy for all believers—cultivating a Christ-centered mind-set that determines the course of both life and death.



Correlation: Focusing on Christ throughout Your Whole Life

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. Paul reminded the Philippian believers of the power of a Christ-centered life.

Read Paul’s words to the Colossian believers in Colossians 3:1–4. What about these words reminds you of Paul’s letter to the Philippians?

According to Colossians 3:1–4, in what way did Paul develop his teaching on the importance of living life with a focus on Christ?

How does Colossians 3:1–4 help you understand Paul’s words to the Philippians about bringing honor to Christ in life and in death?



What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21



Application: Finding Joy in Our Relationship with Christ

Application reveals specific impact points when powerful biblical truths affect the way we think, respond, and act out our relationship with God and others. Close out this study by reflecting on the three applications Chuck Swindoll offered from this passage:

1. *When Christ is central, He broadens the dimensions of our circumstances.* How might you begin to view your present situation as an opportunity to impact others for Christ?
2. *When Christ is central, He delivers us from a preoccupation with others.* What person or group of people have become an unhealthy object of your focus and your thoughts? What can you do to surrender that focus to Christ?
3. *When Christ is central, He calms our fears regarding ourselves and our future.* What aspects of your circumstances or your future are causing you anxiety or fear? What steps can you take to allow the Lord to deliver you from those concerns?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for where You have placed me. Forgive me for my negative attitude, questioning Your gracious plan and taking for granted Your generous provision. Help me to fix my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. For the praise and glory of Your great name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY THREE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

What a Way to Live!

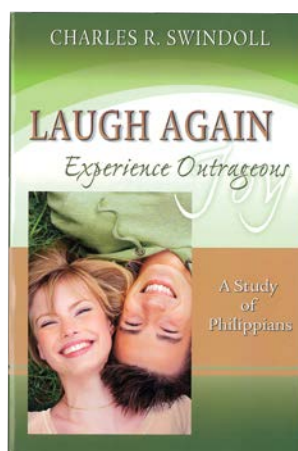
Philippians 1:12–21



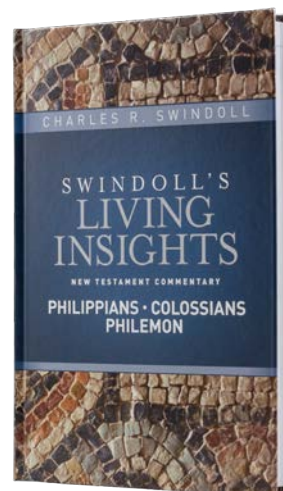
Tools for Digging Deeper



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S03
8

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY FOUR

Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

Paul's credo could be paraphrased, "My earnest expectation, my bold hope is that Christ be exalted."

—Charles R. Swindoll

LIFE is full of painful dilemmas! *Volitional* dilemmas have to do with making a hard choice between two equally appealing situations, such as what college to attend or what career path to take. *Emotional* dilemmas press us to decide between our head—what makes sense—and our heart—what feels right. *Geographical* dilemmas arise when we are faced with choosing one of two different places, such as whether to accept a new job that requires moving away from all that is familiar.

We join Chuck Swindoll in this *Searching the Scriptures* study on Philippians 1:21–30 to learn how Paul responded to his painful dilemma that we might face ours with the same Spirit-empowered joy as he did.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Describe an example of a dilemma you have faced and how you found direction.

Thankfully, the Lord faithfully leads us through His Word if we turn to Him with our dilemmas. Ask the Lord for wisdom today for your situation. Invite the Holy Spirit alongside you and ask Him to guide you down the right path as you search the Scriptures today.



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Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

The apostle Paul stated his life credo beautifully in Philippians 1:20–21:

According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (NASB)

Paul desired to be with the Lord, but he also wanted to be with the Philippians to help them grow in their faith and as a church. That was *his* dilemma. Perhaps with a sigh he exclaimed, “I do not know which to choose.” What could he do? What should he do? His irresolution and indecision left him challenged.

In his message, Chuck listed some pros and cons of being with the Lord and staying with the Philippians.

Pros of Being with the Lord

- Being immediately in the presence of Christ (Philippians 1:23)
- Safety from stonings, beatings, imprisonments, threats, and sleepless nights (2 Corinthians 11:23–27)
- Instant relief from his “thorn in the flesh” (12:7 NASB)
- The fullness of joy and the eternal pleasure from the presence of God (Psalm 16:11)

Cons of Being with the Lord

- Being absent from the Philippian believers
- Inability to provide an earthly witness to Christ
- A gap left among the apostles



Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

Pros of Remaining with the Philippians

- Continuation of a fruitful ministry among believers
- Ability to provide security and hope to persecuted believers
- Ability to provide training for the next generation of servant-leaders

Cons of Remaining with the Philippians

- Absence from the physical presence of Christ
- Absence from heavenly glory
- Continued suffering in the world



Observation: Paul's Personal Dilemma—Philippians 1:21–26

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you capture the setting and key ideas, which become important building blocks for interpretation. Paul's personal dilemma gave expression to some of the most powerful theological reflections in Scripture.

Read again Philippians 1:20–30. How many times did Paul refer to Christ in these few verses?

What other words did Paul repeat through this section? List them below.



Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

Based on reading these verses, how would you state in your own words Paul's dilemma? What words in the passage help you come to your conclusion?

We wouldn't say that Paul had a death wish, but he was torn between longing to be with Christ (which required Paul's death!) and remaining alive to encourage his beloved Philippians. As he built a case for staying alive, he challenged the Philippian believers to join him in the struggle to proclaim the gospel.



Interpretation: A Spiritual Challenge to the Church—Philippians 1:27–30

Based on Paul's deep affection for the church at Philippi, he desired that all believers experience both a sense of partnership in the gospel and a deepening of their experience with Christ. Studying key words in the passage can unlock the meaning of Paul's opening message to these beloved followers of Christ.

Paul issued a multilevel spiritual challenge to the Philippian Christians. First, he urged the Philippians to conduct themselves “in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ” (Philippians 1:27). Paul used the Greek word *politeuomai*, which means to “to live one's life” according to one's place of citizenship. Why would Paul be concerned about the “conduct” of the Philippian believers?

He also urged the Philippians to strive “together for the faith of the gospel” (1:27 NASB). Paul used the Greek word *sunathleō*, which carries the idea of athletes struggling as a team to defeat their opponents. Why would this be an important aspect of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians?



Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

Furthermore, Paul urged the Philippians to stand together in the face of intimidation from the enemies of the gospel. How does standing together as Christians in the face of opposition relate to striving together for the cause of Christ?

By being transparent about his own dilemma—choosing between going to be with Christ and remaining to serve the Philippian Christians—Paul emphasized the joy of joining together in both striving for the gospel and suffering for it *together*!

HINT: See page 31 of Chuck's [commentary](#) on this section of Philippians in Swindoll's *Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*.



Correlation: Bearing the Struggle Together in Christ

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support interpretation. Paul's clarion motif of banding together in the face of spiritual opposition reprises in another New Testament epistle written to believers facing a similar dilemma of persecution:

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23–25)

In what ways do these words relate directly to Paul's letter to the Philippian believers?



Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

What specific actions are we to take as a family of believers when faced with the dilemma of persecution?



Application: The Privilege of Trusting in Christ

Ultimately, once we go to be with Jesus in heaven, we will be delivered from all the challenges and heartaches, dangers and terrors associated with our being persecuted because of our faith in Him. Until that time, we are left to face these dilemmas with faith and hope. Chuck reminds us, however:

- We are not alone (Philippians 1:27).
- We are promised the victory (1:28).
- We are called to suffer (1:29).
- We are in good company (1:30).

How does knowing that we are not alone strengthen our faith and give us hope?

How does accepting Christ's victory at the cross give us courage to keep the faith in the face of mounting opposition to the gospel?



Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

Philippians 1:21–30

How does joining in the suffering for the gospel shine the light of Christ's hope to a watching world?

How can believers encourage each other in the face of spiritual opposition?



A FINAL PRAYER

*Thank You, Father, for reminding me that there is much joy in sharing in the sufferings of Christ. And thank You for my **brothers and sisters in Christ around the world** struggling together for His name. Grant them Your personal and powerful protection and hope today. Cause them to stand firm in their faith until the day they stand before You and receive their ultimate reward. In the powerful name of Jesus, I pray, amen.*



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY FOUR

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Laughing through Life's Dilemmas

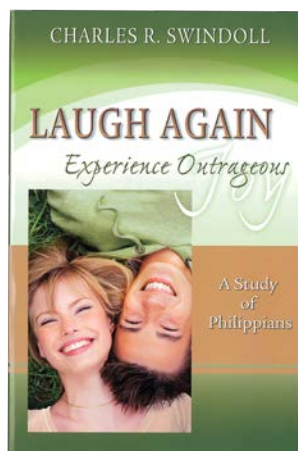
Philippians 1:21–30



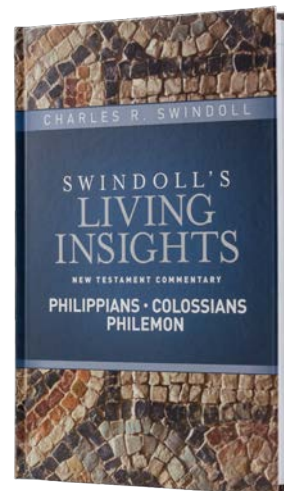
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S04
8

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY FIVE

The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

Let's start with a one-question quiz: "Can you name the most Christ-like attitude on earth?"

