

THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY ONE

The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

I've come to realize that there is one rarely mentioned, essential ingredient for ministry. There is no course on it. There never will be. Looking back, I regret that I didn't learn more about it because I realize now that it is invaluable.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

seems like every day another pastor leaves the ministry. Some crumble under the ever-increasing pressure of the role's demands, while others step aside to pursue a more lucrative and comfortable career.

While these departures often fill hearts with sadness, a career shift is sometimes understandable. But it is always deeply heartbreaking and troubling when a minister departs from his post due to a personal moral failure. The annals of church history contain story after tragic story of those who set their ministries ablaze because of an affair, embezzlement, or abuse.

No one is immune to the lures of moral failure. Even the most knowledgeable teacher, the most compassionate counselor, or the most passionate preacher can be consumed by its flames. An essential characteristic, however, enables anyone to withstand such fiery trials and temptations. And that ingredient is *integrity*.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will consider why integrity is an essential ingredient for ministry. The example of a young Israelite named Daniel demonstrates how God uses the ministry of a person of integrity for His purposes even amid the most heated of circumstances.



insight.org | insightworld.org



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

Copyright © 2021, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S01
1

The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Integrity starts as a seed in the heart, and it grows only through a nourishing relationship with Jesus Christ. As you open your Bible, ask God to cultivate your character so you might reflect *His* character in your thoughts, words, and deeds.

Father, I know I cannot produce any good fruit apart from You. Use my time in Your Word today to shape me into a person of the highest integrity—one who looks like Jesus and points a lost world to You. In Jesus' strong name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As exiles in Babylon and then in Medo-Persia, the Israelites lived in a pressure-cooker of paganism. False religions and pagan practices constantly pushed against their faith in the one true God. Many cracked under the tension . . . but not Daniel.

As Israel's oppressors turned up the heat of opposition against God, Daniel's faith and character only grew more refined and more fortified. Everyone could see how impressive Daniel was, and his overlords simply couldn't resist inviting this foreigner to help lead their kingdoms.

So Daniel faced a predicament. Would his closeness to the pagan rulers slowly chip away at his faith in God until he compromised his beliefs? Or would Daniel cling to the One who blessed him so richly, even if it cost him his royal position—or even his life?

Turn to [Daniel 6](#) to witness one of history's greatest tests of integrity.



Observation: A Test of Integrity

Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method shows how understanding God's Word can lead to powerful life change. Every time he engages with a passage, Pastor Chuck follows the same four steps: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application.¹ Read [Daniel 6](#) and carefully observe what the text says.



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Up to this point in the narrative, Daniel had demonstrated his abilities to the Babylonian rulers, but Babylon eventually fell to the Medo-Persians. According to [Daniel 6:3](#), how did the new king Darius view Daniel? What did he decide to do for Daniel based on this impression?

The other Medo-Persian rulers didn't like their king giving such special treatment to a foreigner, so they wanted to prove that Daniel did not deserve his new prestigious role. "But they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy" ([6:4](#)). So they switched to their backup plan.

What new scheme did the Medo-Persian rulers devise in [6:5–9](#) with the desire of causing King Darius to turn against Daniel?

According to [6:10](#), what did Daniel do when he heard the king's decree? What does Daniel's response reveal about his character?



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Despite all of Daniel's valuable service to the kingdom, he ultimately defied Darius' decree. The king wanted to keep his trusted vice-regent by his side, but the law is the law. So he begrudgingly threw Daniel into the lions' den to be devoured. According to [Daniel 6:19–23](#), what happened the morning after Daniel entered the den?

According to [6:25–27](#), how did Darius respond to these events involving Daniel?

I've observed in my years in ministry that God is still searching for men and women like Daniel—people of integrity. I hope you are one of them. And if you are not, I hope you will begin today to pursue integrity deliberately, consistently, faithfully.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



Interpretation: The Meaning of Integrity

Integrity is one of those words people use so often that they have grown desensitized to its meaning and rarely stop to ponder its significance. Look up *integrity* in a [dictionary](#), and summarize the definition. How did Daniel demonstrate integrity in Daniel 6?

Why is having an integrated private and public life important for a follower of Jesus? Why is it *essential* for a Christian leader?

While Daniel is the main character of the narrative, Darius plays a central role as well. How did the king respond to his subject's integrity? How is this scenario instructive for the people of God today?

Hardly a day goes by that we do not have to choose between compliance to what is expedient or being loyal and pleasing only to the Lord our God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



Correlation: The Wisdom of Integrity

The book of Proverbs contains hundreds of sayings that center on a single theme: wisdom. In Proverbs, wisdom does not exist without godliness, and integrity is essential to godliness. Read each of the following proverbs using a few different Bible translations, and note what you discover about the importance of integrity as you navigate life in relationship with God.

