



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Who are you? What do you believe? How does your life bear out those beliefs? In his final letter to Timothy, Paul wasted no time in adjuring him to steadfastly continue in the faith and, in so doing, finish well. As Paul stared down the end of his journey, he was satisfied that he had run well (2 Timothy 4:6–7), and he desired the same result for his protégé.

Paul's charge doesn't stop at Timothy, though. You, me, and the rest of the body of Christ are charged with the same imperative: *finish well*. We don't consider this charge only in our twilight years; we begin right where we are, right now.



DIGGING DEEPER

In his message, Chuck Swindoll says, "Let's do something for a change. Rather than leaving this in Timothy's court, let's leave it in our court. These are words to you and me. Let's take Paul's words as counsel from the Lord God to us personally. Let's ask the question and answer it four different times and fill in the blanks, if you will."

In today's *Searching the Scriptures* study, we will fill in those blanks. Chuck breaks down the answer to the question, "How can I finish well?" by providing four answers:

- Continuing in what you have learned
- Becoming convinced of what you know
- Placing value on what God has revealed
- Allowing the truth to change your life

Let's develop where 2 Timothy 3:14–17 fits into *our* story.

Quotable

*What air is to
our lungs, what
nutrition is to our
bodies, the truth
of the Scriptures
is to life.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Searching the Scriptures: Learning Where We Fit in the Story

Answer #1: Continuing in What You Have Learned (2 Timothy 3:14)

Paul contrasted the evil impostors of 2 Timothy 3:13 with the trustworthy people of 3:14. The trustworthy people—in this case, Timothy’s mother and grandmother (1:5)—are not deemed so because of their worldly success (the evil impostors are described as flourishing in 3:13, while Paul guaranteed the godly would suffer persecution in 3:12) but because of their knowledge and teaching of the holy Scriptures.

From whom did you consistently learn about the Bible?

What were some of the most important biblical truths that were shared with you?

If you could write a thank-you letter to one spiritual mentor, to whom would you write? If he or she is still living, why not pray for him or her now? Write a short prayer thanking God for this person.

How, specifically, are you continuing in what you have learned from your own spiritual mentors?



Answer #2: *Becoming Convinced of What You Know (2 Timothy 3:15)*

Ezekiel 18:20 says: “The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.” We cannot inherit either punishment or faith from our parents—and that’s a good thing! God has no grandchildren.

There are two specific ways that Chuck outlines from the text how to become convinced of what we know.

- **By cultivating our own convictions**

What does it mean to cultivate one’s own convictions? We cannot inherit our faith in God or knowledge of His Word. Timothy had an incredible spiritual heritage in his mother and grandmother; however, Timothy’s heart, soul, and mind were his alone to yield to Jesus. Paul could only offer his experience and wisdom, but it was up to Timothy to integrate Paul’s advice into his own life.

What are five convictions that you live by, based on your relationship with God and understanding of His Word?

- **By gleaning wisdom through our own faith**

We cultivate faith through our immersion and reliance upon the holy Scriptures. The guidance of the Holy Spirit works powerfully through the Word. After all, how can you know where the Lord is leading if you aren’t accustomed to His voice?

Recall an experience you had where God strengthened your faith in Him through His Word.



How do you make the Word of God a part of your daily life?

Answer #3: Placing Value on What God Has Revealed (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible comes from God; the Bible is God's words about Himself (2 Timothy 3:16). While there are certainly other amazing qualities to Scripture, inspiration alone gives each of those words true and lasting significance. Why? Inspiration sets the Bible apart from *every* other book known to humanity. The Bible's divine origin imbues it with qualities that other books simply cannot match.

Among the most significant of those qualities is the fact that the Bible is true. Scholars in modern times call this doctrine *inerrancy*, meaning that the Bible is completely true in its original writings. Christians throughout history have held to the truthfulness of the Bible. In other words, the Bible is a reliable and trustworthy revelation of God.