—Charles R. Swindoll

EARLY on in his letter to the Philippians, Paul stated his credo: "For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better" (Philippians 1:21).

Paul lived his post-conversion life with that credo guiding everything he did. As he wrote to the Christians at Philippi, he developed for them a theology of surrender fueled by one overarching, Christlike attitude: *humility*. We'll see that attitude literally in the flesh since Paul beautifully expounded the wondrous, albeit mysterious, incarnation of Jesus—God humbly "taking the form" of a servant to lead all of us to glory (2:7 NASB).



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Most Christians who've known Christ for even a few years know the uplifting portion of Paul's letter to the Philippians that encourages prayer in place of worry, making it heaven's antidote for an anxious spirit. Before you begin your study, ask yourself this question:

What is causing me to be anxious today that I've yet to give to the Lord in prayer?

Take all the time you need to bring your life, your family, your circumstances to God in prayer by listing out what is making you anxious, then bring those things to God in prayer. When you do so, with thanksgiving in your heart, He promises to replace your fears and anxious woes with a perfect peace to guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).



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The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

If someone had asked the apostle Paul to explain the secret to Christlikeness in one word, he would've likely said *humility*. Jesus described Himself in such terms with an invitation: “Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart” (Matthew 11:29).

In other words, Jesus embodied humility, putting the needs of others before His own. What other examples of Jesus' life and ministry demonstrate His humility? See how many examples you can think of on your own and list them below.

How would you define *humility*?

To amplify the meaning of “lowliness of heart,” I think of such things as being generous with one’s time and possessions, one’s money and energy. Unselfishness means looking out for the other person rather than simply one’s own self. In a word: servanthood. —Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Paul's Plea for Christlikeness—Philippians 2:1–4

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul appealed to the believers at Philippi to embrace the attitude of Christ, and he did so through a series of questions followed by corresponding exhortations.



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ([Philippians 2:1–4](#))

Unity Flows from a Christlike Attitude—Philippians 2:1–2

As Paul asked a series of questions, what did he list as benefits of belonging to Christ?

Fill in the following blanks based on Paul's words in Philippians 2:1.

1. Encouragement comes from _____ to Christ.
2. Comfort comes from Christ's _____.
3. Fellowship together resides in the _____.

Verses 1 and 2 express Paul's ideas in positive terms. Verses 3 and 4 express Paul's concern in negative terms signified by the repeated use of the word *don't*. What attitudes did Paul list as those that should not characterize Christians (Philippians 2:3–4)?



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

How Unity Is Accomplished—Philippians 2:3–4

Paul not only exhorted the Philippian Christians to embrace the attitude of Christ, but he also showed how unity in Christ could be accomplished. He described three practical points to follow:

1. Never let selfishness or conceit motivate you.
2. Regard others as more important than yourself.
3. Don't limit your attention to only your interests, but include the interests of others.

In verses 3 and 4, what word or words did Paul repeat to emphasize his point?

In your own words, summarize the principles found in these two verses.



Interpretation: Christ's Life Before and After—Philippians 2:5–11

Interpretation is the step in your Bible study that answers the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey.

In this section, for instance, Paul revealed Christ's humble attitude by showing us His life before, during, and after His coming to earth.



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

Prior to His Incarnation

To highlight Christ's lowliness of mind, Paul first revealed the height of glory the Savior enjoyed in heaven (*Philippians 2:5–6*).

What two phrases in verse 6 express the deity of Jesus?

Paul explained that Jesus, though God, willingly relinquished His hold on all things “deity” in order to become human.

How does Christ's willingness to relinquish His rightful privilege as God demonstrate His humility?

For some of you who have built a successful business but who are now growing older, you're realizing how hard it is to give up control. You think to yourself, “No one can run this like I can!” Nope, that's not true. Consider Jesus. He had control in His hands and willingly released it. He did not regard His position with the Father “a thing to be grasped.” We want to seize, to cling to, to hold on to. He let go of it all. —Chuck Swindoll

In His Coming

That incredible path, from heavenly sovereign to earthly victim crucified on a cross, is next portrayed in *Philippians 2:7–8*.



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

Consider the downward steps Jesus made in leaving heaven and coming to earth:

He gave up His divine privileges . . .

He took the humble position of a slave . . .

He died a criminal's death on a cross . . .

How did Paul use the downward progression of Christ's coming to explain Christ's humility?

According to Paul, why was Christ willing to do this (Philippians 2:8)?

In his book *Laugh Again*, Chuck explained the meaning of Jesus emptying Himself:

To accomplish our salvation on a cross, Jesus first had to empty Himself. This does not mean that He gave up His deity; rather, it signifies that Christ set aside the independent use of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Father's will.¹

Since His Departure

The Father's will mandated that Jesus descend into the lowest depth of suffering for our sins. But once our debt was paid, God elevated His Son to a position of highest glory and honor!

*Therefore, God 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)*



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

What is the relationship, according to Paul, between Jesus' willingness to humble Himself and God exalting Him to the highest place?

How is obedience to God connected to humility?

What is significant about the response of all people to the exalted Jesus (Philippians 2:10–11)?



Correlation: The Disciple's Calling to Follow Jesus

Correlation compares different passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. The gospel writers recorded the connection Jesus made between being His disciple and remaining humbly obedient to Him.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 16 compare to Paul's words in Philippians 2:5–11?



The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

In both passages, how does suffering relate to the attitude of humility which Paul emphasized?



Application: What about You and Me?

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Obviously, what's in view is the attitude of our hearts.

The best response to this passage is to humble yourself before the Lord. And, like King David, ask the Lord to search your heart to determine if there is anything hindering you from submitting to Him—to Christ's call to follow Him in humility and obedience (*Psalm 139:23–24*).

Once He makes that known, be willing to offer your entire self to Him in humble, obedient submission. Take a reflective moment and, in the space below, express your heart's desire to the Lord.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the perfect illustration of humble obedience in the person of Jesus Christ. Form His humility in me until I am wholly and unswervingly Yours. For the glory of His name, I pray, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Laugh Again: Experience Outrageous Joy *Insight for Living Bible Study Guide* (Plano, TX: Insight for Living, 1992), 40.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY FIVE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

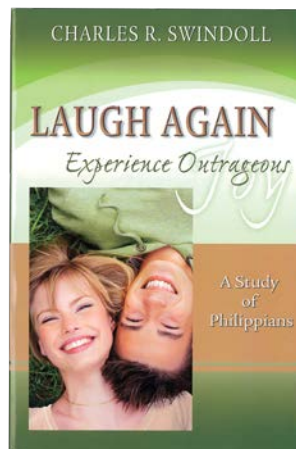
Philippians 2:1–11



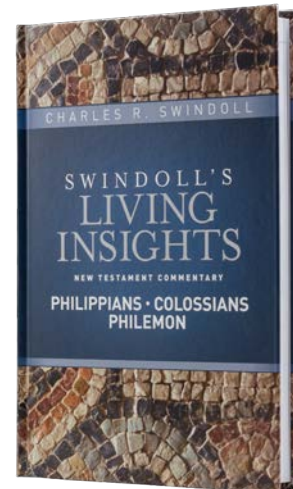
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S05
9

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY SIX

While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18

*There's no getting around this truth: not only was Christ our perfect example . . .
He is our example of perfection!*

—Charles R. Swindoll

PAUL exhorted Christ's followers to follow Christ's example (Philippians 2:5), which can be a daunting goal. Some attempt to be like Christ by trying hard to do exactly what Christ did. When they fall short, they fake it by putting on a show of spirituality. They simply lip-sync the great virtues and doctrines of the Christian faith, focusing on image rather than substance.

It takes more, though, than perspiration and performance to follow Christ's example. It takes power—from the inside. And that is what separates Christ's example from all others. He *can* enable us to be like Him. How? Through the Holy Spirit who lives inside His followers. By His strength we can learn to keep our balance as we walk in Jesus' footsteps.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before beginning the study, pause for prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see truth in God's Word. Consider this prayer of David to help prime your heart:

*I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.
I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.
Be good to your servant,
that I may live and obey your word.
Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:15–18 NLT)*



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While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18

Write your own prayer below.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few minutes to read Philippians 2:5–11 as a review. Paul emphasized Jesus as our example by demonstrating how He lived unselfishly and in a state of humble willingness to obey.

What examples did Paul give of Christ's selflessness and willingness to obey the Father?

What were the results of God choosing to exalt Jesus (Philippians 2:9–11)?

Based on the example of Jesus, Paul developed for his readers a vision for living a balanced life: balance between *purpose* and *power*, *attitude* and *action*, and *seriousness* and *joy*.

As a man among men, Jesus lived a life of obedience, submission, and purity. When faced with the ultimate death—death on a cross—He willingly endured its anguish. What a model! But who can possibly follow such a lofty example? Those who try often gravitate toward legalistic and unrealistic extremes, resulting in a life of hidden hypocrisy or demoralizing frustration. Yet God's desire for us is balance; being all we're meant to be through His strength—a vision made possible when we follow Him and rely fully and wholly on His supernatural enablement. —Chuck Swindoll



While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18



Observation: Balancing Purpose and Power—Philippians 2:12–13

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul appealed to the believers at Philippi to embrace the attitude of Christ, and he did so through a series of questions followed by corresponding exhortations.

Read Philippians 2:12–13. As you read, make observations about Paul's instruction to these Christians he loved so passionately.

How did he refer to the Philippian Christians (Philippians 2:12)?

Paul's instruction at first glance appears to be a contradiction:

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (2:12–13)



Interpretation: Our Great Balancing Act—Philippians 2:14–18

Interpretation in Bible study answers the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey. In each section below, take a few minutes to think through the reflection questions aimed at discovering the meaning of Paul's words.