Proverbs 10:9

Proverbs 10:29

Proverbs 13:6



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

The way of wisdom is the way of integrity. Those who follow that path face a difficult road. Yet it's the road where Christ is, and it's better to be on the difficult road with Christ than a convenient and pleasurable road without Him. Never forget: eternal blessing awaits those on the difficult path of faith and integrity.



Application: The Development of Integrity

True integrity cannot exist without Christlikeness. The more you allow the character of Jesus Christ to permeate both your private and public life, the more you will grow in integrity. Practically speaking, you can grow in Christlikeness by:

1. *Understanding true Christlikeness*—even when it challenges you.
2. *Cultivating private Christlikeness*—even when no one sees you.
3. *Exhibiting public Christlikeness*—even when it deeply costs you.
4. *Upholding faithful Christlikeness*—even when life's circumstances test you.

Have you ever had a lapse in your integrity—in either a private or public moment when a strong temptation eclipsed the light of your trust in God? How did you feel after you made that choice?



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6

Thankfully, God is merciful and offers forgiveness, and He even uses past mistakes to prepare His children for future challenges. What steps can you take to cultivate your Christlike integrity in private so you can stand strong upon your faith in public when the pressure feels strongest?

You may not serve in vocational ministry, but God gives each of His followers a realm of responsibility and influence. Why is it essential that you lead a life of integrity before your family, your neighborhood, and your workplace? How might your integrity have a Daniel-like impact?

True integrity doesn't arise in us from nowhere. Those who neglect to cultivate this essential quality are bound to fall into sin when the stakes are highest. Yet Scripture is filled with accounts of lives like Daniel's that serve as road maps for those who seek to grow in integrity.

Imitate Daniel. Stand strong whether you're alone or in public. And when the pressure is strongest, look to Christ for divine strength.



The Essential Ingredient for Ministry

Daniel 6



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for offering the greatest example of integrity in Your Son Jesus Christ. Help me as I seek to imitate His character so I might grow in integrity. Help me remember Your faithfulness so I might remain faithful to You, even when it's hardest. I pray these things in Jesus' sure name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

insight.org | insightworld.org

Copyright © 2021, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S01
9

THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY TWO

Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20

Be aware. As a shepherd, keep your eyes open. Pay attention to those who are influencing others in the church. Those who do so with wrong motives will soon reveal themselves as among those boars in the vineyard.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

church is free of problem-people. The wealthy congregant whose giving fluctuates based on how much she enjoyed the past few sermons. The stubborn elder who foments strife among his fellow elders. The nosy gossip who shares others' private information without hesitation.

These problem-people are like boars in God's vineyard. They root around looking to attack laborers for the gospel. As a result, they uproot the kingdom-work that congregants have spent years cultivating, causing that local church to have little fruit to show for all its faithful work.

Yes, the problematic behavior of a few can cause a great deal of damage for many—especially in Christian communities. This *Searching the Scriptures* study offers ways to identify these boars and ways to respond to them so God's vineyard might be restored to a state of flourishing.



insight.org | insightworld.org



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

Copyright © 2021, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S02
1

Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before His death, Jesus told His disciples, “I will build my church” ([Matthew 16:18](#)). Human effort alone will not cause God’s vineyard to flourish. Instead, ministers of the gospel must rely on the Heavenly Gardener. Offer this prayer of dependence to Him as you open His Word today:

Father, I acknowledge that I will accomplish nothing apart from You. Give me wisdom today as I seek to understand how to handle problem-people in Your church. Help me rely on Your guiding hand as I work in Your vineyard. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Many consider Paul’s letter to the Romans to be His *magnum opus*. Throughout the letter, he unfolded central theological ideas like the righteousness of God, the depravity of humanity, justification by faith in Christ, sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit, and unity among Christians.

Yet as Paul closed his letter, he left his dear readers with a final, essential exhortation—to “watch out” for boars in God’s vineyard ([Romans 16:17](#)).



Observation: Identifying the Boars

Read [Romans 16:17–20](#), and as you read, note some key observations about what Paul said about the boars in the Roman church. For this phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* method, focus only on what the text says.¹

Why did Paul warn the Roman Christians to avoid the boars? According to [16:17](#), what were these boars doing to the Christian community? According to [16:18](#), how were they accomplishing these things?



Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20

According to [Romans 16:18](#), whose interests do these dangerous people serve through their problematic behavior?

According to [16:19](#), what behavior distinguishes the true laborers for God from the boars in His vineyard?

What refrain of hope did Paul offer in [16:20](#) despite the presence of the dangerous boars?

Those in the church who are less mature don't know that they're around people who can't be trusted. They don't realize how innocent—how gullible—they are. They are like defenseless sheep seduced and led astray. That's why they need you. That's why they need a strong shepherd, a faithful shepherd. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20



Interpretation: Assessing the Damage

The apostle Paul's letter exposed the boars in the vineyard of the Roman church. These boars chewed at the church's unity by causing dissensions and upsetting people's faith (see [Romans 16:17](#)). Understanding the meaning of these two problems will reveal timeless truths valuable for any church today.

