

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Involvement

Acts 2:42–47; Romans 12:9–16; 1 Corinthians 12:20–27



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In an article written a number of years ago, a psychologist attempted to describe the relationship of Christians with one another. He compared us to porcupines on a cold winter night. The cold drives us together in a close, tight huddle to keep warm. But as soon as we get so close that we start touching, we start jabbing one another with our sharp quills, scattering the huddle. But when it gets cold again, we move back toward one another to get warm . . . only to prick each other yet again.

And so we are constantly coming together then moving apart in a sort of religious dance. We *need* each other . . . yet we keep *needling* each other!

It's a bit dismaying to realize that you're going to be spending eternity with people in the family of God you don't even speak with on earth! Quite frankly, when someone has wounded us with his or her sharp quills, it's natural to want to keep our distance. But we do need each other . . . needles and all!



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Historical Perspective: Involvement in the Early Church (Acts 2:42–47)

Throughout history, no church has better modeled involvement than the early church in Acts 2. It all started with Peter's sermon at Pentecost when 3,000 Jews were saved. The new church had no pastor, no bylaws, no sanctuary, and an incomplete Bible (the New Testament had not yet been compiled). Yet the members of this new congregation were more deeply involved with one another than almost any other group in history. Even with the hindsight of 2,000 years of church history, the latest technology, and shelves groaning under the weight of ministry books, few modern churches display the involvement of that first congregation.



Quotable

*“Don't just
pretend to love
each other;
really love
people.”*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. A Present-Day Question: Why Get Involved? (Romans 12:9–16; 1 Corinthians 12:20–27)

Why get involved with others, anyway? Doesn't the Christian life really come down to us and God? In his letters to believers in Rome and Corinth, Paul provided two insightful answers:

- God *Commands* Involvement

- The Body *Needs* Involvement

3. Three Essentials of Involvement

To encourage involvement in our churches, we need to maintain these three essentials:

- **Spontaneity:** Involvement should be voluntary and spontaneous, never mandatory or contrived. People must have the freedom to get involved as God leads.

- **Vulnerability:** We can't truly be involved with others if we don't open up and let them see our hurts and our weaknesses. And yes, it's worth the risk!

- **Accountability:** Since our actions affect the whole church, we need relationships with people who will ask the tough questions about our growth and purity.



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GETTING TO THE ROOT

True Fellowship

The Greek term for “fellowship” is *koinonia*, the root of which means “common.” Drawn together by the thread of their common commitment to Christ, their common possessions, and their common suffering for Christ, the early church became a tightly knit group. We might define *fellowship*, then, as genuine Christianity freely shared among God’s family members.

God created us for involvement, not isolation. God shaped us to fit together in relationship with Him and with each other. The fall, though, bent that perfect union out of shape, leaving us either fighting against closeness to Him and others or straining to connect with Him and the people around us.

Thankfully, Christ came to teach us how to live in the community of the church, flaws and all, and to exercise love, grace, and mutual encouragement.



LET’S LIVE IT

Are you involved? Many of us spend many hours each week serving in our churches in some capacity. But involvement and busyness aren’t necessarily the same thing. Sure, fellowship will often revolve around church programs, but just because our schedules are full doesn’t mean we’re *involved* in the lives of others.

How many people in your life really *know* you—your dreams, your struggles, your fears, the areas of your life that need accountability? How can you begin to truly get involved in one person’s life this month?



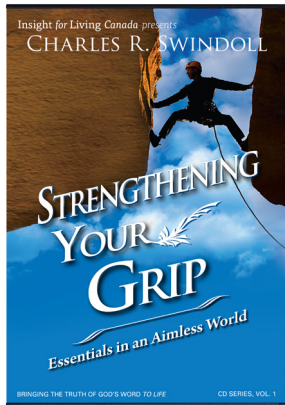
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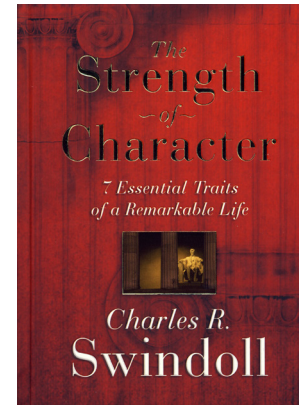
Tools for Digging Deeper



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