Balancing Attitude and Action

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. (Philippians 2:14–16)



While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18

What negative attitudes and actions did Paul warn the Philippians to avoid?

What is the significance of Paul's metaphor of Christians "shining like bright lights" in a world of darkness and perversion (Philippians 2:15)?

How does a Christian's attitude about sin impact his or her ability to shine the light of Christ?

Balancing Seriousness and Joy

But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy. (Philippians 2:17–18)

Paul emphasized the shared experience of joy among believers.

In what way did the Philippian Christians share in the joy of serving with Paul?



While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18



Correlation: Light in a Dark World

Correlation compares different passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Similar to Paul's message to the Philippians, Matthew recorded how Jesus spoke about the shining light of a believer's life as a powerful antidote to sin's hold on the world.

"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:14–16)

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 5 compare to Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2?

What is the balance Jesus envisioned between living in the light of salvation and shining the light to a dark world?



Application: Self, Our Battle

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Obviously, what's in view is the attitude of our hearts balanced with our faith being put into action—shining the light of Christ to the world.

In his message, Chuck offered this helpful analysis:

Regarding striking this balance, our number one battle will be with SELF. As soon as we begin to make headway, SELF will be there to remind us how "special" we are—deserving of the praise and recognition—and we'll watch as all hopes of true humility fly away in the wind.



While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18

Chuck listed two principles to help stem the tide of self-praise and self-glorification—both of which can quickly prevent the light of Christ from shining through us.

1. When battling self, ask the Lord to help you control its urges to take the credit.
2. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you can control self's tendency to take charge. That requires daily surrender to the Lord and His Word.

How can you put these principles into action today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You alone understand how strong my tendency remains to exalt myself and maintain control of all aspects of my life. I want the light of Christ to shine unhindered through me and to bring glory to You and You alone. Help me to bring myself in full surrender to You and in obedience to Your Word . . . so that Christ, and Christ only, may be seen in me. In His matchless name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY SIX

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

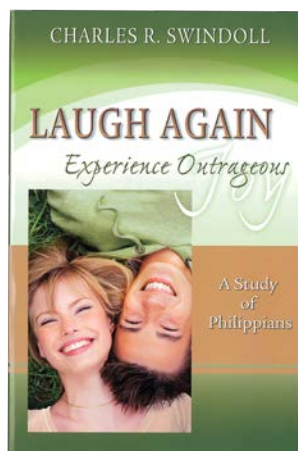
Philippians 2:12–18



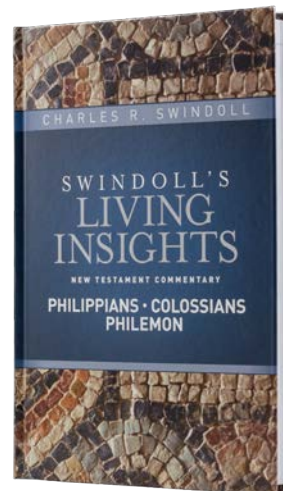
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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY SEVEN

Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Don't let anyone ever tell you that people are not important. When you stop and think very critically, you realize it was people for whom the Savior died. And it will be for people for whom He will one day return!

—Charles R. Swindoll

GOD works in our hearts through the ordinary people in our lives. People play a significant role in God's plan because, first, people are eternal; no one dies and simply dissolves into oblivion. We have eternal souls whose destinations are determined by our response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, God normally accomplishes His work through people. What He could perfectly perform Himself in an instant, He has chosen, instead, to do through imperfect people over time. He could easily spread food before the hungry or pop in an angel to comfort the sick, but He intends for us to do those things.

Two men who took on angels' garb in Paul's life were Timothy and Epaphroditus. Together, they encouraged Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome and gave him the strength to endure. We'll meet these friends and learn to appreciate the joy God offers us through the special people in our lives as we study today's passage, Philippians 2:19–30.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before beginning the study, pause for prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to His truth. He longs to shepherd you through whatever may have you feeling troubled or fearful today. You are not alone. Go to Him with great confidence and ask for His help. Take all the time you need. He is patient and loving, and He's waiting to hear your voice (*Psalms 116:1*).



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Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Few books of the Bible provide more line-by-line encouragement to the weary soul than the book of Philippians. Open to Philippians 2 and read the entire chapter as if reading it for the first time. Underline words or phrases that speak directly to you or your situation . . . even make notes in the margin. Then record some of what you discover in the space provided.

Philippians is about *people*. The letter flows rich with Paul's longing to be with the people at *Philippi* and his gratitude to the Lord for bringing them into his life to encourage and support him in ministry.

Can you name a few people who have encouraged you in your faith? If so, write down their names.

Skim Philippians again. How many names of specific people or groups of people did Paul reference?

Describe some of the emotions he expressed about these individuals.



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

People occupy the center of God's story, from Genesis to Revelation. That's why when a biblical writer makes specific mention of individuals—just as Paul did with his two friends and fellow servants of the gospel, *Timothy* and *Epaphroditus*—it carries unusual significance. At a time when Paul would soon face heaven, these individuals made all the difference on earth.



Observation: Two Friends and Fellow Servants—Philippians 2:19–30

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul commended two individuals to the Philippian church and highlighted their usefulness on behalf of the gospel.

Timothy: A Friend and Son in the Faith—Philippians 2:19–24

The first individual Paul commended to the church at Philippi was Timothy.

If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon. (Philippians 2:19–24)

Using your observation skills, identify the characteristics of Timothy that Paul highlighted, and record them below.

What reason(s) did Paul give for sending Timothy to Philippi?



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Paul compared his relationship to Timothy to that of a father and son. According to Paul, how did that unique bond play out in their ministry (Philippians 2:22)?

Based on Paul's commendation of Timothy to the Philippians, how would you characterize Paul's feelings toward Timothy?

Epaphroditus: A Minister of Encouragement—Philippians 2:25–30

The second individual Paul highlighted is a man by the name of Epaphroditus. Read the following passage that describes this remarkable friend of Paul.

Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away. (Philippians 2:25–30)



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Paul used several words or phrases to describe Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25).

1. “He is a true _____”
2. a “_____”
3. a “_____”
4. “And he was your _____”

Epaphroditus clearly meant much to Paul and to the Philippian Christians. He served Paul and the church even to the point of risking his life for them.

What are some of the emotions Paul described to explain Epaphroditus’ relationship to the Philippian church?

Now that we have a better understanding of the importance of these two men, we can turn our attention to grasping Paul’s motive for including their stories in his letter to the Philippians.



Interpretation: Who People Are and What People Do

Interpretation is the step in your Bible study that answers the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey. In each section below, take a few minutes to think through the reflection questions aimed at discovering the meaning of Paul’s words.

Paul had an ongoing desire for the believers at Philippi to continue to grow in their knowledge of Christ and in their devotion to Him (*Philippians 1:3–11*). Yet, because Paul was in prison, he could not visit the Philippians personally.



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Isn't it significant that Paul, unable to go and minister to the Philippians, was comfortable sending Timothy and Epaphroditus in his place? I think that shows remarkable humility and an often hard-to-find maturity in Christian leaders today. We must resist thinking so highly of ourselves that we miss sharing the joy of serving Christ with others. —Chuck Swindoll

Knowing that Paul was prevented from ministering personally to these dear Christians, how does that help you understand the importance of both Timothy's and Epaphroditus' ministry?

Paul had a two-fold hope for sending Timothy to visit the Philippians. What did Paul hope Timothy would accomplish on his behalf (Philippians 2:19)?

What did he hope Timothy would accomplish on behalf of the Philippians (2:19, 22–23)?

Based on Paul's words, how would you expect he'd wish the Philippians to respond to Timothy's visit?



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

How did Epaphroditus serve both Paul and the Philippian believers?

Epaphroditus most likely acted as a personal courier for a sizeable financial gift the Philippians sent to Paul. How does knowing that explain the significance of the peril he faced on his journey (Philippians 2:30)?

How did Paul want the Philippians to respond to Epaphroditus when he visited them again (2:29)?



Correlation: Focusing on Christ with Friends

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Nearing the end of his life and facing certain execution at the hand of Rome, Paul wrote tenderly to Timothy again, reminding him of the importance of keeping the focus on Christ. But the aged apostle took particular comfort in the faithful encouragement of friends, albeit only a few, who remained committed to him all the way to the end.

Timothy, please come as soon as you can. Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, be sure to bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas. Also bring my books, and especially my papers. . . .



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and those living in the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed at Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick at Miletus.

Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus sends you greetings, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters.

May the Lord be with your spirit. And may his grace be with all of you. (2 Timothy 4:9–13, 19–22)

Paul's tender farewell bares overtones from his heartfelt expression of affection toward the Philippian believers. How do Paul's final words confirm the importance of godly friendships in the work of the gospel?



Application: Three People Who Deserve a Response

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate the heart. God in His goodness has likely brought individuals into your life too. Chuck wants you to be prepared to respond in a way that honors God and takes full advantage of the gift of others, so he offers three practical principles to follow:

1. When God brings a Timothy into your life, He expects you to relate to that person. That means making a commitment to *cultivate a close and lasting relationship*.
2. When God sends an Epaphroditus to minister to you, He expects you to respect him or her. That means being willing to *open your life up to someone's assistance and encouragement*.
3. When God sends His Son across your path, if you are an unbeliever, He expects you to receive Him. That means you humbly and willingly *believe and surrender*.