First, these boars created factions within the church. One of the most natural divisions in the early Roman church would have been between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. Why would such a division have created problems for the Roman church? Why is it essential for any Christian community to maintain unity?

The second kind of harm against Christian communities is a little more difficult to understand. Paul warned that these boars would "cause a scandal." The Greek word *skandalon* often describes a trap, and in this case, it specifically depicts something that causes someone to stumble into sin.

In what ways does false teaching lead someone into sin, upsetting his or her faith in God? Why is this false teaching harmful to a Christian community?

Realize, individuals who have gained the mastery over a few people often have a following. Those loyal followers don't see the danger in the one they're following. But you do. You'll be misunderstood by some by dealing with it. But you must take it on privately, personally, and directly. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20



Correlation: Confronting the Boars

You might be wondering, “What do I do if these boars have infiltrated *my* allotted portion of God’s vineyard?” Thankfully, Jesus taught His disciples a three-step approach for handling persistent sin in the church.

According to [Matthew 18:15](#), what is the first step to take if a fellow Christian sins against you?

If this person continues to sin, what is the next step, according to [18:16](#)?

In some instances, however, this brother or sister will continue to sin. According to [18:17](#), what is the final step in this process of confrontation?



Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20

Jesus' goal wasn't simply to eradicate the boars from the vineyard. Rather, He wanted to restore them to the community so he might transform them into laborers for the kingdom of heaven. Although everyone acts boorish at times, Jesus offers forgiveness, not just seven times, but "seventy-seven times" (*Matthew 18:22*). His forgiveness is as abundant as the water in the sea.



Application: Working in God's Vineyard Today

As you labor in God's vineyard, keep in mind the following exhortations when facing boars who seek to undo all your church's hard work for the gospel.

1. *Vigilantly watch for boars who cause damage.* Specifically, look for those who create division and lead others into sin.
2. *Courageously confront those you've identified as boars.* And always follow the guidelines of *Matthew 18:15–22*.
3. *Continually seek restoration with them.* Remember, the goal isn't to kick them out. You should desire to welcome them back into the community as co-laborers for the gospel.
4. *Prayerfully allow them to walk away if they refuse repentance.* This sad ending won't happen often, but be prepared for the times when it does.

Are any boars wreaking havoc in your allotted portion of God's vineyard? Which of the four exhortations above do you need to heed right now?

Don't be afraid of doing what is right. Don't be afraid of standing against what is wrong.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Boars in God's Vineyard

Romans 16:17–20

What kinds of divisions exist in the church today? What specific matters do boars tend to exploit in order to divide your local church? What would it look like for your community to maintain unity in Christ despite natural diversity and difference in opinions and preferences?

What steps can you take right now to prepare yourself for a time when a boar might enter the vineyard of your Christian community? A conversation of confrontation will always be difficult, but it will be easier with preparation.

Boars will continue to roam God's vineyard until Jesus returns. Until then, however, any human effort to subdue a boar simply will cause more damage. Thankfully, Scripture provides counsel for facing these fearsome boars in a way that is both honoring to God and fruitful for the church.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for offering me wise counsel through Your Word. Multiply my wisdom as I prepare to confront the boars who seek to uproot the fruitful work of the gospel in my Christian community. Transform me into a laborer for You and for Your good purposes. I cannot do it on my own. Thank You for supplying the strength to serve You well. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY THREE

Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7

While you're on this earth, you will wrestle with the old sin nature, and it will forever want to take control of what you're doing. It lurks at every corner, urging you to gratify your selfish desires. The secret is learning how to restrain it through the power of the Spirit. You must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide you, to correct you, to use you, to shape you, to break you, to teach you.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

is hard. Anyone who walks the way of vocational service to God will agree that the path is marked with countless obstacles. Yet they will disagree on what the *biggest* obstacle is. Some will say it is the ever-changing cultural pressures. Others will point out the ever-pressing opinions of difficult people. And who can ignore the ever-present financial challenges?

While these obstacles are big, they certainly aren't the *biggest*. No, the biggest obstacle to fulfilling your calling in ministry is *you*.

Because of the curse of sin, every person is born with what the apostle Paul called "the flesh." This poison of sinful corruption saturates our nature. You can feel it in those quiet temptations that fight against your own well-being and in those subtle desires to reject God's glory and presence.

Yet the temptations of the flesh are simply *desires*. A minister who yields to such desires can uproot decades of fruitful work. But those who instead resist these desires by yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit allow God to cause their ministry to flourish. This *Searching the Scriptures* study soberly examines this conflict between the Spirit and the flesh to help you guard against those fleshly failures.



Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7



PREPARE YOUR HEART

To combat the power of the flesh, God graciously offers the Holy Spirit to believers in Jesus Christ. The Spirit also allows Jesus' followers to "come to the Father" in prayer ([Ephesians 2:18](#)). Offer this prayer by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father, thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit who allows me to overcome my own sinful desires. As I study Your Word today, help me see, not what I want to see, but what You want me to see . . . what I need to see. I ask these things in Jesus' powerful name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In a letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul described himself as working among the ranks of the "ministers of the new covenant." He clarifies this statement by saying that his is a ministry of the Spirit because "the Spirit gives life" ([2 Corinthians 3:6](#)). He spends the subsequent chapters explaining the specifics of his Spirit-filled ministry of the new covenant.



Observation: New Covenant Ministry

"We never give up." Paul opened [2 Corinthians 4:1–7](#) with these powerful words. Because of God's mercy, ministers of the gospel shouldn't lose heart, and they instead should choose to serve God with hearts of joy. As you observe these verses, look for what Paul identifies as those fleshly desires that tend to threaten fruitful and joyful ministry.¹

What exhortation did Paul offer to the Corinthians in [4:1](#)? For what reason could Paul offer such an exhortation?



THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY THREE

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7

What three kinds of behavior did Paul condemn in *2 Corinthians 4:2*?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What alternative behavior did Paul encourage in *4:2*?

Based on the context of this passage, what are the “fragile clay jars,” and what is hidden in them? For a hint, read *4:6–7* in the New Living Translation.

With every ministry, special mercy is needed. In every ministry, the same things must be rejected. Through every ministry, an authentic example must be modeled.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

insight.org | insightworld.org

Copyright © 2021, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S03
3

Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7



Interpretation: Failures of the Flesh

In 2 Corinthians 4:2, the apostle Paul lists three kinds of fleshly failures that damage a ministry: “We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in trickery nor distorting the word of God” (NASB). The timeless principles behind these commands are valuable for anyone serving in ministry.

You may rarely think about shame, but for those living in the Greco-Roman world, shame was *everything*. Whenever you sin, you experience both guilt and shame. Some people use these terms interchangeably, but they are distinct. While guilt is often private and personal, shame is always public and communal. When a person’s sins come to light, it brings shame to the entire community.

Additionally, some acts that aren’t explicitly *sinful* are still considered *shameful*. Imagine attending a wedding wearing your pajamas. This behavior isn’t necessarily morally *wrong*, but it just doesn’t feel *right*. That’s because of shame! What kinds of shameful things might a minister want to hide? Why is it essential for servants of the gospel to live open and honorable lives?

“Walking in trickery” can refer to any actions characterized by cunning or craftiness. Often this expression describes someone who is ready to do *anything* to reach a goal or to obtain honor—someone with a “whatever-it-takes” mentality. Why is this kind of behavior problematic for a person in ministry?



Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7

What might cause a preacher or Bible teacher to distort God's Word intentionally?

So here's my advice to all of us. Draw on God's mercy. Determine to be authentic. Devote yourself to serving others. Demonstrate grace regularly. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Spirit versus the Flesh

No passage depicts the conflict between human flesh and the Holy Spirit quite like [Galatians 5:16–26](#). In these verses, Paul enters this fray to show how followers of Jesus can walk in the Spirit and overcome the desires of the flesh.

According to [5:16–17](#), why are the Holy Spirit and the flesh in constant opposition to one another?

According to [5:19–21](#), what fruits reveal that someone is yielding to the desires of the flesh?



Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7

According to [Galatians 5:22–23](#), what fruits reveal that someone is yielding to the desires of the Spirit?

What words of hope did Paul offer in [5:24](#) to those struggling to overcome the desires of the flesh?

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” ([5:16](#), NASB). These words should be the motto for anyone serving in ministry. Yet the flesh is subtle. Even someone who engraves truth on his or her heart will still struggle with the flesh. So what can you do? Or better yet, what can you *not* do?



Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7



Application: You Cannot Do It All

As you serve in ministry, your flesh will continually tell you of several things you can do—or even *must* do. The reality is, however, that these things are impossible. Pastor Chuck Swindoll identifies ten fleshly desires that act contrary to the work of the Spirit.

1. You cannot control everything.
2. You cannot change anyone.
3. You cannot fix everyone's problems.
4. You cannot meet everyone's expectations.
5. You cannot dodge hard questions.
6. You cannot avoid tough assignments.
7. You cannot let criticism get to you.
8. You cannot believe all the great things people say about you.
9. You cannot force someone into a responsibility he or she isn't qualified to fill.
10. You cannot do it all on your own.

This list certainly is not exhaustive. What other temptations does your flesh lead you to believe you *can* do even though you truly *cannot* do them? Write two or three of your own statements below starting with, "I cannot . . ."



Fleshly Failures That Damage a Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1–7

So what *can* you do? The apostle Paul exhorts believers to lean on the Spirit and to flee from the flesh. What practical steps can you take right now to lean into the Spirit more fully? How might this kind of Spirit-filled living affect you, your relationships, and your ministry?

