

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Attitudes

Philippians 2:1–5, 14; 4:4–8



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Like a famished dog gnawing away at the last trace of meat from a bone, the Nazis stripped Victor Frankl's life down to almost nothing. They took all his possessions, shaved his head, and stole his freedom. They robbed him of his family; his mother, father, brother, and wife all perished in the concentration camps. Once a renowned psychiatrist, Frankl was reduced to being a slave laborer at the notorious death camp Auschwitz.

Frankl endured hard labor—he once had to dig a water main tunnel *alone*—as well as abuse and starvation. He could have seethed with hate and self-pity but, instead, Frankl realized that the Nazis could never steal, shape, or dictate his attitude. In *Man's Search for Meaning* he wrote:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.¹



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Attitude: It's Up to You (Philippians 2:1–8, 14; 4:4–7)

Our attitude can have more influence than our past, education, money, circumstances, appearance, skills, failures, successes, or how others treat us. Though most of us will probably never step foot inside the walls of a concentration camp, the borders of our comfort zones will be assaulted by failure, unmet expectations, illness, and broken relationships. We don't, however, have to allow any of these things to dictate our responses. If our minds are guided by the Word of God, we can respond with a godly attitude.



Quotable

“You can come to church, sit, leave, and NEVER be impacted by another life. That’s tragic, you know?”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Food for the Right Attitude (Philippians 4:8)

Paul, in his typical style, never told us to avoid something without giving us something to practice in its place. But he reminded us that our attitudes start, not in our circumstances, but in our minds. In Philippians 4:8, he provided six thoughts to dwell on that will squelch the voices of blame and self-pity, and help us develop a godly attitude. “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”



A CLOSER LOOK

Choose Your Attitude

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians because they had a tendency toward disunity. One particular relationship within the church caused the apostle to admonish the Philippians to pursue unity: “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). Disunity and broken relationships often occur when individuals display these and other aggressive or passive attitudes:

- **Blame:** When life doesn’t go our way, we often become aggressive and start looking for someone to blame. Sometimes we even lash out at God, our primary source of help.
- **Self-pity:** Self-pity, the passive response to bad circumstances, keeps us down, makes us feel like the victim of an unfair world, and causes us to believe that no one, not even God, cares.

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But instead of fighting one another, Paul encouraged Euodia, Syntyche, and all the Philippians to reflect these positive attitudes rooted in their relationships with Christ:

- **Unselfish humility:** Christians should adopt Christ’s attitude when He came to earth to die for our sins (Philippians 2:3–8).
- **Positive cooperation:** Let’s abandon grumbling and seek to build others up instead (Philippians 2:14).
- **Genuine joy:** Joy is rooted in a Person, not in our circumstances. Prayer shifts the load from our shoulders to God’s, making room for peace and joy (Philippians 4:4–7).



LET’S LIVE IT

Yes, we can control our attitudes. Think of your mind as a safe deposit box. Every day, we make attitude “deposits” into that box. So let’s begin to fill that box with godly attitudes that come from God’s Word—joy, humility, encouragement, forgiveness, and love.

What circumstances are challenging your attitude today? What will you do to keep your mind focused on Christ and the godly attitudes He modeled for us?

ENDNOTE

1. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, trans. Ilse Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 65.



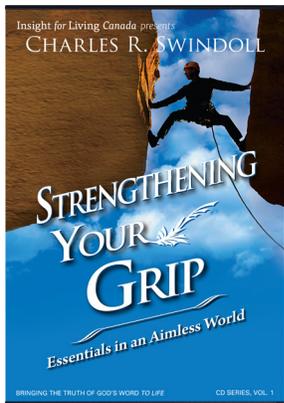
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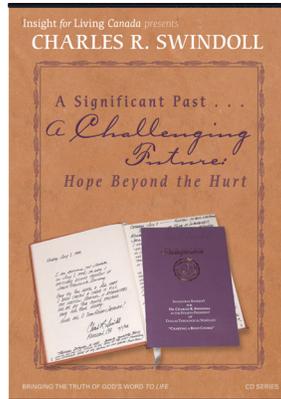
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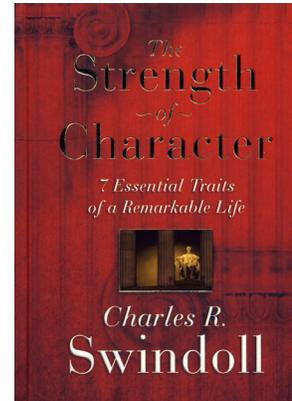
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