Friends Make Life More Fun

Philippians 2:19–30

Which of these three people has entered your life and deserves your response? In what ways can you respond?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how grateful the apostle Paul remained even to the end for his closest companions who, though many others deserted him, stayed at his side in his last hours. Thank You, Lord, for faithful, loving friends, though rare, who have courageously loved me and who have never left my side in this walk of faith on earth. Bless each one, Father, in the name of Christ and for His sake, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY SEVEN

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Friends Make Life More Fun

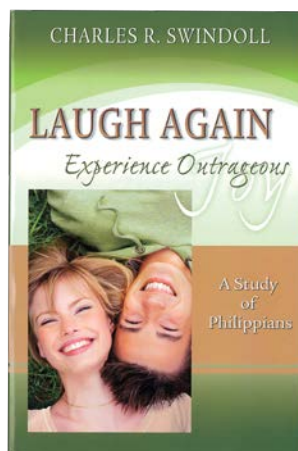
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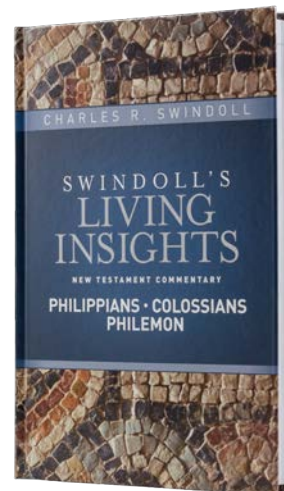
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY EIGHT

Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11

While still on the outskirts of that ancient city—suddenly, a voice which must have sounded like the roar of Niagara Falls broke through: “Saul, Saul . . . why are you persecuting Me?” And the once pious Pharisee got his first glimpse of unvarnished righteousness.

—Charles R. Swindoll

In a society obsessed with high achievers, we learn early that to be recognized, praised, and rewarded, we must perform well. We cut our teeth on the hard fact that this world assigns value to us based on our outward success. Yet, God’s Word reveals a better way—the way that offers worth and value in the pursuit of Christ. We will see the eternal difference that a reliance on Christ, not on ourselves, makes as we study a passage from Philippians 3.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do you find yourself in need of a fresh word from heaven today? Weary of the daily press to live for God but feeling frustrated by your failing self-righteousness? Don’t despair. Jesus loves turning our wasted human effort into a glorious experience of His limitless power. Bow before Him just as you are and confess your need. Ask Him to renew your mind, strengthen your hands, and encourage your heart through His Spirit (*Hebrews 12:12*). He is faithful.



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Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

To one degree or another, we've all been raised on a philosophy that emphasizes personal achievement. But there's a pitfall when we're tempted to translate human achievement into a guarantee for eternal reward. That's what the apostle Paul warned about in Philippians 3. Take a few moments to read Philippians 3 slowly and reflectively. Make some notes about what strikes you as significant.



Observation: Testimony of a High Achiever—Philippians 3:1–6

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul began this section of his Philippians letter stating his purpose in writing:

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. (Philippians 3:1)

Paul had a concern about a potential threat to the Philippians' faith.

A Warning to His Close Friends—Philippians 3:1–3

What did Paul feel posed a threat to the Philippians' faith? Read verses 1–3 and see if you can find clues to support your answer. Use the space below to record your observations.



Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11

How did Paul describe the individuals harassing the Philippian Christians? What images did he invoke (Philippians 3:2–3)?

There were apparently Jews among the Philippians barking about rules and regulations while snarling about the freedom of the Spirit these Philippian believers were experiencing. For that reason, Paul warned about yielding to these junkyard dogs and urged the Philippians to give them a good kick in the teeth! Then, he offered a word of encouragement to those who would rely on Christ:

For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort. (3:3)

Notice Paul's clear description of those who live according to the Spirit and who are "truly circumcised" (3:3). These people:

- Worship by the Spirit of God
- Rely on the accomplishment of Christ
- Resist putting confidence in human effort

In your own words, how would you describe the contrast between living in the flesh—human strength—and experiencing the power of the Spirit in the Christian life?



Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11



Interpretation: The Example of Paul's Experience—Philippians 3:4–11

By writing out that summary above, you've started down the important path toward interpreting the passage! Interpretation helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into the author's intentions. In each section below, take a few minutes to think through the reflection questions aimed at discovering the meaning of Paul's words.

A Revealing of Paul's Proud Record—Philippians 3:4–11

At first, it's easy to dismiss Paul's words about himself as those of a proud scholar bent on bragging and seeking recognition. But there's a reason Paul listed his impressive credentials. Why do you think he went to such lengths to describe his achievements?

This would be an excellent time to find a reliable online commentary on Philippians, such as [Constable's Notes](#), and read about Paul's words regarding his achievements (Philippians 3:5–6). You may also wish to consult Chuck Swindoll's commentary on [Philippians](#). Once you've done some of that study, write down anything that stood out as particularly helpful in understanding Paul's intention for including this conversation?

According to Paul's own confession in verse 7, what changed his mind about his own human capabilities?



Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11

Paul's dramatic experience of Christ changed him forever, resulting in a transformation of Paul's focus and passion. He went from relying fully on his own human effort to experiencing the full power of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry.

Read his post-conversion confession reflectively:

For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right himself depends on faith.
(Philippians 3:8–9)

How does this confession compare to his pre-Christ obsession with self and human effort in Philippians 3:5–7?

Paul ended this section with these bold words:

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (3:10–11)

Suffering no longer frightened him. Death no longer terrorized him. His own credentials no longer impressed him. The man was once for all converted! What impact do you think Paul's words had on the Philippian church?



Happy Hopes for High Achievers

Philippians 3:1–11



Correlation: A Consistent Theme—Romans 8:1–10

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Paul's experience with Christ fueled his entire ministry until his death. In fact, he developed an entire theological framework for believers to experience the power of the Holy Spirit rather than trusting in human righteousness.

Many consider the New Testament epistle to the Romans to be Paul's magnum opus! Read Paul's words in Romans 8:1–10. How does his teaching on the freedom and power of the Spirit for the believer reflect his impassioned appeal in Philippians 3 to rely on the Spirit?



Application: Where Are You?

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our heart. And in the plainest sense of the word, according to Chuck, there are only two things you can trust in as you think about facing the living God: one is your own accomplishment, and the other is Christ's finished work on the cross. Chuck concluded his message with these final applications:

1. Trusting in your own achievements brings you glory now but leaves you bankrupt spiritually . . . forever.
2. Trusting in Christ's accomplishments and relying on the Holy Spirit for power brings Him glory now and results in your eternal righteousness . . . forever.

Do you still rely on human effort to gain favor with God, or have you converted to fully trusting in Christ as your only source and hope of true righteousness?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to take my place and suffer and die for my sin in order that I might come to know You. Deliver me, Father, by Your gracious Spirit, from any remnants of confidence in myself and my worthless attempts to stay right with You. And let me experience each day the fullness of the life-giving, limitless power of Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY EIGHT

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Happy Hopes for High Achievers

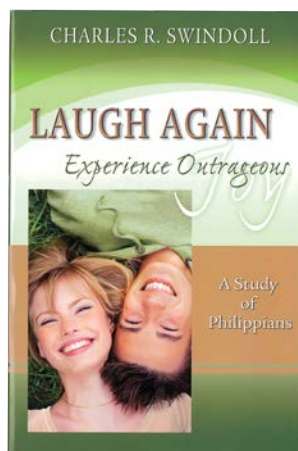
Philippians 3:1–11



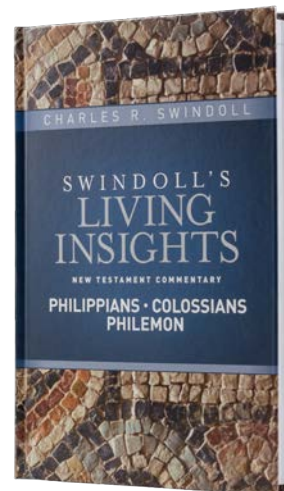
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY NINE

Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16

The Christian life is not about singing goofy songs, praying dreamy prayers, or living in some sort of ethereal alternate reality where everything turns out rosy. None of that. The Christian life requires perseverance, which means hanging tough against all odds. It is living with the sword over your head.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WE all need enduring determination in order to persevere through the most difficult game of all—the game of life, especially the Christian life that too many people falsely believe is a bed of roses. They quickly discover that living for Christ on earth requires spiritual toughness. That includes persistence, determination, and what Chuck Swindoll refers to as the ability to “hang tough, regardless.” We will see spiritual toughness on display in the apostle Paul during our continuing study of Philippians 3.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Since none of us can conjure this spiritual toughness by our own willpower or find it by our own ingenuity, we depend upon God to give it to us—day by day, hour by hour. Take a moment to ask Jesus Christ, who has made you His own, to fortify you through this study. Pray that you would receive a clearer vision of the upward call of God that you may stand firm in the new life He has given you.



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Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

At first glance, reading Paul's testimony might make you think he achieved a certain level of unattainable spiritual perfection, which might be discouraging, especially for new Christians just beginning their walk with God. But a closer examination of Paul's words in Philippians 3:12–16 reveals a more realistic and uplifting scenario. Take a few minutes to review the passage and make some notes about what stands out as significant.



Observation: Paul's Process for Pursuing Perfection—Philippians 3:12–14

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul continued focusing on gaining a deeper experience of Christ and emphasized the fact that he had not yet fully arrived at that noble goal:

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. (Philippians 3:12)

Notice that Paul set up a contrast between two ideas by using the word *but*. What two ideas was Paul contrasting according to verse 12?



Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16

Paul drew from the context of the previous verses to develop his next few points. How is verse 12 linked to verses 10 and 11 from the last study?

Based on verses 13–14, what was Paul's new focus in life?

What metaphor did Paul employ to explain the process of reaching spiritual perfection?



Interpretation: Racing toward Maturity in Christ—Philippians 3:13–16

Understanding metaphors in Scripture helps us unlock the biblical writer's meaning. Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Metaphors often provide important clues to meaning. Paul concluded this section on what it means to experience spiritual maturity by likening the achievement of spiritual maturity to finishing a race.

No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.
(Philippians 3:13–16)



Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16

Paul emphasized the importance of leaving the past and focusing on the future. How does this transition help the believer gain spiritual progress?

How can focusing on the past impede spiritual progress both for individuals and for churches?

Living in the past, by the way, can be the death knell over a church. A church can live in the days of past glory. Or a Christian organization can live in the days when “we were a great place.” But I say you’re headed for trouble when that is your attitude. The apostle says, “Forget what lies behind.”
—Chuck Swindoll

Paul likened the process of gaining spiritual maturity or “perfection” (Philippians 3:12) to running a race and receiving a prize.

What do you think he meant by “press on” to reach the end of the race?

What emotions come to your mind when you think of someone pressing on to finish a race?



Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16

How would training for and completing a marathon, for instance, be likened to the process Paul described for realizing spiritual maturity?

New Testament commentaries are helpful resources for shedding light on metaphors and images the biblical writers employed. Take a few minutes to consult either a [commentary on Philippians](#) or a Bible dictionary to discover the significance of Paul's racing metaphor, and record what you learn below.

Though Paul used his personal story to emphasize his point, there are numerous examples in the Scriptures that offer a vivid illustration of others who chose to hang tough and strengthen their faith.



Correlation: Immoveable in the Lord's Work

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Paul's experience of hanging tough served him to the end. But there are other examples in Scripture that the journey toward spiritual maturity is often uphill and through storms.

Here are a few examples:

- Samson facing strong temptation
- Jonah running from God's clear command
- Daniel facing the lions
- John Mark losing his courage
- Peter finding strength in colossal failure



Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16

Consider Paul's strong exhortation in his letter to the Corinthians:

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

How do Paul's words to the Corinthian church support his exhortation to the Philippians to hang tough in the process of reaching spiritual maturity?



Application: Making Progress, Day by Day

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Throughout Chuck's message on this compelling passage, he offered several pointed applications to help fix these truths deep within our lives. Pick one of these principles to live by this week:

1. *The plan for spiritual maturity is progress, not perfection.* God desires that we follow Him and experience a journey of faith toward realizing spiritual maturity in Christ.
2. *The past is over, so forget it.* There are few things more debilitating in the Christian life than living in the past. Paul's aim was to look "forward to what lies ahead" (Philippians 3:13).
3. *The future holds out hope, so reach for it.* There is so much more to be gained by reaching for the future with Christ than living in the past without Him.
4. *The secret is a determined attitude, so maintain it.* Paul repeatedly emphasized the fact that he had not yet arrived at spiritual maturity but that he was committed to the process.
5. *The need is to keep a high standard . . . together.* God did not design the Christian life to be journeyed alone. And the process of gaining Christ is a process that requires the accountability and fellowship of God's people, who are mutually committed to each individual's spiritual growth.



Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

Philippians 3:12–16



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for encouraging me through Your Word to hang tough in my walk with Christ . . . and to resist going it alone. Thank You for providing people in my life who love me, who are willing to challenge me when I'm failing, and who encourage me when I'm down. How thankful I am today for each one who journeys with me. In Jesus' name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY NINE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Hanging Tough Together . . . and Loving It

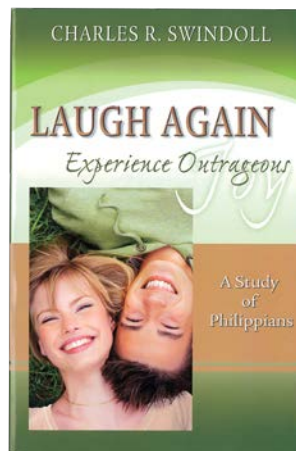
Philippians 3:12–16



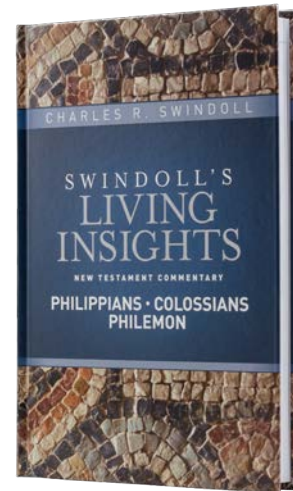
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY TEN

It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1

The role of the Christian is unusual, but it is not impossible. I suppose the best words to use would be, our role is unique. We have a unique relationship as compared to all other living beings on earth . . . for our citizenship literally is in heaven.

—Charles R. Swindoll

EVEN though the earth is not our home, it is, for the present time, our residence. And living here, we face powerful pressure to abandon our heavenly Father and adopt the prodigal lifestyle of a lost and rebellious world. This situation raises the questions, *Why does God leave us in such a hostile environment? Why doesn't He move His own into heaven just as soon as they're converted?* We'll begin to answer those questions in this study of Philippians 3 and the early part of chapter 4.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord desires to meet you in His Word. Pause for a few minutes and turn to Him in prayer. Ask Him to clear your thoughts and open your eyes to the truth of His Word. Write out your own prayer of preparation below.

*Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:18)*



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It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take some time to write down thoughts and passages of Scripture that come to your mind when you think of what it means to live as a Christian in a dark world.

Read John 16:1–2, 13, and 33. How do these verses provide perspective on the Christian's place and purpose in the world?



Observation: The Christian's Marching Orders—Philippians 3:17–19

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul began this section of his letter by reminding the Philippian Christians that this world is not their home. And that's a good thing!

Paul went into command mode as he exhorted the Philippians to live by his example and learn lessons from those who pattern their lives after his.

The Value of Following Good Examples—Philippians 3:17–18

Read though Philippians 3:17–18. What key words indicate Paul's emphasis on the importance of following his teaching and learning to live faithfully?



It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .
Philippians 3:17–4:1

Paul used two words (verbs!) to describe what it means to follow his example. Can you find them in verse 17?

*Dear brothers and sisters, _____ your life after mine,
and _____ from those who follow our example. (NLT)*

The Challenge of Living with Bad Apples—Philippians 3:18–19

Paul expressed deep emotion when he described people who lived as “enemies of the cross of Christ.” What clues did he include that reveal how deeply he felt (Philippians 3:18)?

Contrast is a literary device the biblical writers skillfully employed to emphasize a point. How did Paul contrast the traits of those who live as enemies of the cross with those who live as citizens of heaven?

Enemies of the Cross—Philippians 3:19	Citizens of Heaven—Philippians 3:20–4:1

Paul clearly desired that the Philippian believers be reminded of the importance of living as citizens of their *true* home: not Rome but heaven!



It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1



Interpretation: The Example of Paul's Experience—Philippians 3:20–4:1

Once you've looked closely at the literary clues in the text through observation, you are ready for interpretation! Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey.

We Are Bound for Heaven

Paul painted a beautiful picture of what it looks like for the Christian to live as those bound for their heavenly home!

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. (Philippians 3:20–21)

Paul used the powerful metaphor of *citizenship* to drive home his point about how Christians should live while on earth!

Reading reliable [biblical commentaries](#) can help you understand more deeply the author's intent in writing Scripture. Consider William Barclay's helpful insights into Paul's compelling metaphor:

Here was a picture the Philippians could understand. Philippi was a Roman colony. Here and there at strategic military centers the Romans set down their colonies. In such places the citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time—twenty-one years—and who had been rewarded with full citizenship. The great characteristic of these colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakably Roman. Paul says to the Philippians, "Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship."¹



It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1

Becoming Paul's Joy and Crown

Often, the problem we face as Christians is being so earthly minded that we are of no earthly good! How do Paul's words about our heavenly citizenship help us overcome that mind-set (Philippians 3:21)?

What ultimately awaits us as followers of Christ?

How does knowing our weak earthly bodies will be transformed into glorified heavenly bodies help us live on earth as citizens of heaven?

How did Paul describe the Philippian Christians in relationship to himself (4:1)?



It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1

How might this also have motivated them to keep their focus on things above?



Correlation: The Reality of Our Heavenly Perspective

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help us interpret the passage in view. Paul's intense focus on the reality of Christ and the believer's heavenly identity runs as a thread throughout his epistles. Perhaps Paul's most compelling teaching on this topic is found in the opening refrains of his letter to the Colossians.

Read Colossians 3:1–11. As you do, circle key phrases or underline words that remind you of Paul's words in Philippians 3:17–4:1. Make some notes in the space below about how these passages compare.

In your own words, how would you summarize Paul's message to both the Philippians and Colossians about how to live while here on earth?



It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

Philippians 3:17–4:1



Application: Taking It to Heart

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. One of the most effective ways to develop pointed application is to answer questions about your own life. Here are a few to get you started. Feel free to compose a few of your own if you are thinking of teaching this passage to a group of students or young adults.

1. Does your present conduct match your heavenly citizenship?
2. Are you unshakably committed to Christ even in those remote corners of your life where no one else sees you?
3. Do you care more about your affairs on earth than investing in the things of Christ? How do your priorities align with your citizenship in heaven?

Take a few moments to prayerfully reflect on your own life and your mind-set here on earth. Ask the Lord to point out ways in which you can be more heavenly minded and focused on Christ.