The bleak reality is that ministry is difficult. Pastor Chuck's advice? *Quit trying so hard!* This won't necessarily make ministry easier, but fleeing those fleshly failures and getting out of your own way will make your service to God abundantly more fruitful and joyful.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I know that my flesh is weak, but I thank You for giving me Your Holy Spirit, who is stronger than even my fiercest selfish desires. Help me rely on You so that I might lead a life of fruitful service to You. Keep me strong. In Jesus' mighty name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY FOUR

Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9

I want to talk about the unexpected things that happen to us. They are rarely our fault. They happen to us, and they impact us deeply. They hurt us, and they can crush us. Unless we realize they are all for our good and for our God's glory, we'll resent them and even resist them.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

careful study of church history demonstrates a counterintuitive principle: *when God wants to do an impossible task, He takes an impossible person and crushes him or her.* A crushing experience will soften the hardest heart so God can mold it to the exact shape He wants it to be.

Many move through life relying on their own wits, power, wealth, or hard work, and often, their self-reliance keeps them propped up . . . at least for a while. Yet when the hammer of suffering inevitably comes crashing down, it decimates any sense of control. Those who find themselves so crushed have two options: continue to rely on themselves or begin to rely on God.

Sadly, no one is safe from the indiscriminating hand of suffering, and you will face experiences that will crush you. This *Searching the Scriptures* study considers how you can react when you face crushing experiences so you won't miss the messages God has for you in your misfortune.



insight.org | insightworld.org



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

Copyright © 2021, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S04
1

Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9



PREPARE YOUR HEART

You may be no stranger to crushing experiences: an unexpected loss of a loved one, a season of financial uncertainty, a difficult rejection, a health crisis. Before you search God's Word, come to Him with a sincere and open heart. Use this prayer to guide you.

Father, thank You for all the grace You've shown me throughout my life. Though I may not fully understand why I've faced suffering in my life, I still trust You and Your plan. Help me to keep my eyes on Your mercy. I pray in Jesus' compassionate name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Before his conversion, the apostle Paul certainly was an impossible man. Though he lived his entire life as a pious Jew, he was committed to destroying the church—until he had a personal encounter with the risen Jesus Christ. In a matter of a few days, his life turned entirely around. This once loud opponent of Jesus became His loudest witness.

Similarly, this former persecutor of the faith now faced fierce persecution because of his newfound faith in Jesus. Paul endured several imprisonments, countless beatings, and even suffered shipwrecks until he was finally beheaded. Yet with each trial, his fervor for the good news of Jesus Christ only burned hotter because he knew that God had a greater purpose.



Observation: Exhortation for the Crushed

Because Paul was no stranger to crushing experiences, he had plenty to say about suffering in his letters. Two such places are [2 Corinthians 4:8–9](#) and [Romans 8:28](#). As you turn to these two passages, read and observe them carefully. For now, focus only on what Paul's words say.¹



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9

In *2 Corinthians 4:8–9*, Paul made four parallel statements about himself and his fellow ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the spaces below, record what Paul and his co-laborers *were*. Then record the corresponding contrast of what they *were not*.

1. They were _____
But not _____
2. They were _____
But not _____
3. They were _____
But not _____
4. They were _____
But not _____

How could Paul maintain such an optimistic attitude despite his difficult circumstances? He answers this question in his letter to the Romans.

For many, *Romans 8:28* is a favorite verse . . . and rightly so! Yet one can easily read such familiar verses without thinking carefully about what the words actually say. Read this verse several times using some *different Bible translations*. What new observations stand out?



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9

According to this verse, what does God cause or work out?

For whom does He do it?

Though I cannot tell you how or when, God will break you. And the crushing will often be very, very difficult to bear. But He will shape you into the image of His Son, whatever that may take. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Enduring the Crushing

Often, when someone feels crushed by suffering, some natural questions to ask are, “Why?” or, “What did I do to deserve this?”

Many look inward, asking these questions with a sense of personal guilt and despair. Some direct their questions to God, pointing an accusatory finger. Many search for some secret meaning or purpose behind their pain. Each of these responses—while understandable—represents a *temporal* perspective on life.



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9

Yet Paul had an *eternal* perspective, and he pointed out that God has already determined the ultimate purpose of His people's suffering. What "good" does God offer to *everyone* who believes in Jesus Christ? How can maintaining an eternal perspective affect the way Christians look at their own suffering? See [Romans 8:29–30](#).

While Paul looked ahead to eternity, he did not lose sight of God's purposes in the present. According to [2 Corinthians 4:10](#), what is one of the results of Christian suffering? How does this help you wrestle with the "Why?" of your own crushing experiences?