For Christians, what are the implications of a God-breathed, true book? Two huge issues rise to the surface.

First, Christians who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible can place their confidence in its teaching. In a world that grows more confusing every day, having a place to go for reliable guidance on life's biggest questions can encourage even the most confused among us.

Second, Christians who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible can affirm its authority and sufficiency. Because the Bible comes from God, it carries with it His authority. And the proper response to authority is obedience. Furthermore, the Bible's origins in God mean it is sufficient to make clear the message of salvation and the life of good works for those who follow Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15, 17). Affirming the inspiration of Scripture, therefore, implies our willingness to obey its commands and our confidence that it will help us understand the way toward salvation and good works.

Reading the Bible, therefore, is not a mere spectator sport. We read, meditate upon, and obey. Chuck underscores the Bible's spiritual purposes: teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness.

"Teaching" (*didaskalia*) refers both to the content that is taught and the way it is taught. Timothy was to teach gently (2:24–25), just as Scripture does (Romans 15:4).



“Reproof” (*elegmos*) makes us conscious of sin in our lives and motivates us to rid it from our lives. Scripture is perfect for this task, for it convinces and convicts us of sin (Hebrews 4:12).

“Correction” (*epanorthosis*) is the positive side of reproof. Its goal is recovery and restoration; it “straightens us out” (2 Timothy 3:16 TLB). Time spent in Scripture ensures straight doctrine and deeds.

“Training” (*paideia*) in the Greco-Roman culture involved cultivating the minds and morals of children. Training points out wrongs, but it also points to right ways of living—“in righteousness” (3:16). There is no better guide to living right than Scripture.

Answer #4: Allowing the Truth to Change Your Life (3:17)

The Lord gave Timothy—and gives us—everything we need to finish well; this is what the word “equip” means in the context of 2 Timothy 3:17. God gives us the gear we need: spiritual mentors, His work in our lives, and, most important, His inerrant Word.

Timothy finished well. And he did so as a man of God who was first and foremost a man of the Word of God. This is a lesson to take to heart. For we can only finish well if we take seriously our commitment to Scripture—to know it, believe it, treasure it, and *live it*.

How has the Word of God equipped you for a particular challenge you faced this month?

Are you facing a crisis or a problem today? Search an online concordance or the concordance in your Bible for key words related to that problem. Jot down passages that speak to those needs. Afterward, take the next seven days to meditate upon these passages, and write down what God is teaching you.



Conclusion

To finish well, the man or woman of God ought to be committed to knowing and applying the Bible daily. We will never find more strength or gain more insight from any other source on earth than God's Word. Take time. Go to the trouble. Each day of your life invest in its truths.



A FINAL PRAYER

From Psalm 119:4–8:

*You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.*

*Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!*

*Then I will not be ashamed
when I compare my life with your commands.*

*As I learn your righteous regulations,
I will thank you by living as I should!*

*I will obey your decrees.
Please don't give up on me!*

Amen.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

God-Breathed Truth

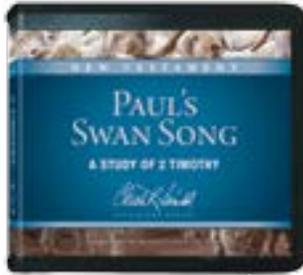
2 Timothy 3:14–17

SEARCHING
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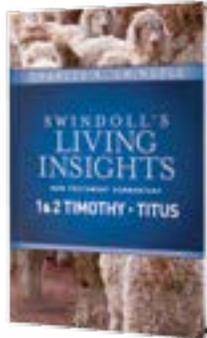
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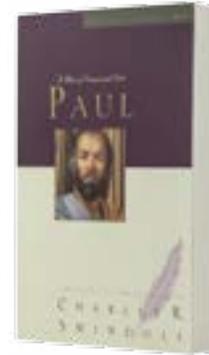
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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