You know what? It isn't a problem of being so heavenly minded we're no earthly good. I think it's a problem of being so earthly minded we're no good at all . . . especially when we buy into the earth's system so completely that there's no difference between how we live and how those outside Christ live their lives. Remember: You've got the message that makes all the difference in the world!
—Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I'm renewed today in my desire to live on earth with my mind and affections fully fixed in heaven with Christ. Thank You for making a way for me to know You and to be certain of my eternal destiny in Christ. How I praise You and long for the day when I shall see Him face to face. May Your name be exalted in all the earth. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, rev. ed. The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 69.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY TEN

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

It's a Mad, Bad, Sad World, But . . .

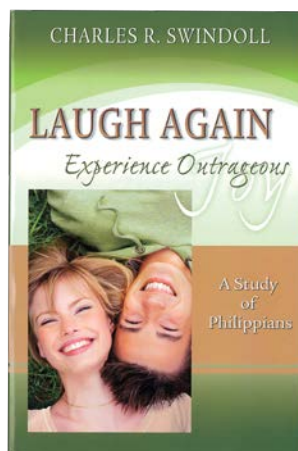
Philippians 3:17–4:1



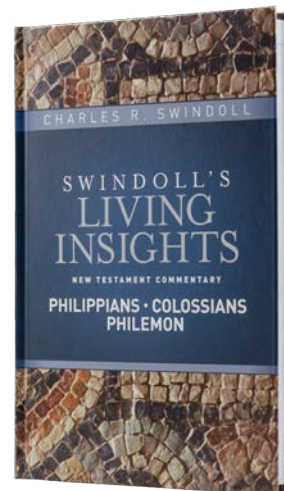
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY ELEVEN

Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3

In the noble pursuit of biblical unity, the Lord becomes our common ground, and His big picture plan becomes more significant than our narrow-minded opinions.

—Charles R. Swindoll

OFTEN, Christians can be like two porcupines trying to live together. The closer we get, the more we tend to prick each other! We profess to need each other, and we do, but we get on each other's nerves or offend one another over often petty opinions. Why? What is it that causes Christ's church to behave more like prickly porcupines than the spotless and holy bride Jesus is preparing for Himself? The study of this brief passage today from Philippians chapter 4 sheds fresh perspective on an age-old problem and offers hope to all of us.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord desires to meet you in His Word. Pause for a few minutes and turn to Him in prayer. Ask Him to clear your thoughts and open your eyes to the truth of His Word. Write out your own prayer of preparation below.

*Open my eyes to see
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Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

God's vision for His people living in harmony is as ancient as the slopes of Mount Hermon, those towering peaks oft mentioned amid the moving choruses of Hebrew praise. Consider the following psalm of David:

*How wonderful and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in harmony!
For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil
that was poured over Aaron's head,
that ran down his beard
and onto the border of his robe.
Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon
that falls on the mountains of Zion.
And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing,
even life everlasting. (Psalm 133:1–3)*

How does the rich imagery of Psalm 133 convey the cascading effect of relational harmony among God's people?



Observation: A Glimpse of a Century-One Church—Philippians 4:1–3

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. As Paul concluded his letter to the Philippians, he addressed the skirmish between two women in the beloved congregation.



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3

A Primary Principle—Philippians 4:1

Before addressing the specific conflict, Paul called for a return to the primary principle that diffuses disharmony.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work. (Philippians 4:1)

What was the basis of Paul's appeal to the Philippians?

What words did Paul use to describe the Philippian Christians?

This would be a good time to review the significance of the Philippian church. Open a Bible dictionary or find a section on *Philippi* in a Bible atlas and read carefully about the background of this famous New Testament church. Record what you discover below.



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3

What did Paul urge the believers to do?

This repeated exhortation to “stay true” to the Lord frames the basis of Paul’s appeal that comes in the next two verses.

A Relational Need—Philippians 4:2

In verse 2, Paul moved next from principle to people and named two individuals whose conflict was so well-known that it had even reached the apostle’s ears in distant Rome.

Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. (Philippians 4:2)

What did Paul ask the women to do?

What reason did Paul give for exhorting these two women to reconcile?



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3

Would you characterize Paul's request as urgent or as a mere suggestion? Explain your answer based on what you observe in verse 2.

An Affirming Request—Philippians 4:3

At times, a dispute runs so deep that it takes the help of a third party, an objective mediator, to resolve the matter and restore the relationship. That appears to have been the case with the clash between these two Philippian believers.

And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life. (Philippians 4:3)

What request did Paul make of his “true partner”?

What additional information do we discover about these women from verse 4?

Though Paul doesn't reveal the name of the one he referred to as his “true partner,” this person must have been a reliable ministry companion. Take a few minutes to read a commentary on this section of Philippians. See what you learn about who this individual might have been in relation to Paul and the Philippians.



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3



Interpretation: The Importance of Standing Firm in the Lord—Philippians 4:1–3

Once you've looked closely at the literary clues in the text through observation, you are now ready for interpretation! Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* In his letter, Paul employed an oft-repeated phrase, “stand firm in the Lord,” as the basis of his appeal for diffusing disharmony. Let's take a closer look at what this expression means and its overall importance to Christians today. Notice, Paul used a similar expression early in his letter to the Philippians:

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. (Philippians 1:27)

How does standing together with one spirit and purpose compare to Paul's appeal to “stay true to the Lord” in Philippians 4:1?

How does standing firm foster unity and harmony in the Lord?

It is not cliché to say to fellow members of the family of God, “Stay true to the Lord.” In other words, be sure your life squares with His will. Be sure you're under the control of His Spirit. Be sure His Word is your guide. Not just the counsel of a friend. Not just some long-standing tradition. Not church polity or policy, but His eternal Word. —Chuck Swindoll



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3

To resolve the conflict in the Philippian church, notice Paul didn't spell out a specific process. Instead, he appealed to both women involved as well as others in the congregation to work together to rectify the dispute. Why is it significant that Paul resisted spelling out the process and instead emphasized the basis of his appeal—the unity of the believers?



Correlation: Exposing the Basis of Disharmony—James 4:1–3

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. A related passage in the New Testament book of James sheds light on how relational conflicts emerge in the first place.

Read James 4:1–3 carefully and reflectively. What insight do you gain from James regarding the reason for relationship troubles?

What sinful emotions are at play when believers collide?

How does Paul's appeal for diffusing disharmony in Philippians 4 relate to James' insights on the causes of relational conflict?



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3



Application: Finding Truth a Home in Our Hearts

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Often, such application is less personal and more general in nature, helping us understand the reality of the situation we face. Chuck offered three helpful insights as he closed his study of Philippians 4:1–3:

1. *Clashes will continue to occur in the body of Christ.* Disagreements are to be expected so long as selfish individuals are compelled to live and serve alongside each other in the church. It's helpful to have our eyes open to the reality of the stubborn nature of the human heart.
2. *Not all conflicts are wrong.* Some conflicts are necessary, even required to bring about a declaration of truth and righteousness. We need the Lord's help to discern the difference between healthy conflict and conflict caused by selfish emotions.
3. *If the disagreement should be and can be resolved but it is not, then stubbornness and selfishness are at the core.* Prayerfully seeking a resolve is always the best approach.
4. *Should you be the "companion" needed to assist in the reconciliation, remember this threefold objective:*
 - The goal is restoration, not discipline.
 - The right attitude is grace, not force.
 - The common ground is Christ, not logic nor church tradition nor personal will.

If you're crossing swords with someone over an issue or disagreement, how can you put the weapons down and follow Chuck's steps toward reconciliation? How can you apply the peacemaking principles from this study today?

Christians can stop being like porcupines with one another when they emulate the Lamb of God, caring for and forgiving each other just as our Savior loves and forgives us.



Defusing Disharmony

Philippians 4:1–3



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I'm challenged today to reflect on my own readiness to stand firm in the faith, especially when I'm tempted to remain in a state of conflict with a brother or sister in Christ. Thank You for reminding me that such a sinful attitude is contrary to Your gospel and impedes the mission of Christ. May You be gracious to me as I seek to restore my fellowship with You and others. In Jesus' name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY ELEVEN

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Defusing Disharmony

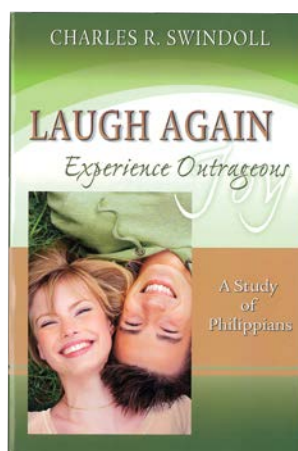
Philippians 4:1–3



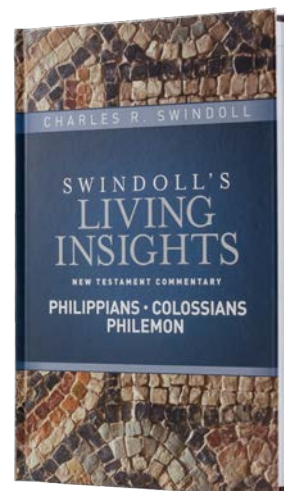
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY TWELVE

Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:1–3

I want to make a statement that will make many of you feel shocked: God intends for His children to be free. That's right, free. He gave you and me minds to think freely . . . hearts to love freely . . . and wills to act freely and to have genuine peace.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT would life be like for you if you were totally free—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually? In other words, how might your experience each day be different if you could know a genuine peace of mind? Sadly, the number of individuals struggling with addictions or chronic levels of anxiety and stress is on the rise. Jesus offers us a wonderful alternative when we entrust all aspects of our lives to Him. Want peace and freedom? Open your Bible to search the Scriptures. Philippians chapter 4 shows us that there is hope!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Are you tired of living life paralyzed by anxious thoughts or deep guilt because of your past? The Lord specializes in setting people free. Turn to Him in these next few moments and ask Him to relieve you of what has you feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Then you'll be ready to hear from Him anew in the pages of His Word.