Since we don't see and since we can't know, there's only one place to look, and that's up. And there's only one to turn to, and that's the One who sees and knows. His ways are better than our ways, so we look to Him with a sense of confidence. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9



Correlation: A Painful Picture of Crushing

Another person in Scripture who endured suffering akin to Paul's was Job. According to [Job 1:13–19](#), what kind of terrible crushing did Job experience?

Much of the book of Job contains accounts of Job, his wife, and his friends attempting to make sense of Job's horrific suffering. According to [23:10–14](#), what was Job's perspective on his experience? How is his example instructive for Christians who are suffering today?

Job didn't claim to know the reason he suffered so terribly, but he trusted that God would produce a good result: "I will come out as pure as gold" ([23:10](#)). The fire of a trial always is painful, but the flames refine you and cause you to shine brightly as a beloved child of God.



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9



Application: Learning from the Crushing

Crushing experiences can teach priceless lessons, but often, the value of suffering isn't terribly evident amid the pain. To clarify the the messages in our misfortune, Pastor Chuck Swindoll points out some common kinds of trials and the lessons these trials teach.

1. *I hope you don't know too much success.*
It will teach you to rely on God.
2. *I hope you experience obscurity and anonymity.*
It will teach you to pursue humility.
3. *I hope you fail to reach some personal goals.*
It will teach you to learn from your mistakes.
4. *I hope you are forced to deal with difficult people.*
It will teach you to handle relationships wisely.
5. *I hope you face unexpected obstacles.*
It will teach you to remember what's most important.

What kind of suffering have you experienced in the past? What lessons did these experiences teach you about yourself, about the world, or about God?



Don't Miss the Messages in Your Misfortune

Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–9

How are you handling the suffering you are experiencing in the present? Are you struggling with feelings of doubt, anger, or fear? Take a moment to write down a prayer about these things. Be honest with God. Try to incorporate into your prayer the timeless truths you've learned in this study.

Believe it or not, God wants to use *you* to do an impossible task. And though He may be ready, you may not be. The hammer of suffering may soon strike you. Thankfully, believers in Jesus Christ can grow despite the crushing. How? Through their hope in the unbreakable and unshakably good God.



A FINAL PRAYER

As you close your time in God's Word today, offer this prayer from Pastor Chuck:

Father, thank You for never leaving me in the lurch. Thank You for teaching life's hardest lessons when I can't even explain why I suffered. I ask You to get me ready for whatever else You have for me. I recognize that when You want to do an impossible task, You take an impossible person, and You crush him or her. May You find it well with my soul following the crushing. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY FIVE

What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16

I want you to remember that all that lasts is what you pass on. It will not be your financial portfolio. It will not be your possessions. What you will pass on, most importantly, will be a life well-lived and a legacy of a series of life-changing relationships that you cultivate in the years ahead.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

I WILL die someday. Every single person must come to accept the grim reality that the hand of death is impartial. Once someone has accepted this fact, he or she will naturally ask an important question: *What will I leave behind when I go?*

Many think of this question purely in material terms since you can't take anything to the grave. Many choose to save their wealth in their final years so they can use it to bless their children and grandchildren. Some families pass on revered heirlooms, like a valuable piece of jewelry or a centuries-old work of art. Others take a more modest approach and leave behind items of personal significance, like a treasured photo album or a beloved article of clothing.

The sad reality is that even these cherished treasures will eventually pass away—just like the one who gave them away in the first place. The inherited money will eventually dry up, and the physical objects will either decay or be lost, tossed, or sold.

Yet there is something you can pass on that will leave an eternal impact. This *Searching the Scriptures* study will consider what it looks like to pass on the immeasurably valuable gift of true, biblical love.



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The apostle John said, “We love each other because he loved us first” ([1 John 4:19](#)). Before you begin your study of Scripture today, offer this prayer of thanksgiving to God for His love.

Father, thank You for Your love. I know that I have done nothing to deserve it. As I study Your Word today, remind me of just how much You love me, so I might extend that same love to others . . . even to those who I think don't deserve it. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in two major movements. The first section, which comprises the book's first eleven chapters, focuses on theology or *orthodoxy*. This section covers all-important themes such as God's righteousness, humanity's corruption, Christ's faithfulness, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

Because right practice—or *orthopraxy*—always emerges from orthodoxy, the second movement builds off the first by introducing a flurry of practical commands. Much of these five chapters deal with Christian unity, and essential to unity is love. The great apostle's letter spotlights this vital virtue in [Romans 12:9–16](#).



Observation: Unhypocritical Love

Just as a tree cannot grow without strong and healthy roots, neither can a believer engage in effective Bible study without careful and thorough observation.¹ Take several minutes to read [Romans 12:9–16](#) slowly and closely. Then do it again. This may feel like plodding, but know that you are growing roots now that will allow you to bear the fruit of solid application later.

With what declaration did Paul begin this discussion in [12:9a](#)?



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16

This passage is shaped like a pyramid. Love stands firmly at the top in [Romans 12:9a](#), but [12:9b](#) provides clarification to what love looks like, and [12:10–16](#) goes into specific examples of loving actions. According to [12:9b](#), what does it mean to love?

Summarize Paul's essential command(s) in each of the following verses to further demonstrate true, Christlike love:

1. [12:10a](#):
2. [12:10b](#):
3. [12:11](#):
4. [12:12](#):
5. [12:13](#):
6. [12:15](#):
7. [12:16](#):

Candidly, I don't know of a better list to shape one's life than that list of commands.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16



Interpretation: The Character of Love

The Greek text of [Romans 12:9](#) says that love is to be genuine: *anypokritos*. The opposite of this term is *hypocrites*, in which the English word “hypocrite” finds its origin. In ancient Greek literature, this term describes an actor in a play, especially one who wears a mask. In [12:9–16](#), Paul demonstrated what unhypocritical love was, but what does hypocritical or “pretend” love look like?

Look back at the list of commands you compiled in the Observation section. What kinds of character traits underlie the loving behavior Paul desired?

Love is not making the other person comfortable. It's not telling him or her what he or she wants to hear. It's not treating another like he or she treated you. It isn't looking the other way when another does wrong. Sometimes, love must be tough and even stern. Other times, it is soft, affirming, reassuring. And it is always full of forgiveness and compassion.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16



Correlation: The Greatest Commandment

The hostile religious leaders hated Jesus, and they constantly looked for opportunities to attack him. One day, they tried to trap Him with a trick question: “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” (*Matthew 22:36*). Regardless of the commandment Jesus chose, His opponents had nine others with which they could ask, “Well, what about *this* one?”

In response, what did Jesus wisely say in *22:37–38* was the first and greatest commandment? According to *22:39*, what is the second most important commandment?

First:

Second:

Jesus concludes this address saying, “The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (*22:40*). What did Jesus mean by this statement? How does this truth correlate with Paul’s teaching in *Romans 12:9–16*?

Some would say that to love is to be human. Yet our selfish flesh fights against selfless love any chance it gets. Indeed, it’s better to say that to love is to be *Christian*, as true love is rooted in God, exemplified in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. So how can you cultivate Christian love in your life today? Explore the ways as you apply the passage.



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16



Application: Passing Love On

Based on his own study of *Romans 12:9–16*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll developed a list of seven virtues essential to demonstrating unhypocritical love that you can pass on to others and leave behind long after you're gone.

1. Devoted affection
2. Honor
3. Enthusiasm and passion
4. Patience
5. Generosity
6. Sympathy
7. Humility

Why is it difficult to embrace these character traits and to demonstrate true love to others?

Which of these seven characteristics come naturally to you in your relationships? Which one could use a little work? In what ways can you practically rely on God to allow Him to cultivate this aspect of love in you?



What Will You Pass On to Others?

Romans 12:9–16

So what will you pass on? God has given you only one life, and He's taught what it means to make that life count eternally. Do not let regret paralyze you. As long as you have breath, you have time. Christ is with you, and His Spirit is in you. Let love flow into a legacy of transformative memories.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for being a God of love and for demonstrating that love to me through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Give me the strength to model this kind of true, unhypocritical love to those around me—especially those whom I find hardest to love. I want pass on a legacy of a life lived for You. Help me do so. I pray these things in Jesus' loving name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



THE PROS AND CONS OF MINISTRY

STUDY SIX

Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

If you want to make a lasting difference, only one thing matters—that your life counts for eternity. Such a life never just happens. It’s never automatic. You’re not born like that. It’s the direct result of who you are, what you do, and why you do it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

the old saying goes, “If you give a person a fish, you will feed him or her for a day. . . .” Giving a fish to someone who is starving, contributing money to one who suffered a job loss, or extending an encouraging word to a brokenhearted friend will certainly make a positive difference. Though the impact is immediate, it is often temporary.

Teaching someone to fish, however, takes much more work, but the effort makes a lasting difference!

This *Searching the Scriptures* study examines the end of the apostle Paul’s life and considers how his positive impact for the gospel of Jesus Christ has lasted centuries after his death.



insight.org | insightworld.org



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

Copyright © 2022, 2023 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S06
1

Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Making a deep and lasting difference in others must flow out of the eternal difference God has made in us. Prepare yourself for this study by asking God to strengthen you as you seek to impact others for eternity.

Father, thank You for changing my life. If it had not been for Your mercy and Your Son's loving sacrifice, I'd still be lost in darkness. Equip me today, through my study of Your Word, to be a light that makes a lasting difference in others' lives. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The letter of 2 Timothy is the apostle Paul's swansong. As his own execution loomed over him, the experienced apostle wrote to his protégé to share some final advice on how to maintain a faithful ministry. Toward the end of the letter, Paul offered Timothy some very pointed advice on making a lasting difference by swimming upstream against this world's current.