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Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take the time you need to read Philippians chapter 4 in its entirety. As you read, circle words or phrases that speak directly to you. Write a note or two in the margin using key words or questions that will help you summarize each section of the chapter; whatever thought comes to mind, write in the margin of your Bible or in the space provided below.

Key words:

Key people mentioned:

Repeated words:

Emotions you feel:

Emotions Paul described:

Now based on what you've read, write a summary sentence that would explain to a new believer the main idea of Philippians 4.



Observation: Getting Serious about Being Free

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. As Paul concluded his letter to the Philippians, he revealed the common experience of anxiety we all face. But before we examine what he offered as a solution to this menacing problem, let's look closely at what God promises to those who take Him at His Word.



Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9

A brief survey of both Old and New Testament passages shows that God longs for us to be free from anxiety and debilitating struggles. Take a look at each passage listed and make some notes about what you see using basic observation.

Read Isaiah 61:1–2 slowly and reflectively. Which key words from this passage relate to the freedom granted to those who believe God's promise?

Read John 8:34. What did Jesus say about the debilitating nature of sin?

What metaphor did Jesus use to emphasize the seriousness of sin's power?

Now read Luke 4:16–21. How does this passage compare to what you read in Isaiah 61?



Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9

Where was Jesus when He spoke these words?

The mission of Jesus was exactly what Isaiah had predicted it would be—proclaiming release to the captives and setting free those who are downtrodden. Not a literal freedom but freedom for those trapped within the walls of self-made prisons of sin and addiction.



Interpretation: Understanding the Antidote for Worry

Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Paul had serious intentions of making sure the Philippian believers understood the importance of praying against anxiety and addictive thoughts rather than allowing them to impede their freedom.

God's Cure for Anxiety—Philippians 4:4–6

In the next few verses, Paul revealed God's way of freeing us from the habit of worry:

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4–7)

Paul insisted the Philippian Christians learn to reject worry by embracing prayer. How did Paul explain the kind of praying he had in mind? What elements should be involved as we approach God in prayer about things that worry us?



Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9

God's Response to Our Trust—Philippians 4:7

As always, God is faithful when we trust His provision for the issues in our lives. According to Philippians 4:7, what does God promise to us in response to our prayers?

How does God's peace guard our hearts and minds?

Replacing the Negative with the Positive: Correcting Our Perspective—Philippians 4:8–9

Paul became a bit of a cognitive therapist with a supernatural twist when he offered some final counsel to those struggling to overcome negative thoughts:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you hear from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8–9)

Paul urged the Philippians to elevate their thinking by focusing on excellent things rather than those things that cause anxiety.

How can realigning the focus of our thoughts relieve us from worry?



Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9

That's what we need guarded: our hearts and minds! We don't need our homes guarded as much as we need our hearts and minds protected. It's my heart that gets me into my day. It's my mind that gets me into my study. My passion flows from that. And His peace surrounds that and frees me from the agitation and the horror of worry. Rejoice! —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Most Universal of All Addictions: Worry!

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help us interpret the passage in view. Not surprisingly, you don't have to go further than Jesus Himself to find a correlating principle with Philippians 4. Who can imagine life without worry? Jesus could. And the addiction to worry and anxious thoughts is one addiction He took time to address. Read Matthew 6:25–34, and as you do, make notes about what strikes you as relevant to Paul's teaching in Philippians 4.

How does Jesus' teaching on this issue remind you of what Paul shared with the Philippians?

How is it different?

How does encountering Jesus' teaching on worry help you understand Paul's explanation?



Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9



Application: Some Closing Exercises

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate the heart. Chuck summarized his study of Philippians 4 with practical exercises for every believer to adopt in their battle against worry.

1. *Feed your mind positive thoughts.* Worry will starve on such food for thought as things that are pure, lovely, honorable, and true. So, refuse to ruminate on negative junk food like shame, fear, or guilt which strengthen worry and strangle peace.
2. *Focus your attention on encouraging models.* Paul urged his fellow believers to follow his example. We would do well to do that too—and to find other people whose lives can offer encouragement and inspiration when we've lost our will and wind.
3. *Find the God of peace in every circumstance.* Anxious times offer excellent opportunities for us to seek the Lord and grow closer to Him. Lean into those times and pursue Him in prayer. He will be faithful and meet you in your need.

Which of these biblical keys can you use to release your worries and anxieties and unlock the peace of Christ in your soul today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I really needed this word from You today. Thank You. How grateful I am that You did not leave me to myself only to watch me sink deeper in the mire of worry and anxiety. Your Word lifts me from despair and places me on solid ground. Now I sing praises to You. In Jesus' name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY TWELVE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Freeing Yourself Up to Laugh Again

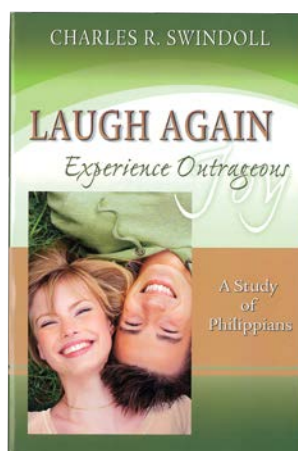
Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–9



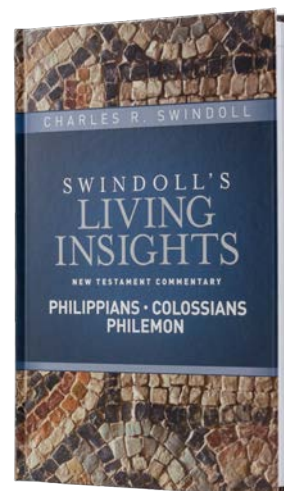
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY THIRTEEN

Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19

Now, once again I want to tell you something that I think is true of you even though you may not think I know it. I think you want to be mature. I can hardly remember meeting anyone in my life who made plans each day to stay immature.

—Charles R. Swindoll

GOD's goal for His people is growth—in other words, pressing on toward spiritual maturity! Though aging may be automatic, growing up spiritually is something we must accomplish choice by choice. Sadly, too often, Christians mistake being older for godly maturity. Nothing could be further from the truth. Thankfully, God gives us excellent examples of spiritual maturity, like the apostle Paul, who we follow in our own quest to grow up in the Lord.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

One mark of a desire to grow spiritually is being willing to pause from the busy pace of life in order to seek the Lord. Take a few moments now to ask the Lord to quiet your heart and focus your mind on Him. Perhaps turn to your favorite passage of Scripture or listen to a worship song. God promises He will draw close to you as you draw near to Him (James 4:8).



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Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

The New Testament letter to the Philippians is not the only place where spiritual maturity is encouraged. Below are a few examples of other passages in the New Testament that emphasize this principle. Read each one and make some notes about what each passage teaches about the importance of growing in the Lord.

Ephesians 4:14–15:

Hebrews 5:14–6:1:

1 Peter 2:1–2:

In one sentence, how would you summarize what these three passages teach about spiritual maturity?



Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19



Observation: Two Sides of the Same Quality—Philippians 4:10–19

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. As Paul concluded his letter to the Philippians, he emphasized the importance of following his example of spiritual maturity.

Maturity of Paul—Philippians 4:10–13

As we begin our study, four characteristics of Paul's maturity emerge from this passage.

1. *Paul is affirming.* Read Philippians 4:10. How did Paul affirm the Philippians?
2. *Paul is content.* Read Philippians 4:11. What did Paul say about this characteristic of maturity?
3. *Paul is flexible.* Read Philippians 4:12. Describe the contrast Paul used to explain his ability to live in any situation.

What words did Paul use to convey his flexibility in life?



Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19

4. *Paul is confident.* Read Philippians 4:13. What is the basis of Paul's confidence?

Maturity of the Philippians—Philippians 4:14–19

By mentioning the Philippians' care and concern, Paul revealed three traits of maturity in their lives.

1. *The Philippian believers showed personal compassion.* Read Philippians 4:14–15. What did Paul commend the Philippian believers for in this passage?

What made the Philippians' actions unique, according to Paul (Philippians 4:15)?

2. *The Philippians showed financial generosity.* Read Philippians 4:15–17. What did Paul mention here that indicates the Philippians were generous givers?



Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19

3. *The Philippian believers made a sacrificial commitment.* Read Philippians 4:18. What expressions did Paul use to describe the financial gift from the Philippians?

Based on what you have observed in these verses, how would you summarize the main idea Paul intended to convey?



Interpretation: Learning Generosity—Philippians 4:19

Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Bursting with joy and gratitude for the way God had met his needs through the Philippians, Paul encouraged them with this magnificent promise:

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Paul went to great lengths to commend the Philippian Christians for their sacrificial generosity as a mark of their spiritual maturity. And he wanted them to understand that in response to their generosity toward him and on behalf of the cause of the gospel, God promised to be generous in return.



Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19

On what does God base His generosity, according to Paul (Philippians 4:19)?

When Paul referred to the “needs” of the Philippians, what was he referring to? Explain your answer by referencing this passage.

That's what we need guarded: our hearts and minds! We don't need our homes guarded as much as we need our hearts and minds protected. It's my heart that gets me into my day. It's my mind that gets me into my study. My passion flows from that. And His peace surrounds that and frees me from the agitation and the horror of worry. Rejoice! —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: An Age-Old Principle

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Paul emphasized that God's desire to be generous in supplying for our needs is based on His faithful character. Paul no doubt learned this principle from his study of the Old Testament, perhaps even the Psalms.

Read Psalm 121, a psalm of David. In what ways do David's words about God's faithfulness support Paul's teaching in Philippians 4?



Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

Philippians 4:10–19



Application: Taking Truth to Heart

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate the heart. In other words, how can you develop the marks of maturity evidenced by Paul and the Philippians? Here are three places to look in your life that will enable you to grow up in your relationship with the Lord.

1. *Look within . . . and release.* Is there something inside your heart that's stunting your spiritual growth? Something other than Christ that you're grasping too tightly? Let it go.
2. *Look around . . . and respond.* Don't assume others will cover the need that is presented. Act on your own. The Philippians saw Paul's need and responded generously.
3. *Look up . . . and rejoice.* Take time to look up and survey all that God has done for you. Consider the riches He has provided through His Son. Reflect on your faithfulness in giving to the Lord in response to all God has done for you in Christ. Are you giving accordingly?

Can you add a principle of your own? What do you learn from Paul's modeling and the Philippians' example of maturity that you can apply to your life?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I've read and studied this passage many times. But now I see in new ways the connection between Your abundant grace to me in Christ and my joyful response in giving back to You. May You be glorified in all I do. Make me a conduit of generosity and grace to others as You have been to me. In Jesus' gracious name, amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY THIRTEEN

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Don't Forget to Have Fun as You Grow Up

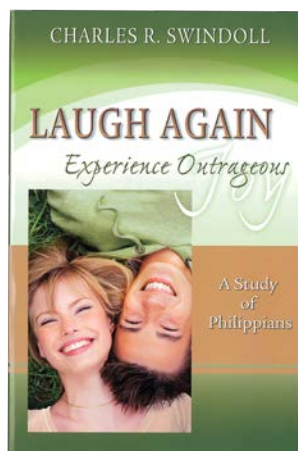
Philippians 4:10–19



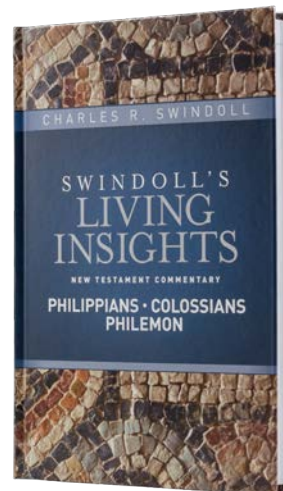
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LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy STUDY FOURTEEN

A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

In many ways, Philippians reads like a love letter from God's heart to ours, so it's almost sad that we have come to His final words. Reading a love letter is not like reading junk mail, thank goodness. We don't glance at it and then trash it. Oh no, we absorb it, letting our eyes linger over every word.

—Charles R. Swindoll

IT'S an incredible letter, isn't it? Just a few more well-chosen words and Paul's epistle of immense affection comes to a tender end. But before we enter into Paul's gracious conclusion, let's turn and take a brief look back at how far we've come through this study of Philippians.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Whatever your situation, the words of this remarkable letter can encourage you, offering joy, hope, and encouragement for all who've felt beaten down by life's cares. Take a few moments to read back through some of your favorite passages from Philippians. Allow Paul's words to refresh you anew, like a cool afternoon breeze . . . and praise God for His faithfulness in providing the living, active, healing Word for you.



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A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul wrote with a sincere affection for the believers at Philippi. His letter flows with expressions of endearment and genuine spiritual concern you'd expect from a beloved pastor tending his prized congregation. Survey the following sections from Paul's letter, and write a sentence summary about the significance of each.

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 1:12–14

Philippians 2:5–11

Philippians 3:12–14

Philippians 4:11–19



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23



Observation: Looking Closely at the Apostle's Words

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. Paul concluded his letter with a climactic expression of personal affection. Take a few minutes to study carefully what he included in those final words.

How Do We Proceed? Philippians 4:19–23

The sad thing about great letters is that they come to an end. Tears may well have flowed from the eyes of the aged apostle as he wrote this goodbye as well as from the Philippians' eyes when they read his closing remarks:

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen.

Give my greetings to each of God's holy people—all who belong to Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. And all the rest of God's people send you greetings, too, especially those in Caesar's household.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philippians 4:19–23)

Go back through this passage and circle each time Paul mentioned God and Jesus Christ. Often, by observing repeated words and phrases you can determine the biblical author's focus.

How many times did Paul mention *God*? How many times did he mention *Christ*?



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

What other words do you see that Paul repeated in these few verses?

In this brief span of verses, Paul wrote two blessings for the Philippian believers. Do you see them? Which verses are “blessings” toward the Philippians?

Paul mentioned groups of people, moving from broad to more specific descriptions. Can you see each group he mentioned (Philippians 4:21–22)? List them as they appear in consecutive order.

Paul apparently had both God and his Savior on his mind as well as the people in Rome and Philippi who had come to mean so much to him personally. As he concluded, he clearly indicated the ultimate meaning of his intimate and tender salutation.



Interpretation: Glory and Greetings—Philippians 4:20–22

Interpretation involves a process that helps answer the question, *What does the text mean?* Interpretation flows from the work you do in observing what the text says. As he finished his letter, Paul highlighted the glory of God and the personal greetings appropriate between God’s people.



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

The Glory of the Lord's Plan

Paul closed his letter to the Philippians with a focus on the *glory* of God. Chuck Swindoll taught that the Greek use of the word translated “glory” can mean “brightness, splendor, and radiance,” as in the glory that shone in the holy of holies described in the Old Testament (Exodus 26:33). But it can also refer to “the credit, the place of significance.”

Which meaning do you think Paul intended here in Philippians 4:20?

How does Paul giving all glory to God reflect the overall emphasis of his letter on the Christlike virtue of humility (Philippians 2)?

Why would it have been important for Paul to end this letter with an emphasis on God receiving the glory?



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

The Greeting of the Saints

The greetings Paul exchanged are easily understood, but for centuries, imaginations have been spurred by his intriguing reference to “Caesar’s household” in Philippians 4:22. To whom do you think Paul was referring?

If you’re using a study Bible, locate the scholarly notes (usually in the margins) and see if there is an entry on verse 22 related to the identity of “Caesar’s household.” What do you learn?

This may also be a good time to reference a commentary on Philippians to study what views are proposed as to the identity of the people from “Caesar’s household.”

What becomes clear is that, despite Paul’s unusual circumstances (being in house arrest in Rome!), the message of Christ flourished in that stronghold of paganism and intense persecution of Christians. Even members of Nero’s own family might have embraced Paul’s gospel, falling in love with the Savior!

What joy! What comfort! What grace is there in knowing God is able and always working for His glory and for our good . . . even in the most trying times and perilous places.

But let me tell you something: It’s good what God’s doing, even though it makes no sense to you. He isn’t finished. And when it is all done, and when in panorama it is all unrolled in front of you, in the presence of His glory, when you stand faultless, you will see it was good; it was right.
—Chuck Swindoll



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23



Correlation: An Expression of Praise

Correlation compares passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Paul's words are echoed through the very end of the New Testament witness. And in the final epistle before the Revelation, Jude concluded his compelling letter to Christians facing persecution with a similar exhortation as Paul to stand firm to the end.

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.

Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All Glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen. (Jude 20–25)

What other New Testament passages come to your mind that resound with praise to God and a challenge to believers to stand firm?



Application: Truth to the Finish

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Take a few moments to thank the Lord for His ministry to you through Philippians. Be



A Joyful, Grace-Filled Good-Bye

Philippians 4:19–23

sure to offer Him genuine praise for His grace and goodness in providing for your salvation in Christ. Then write down at least three personal applications from this section for your own walk with Him.

1.

2.

3.



A FINAL PRAYER

Our God, we pledge our allegiance to You as we would to none other. Thank You for Your plan, full of surprises, changes, unpredictable and unexpected events, tears as well as triumphs, pain as well as pleasure. We thank You for Your good hand upon us, for what You have taken as well as what You have given. These have been acts of grace.

Thank You—as we conclude the study of Philippians—for the words of this remarkable man, the apostle Paul, who has written this letter and who has touched more lives perhaps by his epistles than any other writer of the New Testament. But he, too, acknowledged Your lordship over him, as we do. We offer you praise through Christ our Lord. Amen.



LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY FOURTEEN

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

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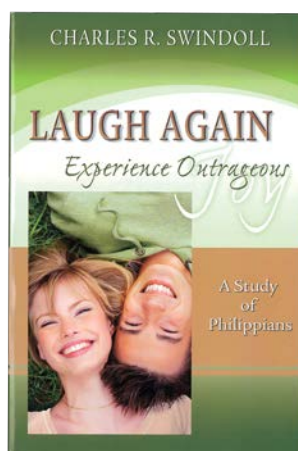
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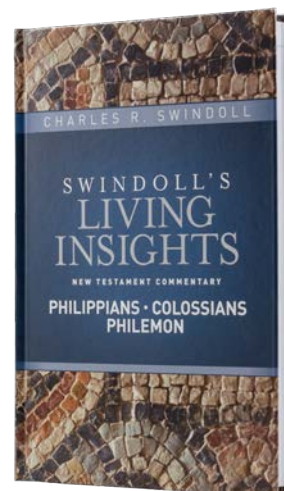
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