In [2 Timothy 3:1–9](#), Paul conducts an audit of the context in which Timothy—and all future servants of the gospel—would minister. The report is pretty grim. Read what he said in these verses. What stands out to you most?

Yes, the condition of the world is hostile to the God's message, yet such circumstances are fertile soil for planting gospel seeds that will yield eternal fruit. Turn to [3:10–14](#) to see what advice Paul offered to Timothy.



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14



Observation: Remaining Faithful

It's natural to come to Scripture with the burning question, "What do I do?" While application is the fruit of Bible study, it must grow out of a careful understanding of the text. Observing a passage is like tilling fertile soil—the essential first step in the process.¹ Slowly and carefully read [2 Timothy 3:10–14](#), and remember that these observations will produce fruitful application.

With what transition word did Paul begin this section in [3:10](#)? What kind of logical relationship does this word create between this section and the previous one?

In [3:10](#), Paul acknowledged that he was able to maintain a posture of faith, patience, love, and endurance amid the world's hostile conditions. According to [3:11](#), how did Paul cultivate these characteristics?

According to [3:12–13](#), what bleak future reality did Paul exhort Timothy to anticipate?



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

Despite the challenges that awaited Timothy, what exhortation did Paul offer in 2 Timothy 3:14?

Paul is near death, and Timothy has more years in front of him than behind him for ministry. Timothy is neck-deep in ministry in the city of Ephesus. Paul is interested in Timothy making a difference. In fact, I'm convinced he's more interested in that than Timothy is. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Remembrance and Continuance

Interpretation is like planting seeds and watering them. We must understand the meaning of the text before applying its fruit to our lives. Based on his study of 2 Timothy 3:10–14, Pastor Chuck Swindoll determined one timeless theological principle essential for anyone who desires to make a lasting difference:

A powerful link exists between remembrance and continuance.

How do you see this principle demonstrated in Paul's example and in his final advice to Timothy?



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

How is this principle instructive for Christians today? What should they remember as they seek to continue in faithfulness to God?

There's a powerful link between what we remember from those who taught us, those who were our mentors, those who established us in our spiritual formation, and the way we pursue God today. That's what Paul is underscoring here. "Remember the things you learned from me, and then continue in them, Timothy." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Remembering and Continuing a Legacy of Faithfulness

Timothy probably received this letter from his dear friend with a smile, yet his smile likely sank as he read the challenging words Paul penned. Paul was handing off the torch of ministry to Timothy, and the road that lay before this young servant of the gospel would be treacherous.

Yet as Timothy continued the work of God, he could look back and remember one who faced very similar circumstances. Millennia before the time of Paul and Timothy, Moses carried the same torch of God's plan. He had delivered the Israelites from slavery and led them out of Egypt. And when Moses reached the end of his life, he passed the torch on to Joshua.

According to [Joshua 1:2](#), what responsibility did Joshua have after Moses died?



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

What promise did God make to Joshua in [Joshua 1:5](#)?

According to [1:6–9](#), how was Joshua to act in light of these promises? (Note the repetition in [1:6](#), [7](#), and [9](#).)

Be strong and courageous! Remembering God's faithfulness was essential for Joshua as he prepared to lead the Israelites into Canaan. It was essential for Timothy as he carried on the apostolic work Paul began. And it is essential for anyone who desires to pick up the torch of ministry today.



Application: Qualities of Difference Makers

You may be wondering, *How can I know I will make a lasting difference for the gospel?* Pastor Chuck points out three characteristics of those who will make a lasting difference:

1. *They're not motivated by money.* While possessing wealth is not a sin, it can become an idol when it is one's primary pursuit.
2. *They're not interested in impressing others.* They recognize that their approval and applause is worthless compared to remaining faithful to God.
3. *They're not afraid of risk, hardship, criticism, or sacrifice.* Those who desire to make an eternal impact must endure and overcome these challenges.



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

Which of these three characteristics proves most challenging for you to embrace? Internal desires, external pressure, and fear of the unknown affect everyone, but the Holy Spirit provides the strength necessary to overcome these obstacles!

Who has made a lasting difference in your life? Who has made you the person you are today? What lessons did these people teach you? What character qualities did they pass on to you?

Has God placed a “Timothy” in your life? How would you like to make a lasting difference in this person’s life? What would you like to pass on?

So . . . do you want to make a difference?



Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

Paul warned Timothy that doing so wouldn't be easy. Yet remaining faithful to God despite the struggle will be worth it. Reflect on the rich heritage of faith you've inherited. As you look ahead, be strong and courageous! Invest what you've received in the lives of others. God wants to make a lasting difference through you.



A FINAL PRAYER

Offer your own prayer to God as you conclude this series. Ask Him to use the things you've learned to equip you to serve Him in whatever ministry He has prepared for you.

Father,

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

