

WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

STUDY ONE

The Essential Ingredient for a Godly Life

Daniel 6:1–10

The essential quality, the one ingredient that must be part of any life that aims to be godly is integrity.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ADVERSITY can sweep over our lives like the howling winds of a winter cyclone. We may experience a financial setback, loss of employment, serious family conflicts. The storm can intensify with the betrayal of a close friend or persecution from an enemy. It can seem as if our whole world is falling apart!

What stabilizes you when the winds of adversity blow? Some people rely on their cunning to navigate the storm. They will do whatever it takes to survive—covering up the truth, manipulating people with lies, or shifting blame to others.

One biblical figure encountered the fiercest storms, but his eighty-plus years of walking with God taught him that upholding an unshakable integrity is the best way to get through adversity.

His name is Daniel.

The integrity of our faith and character is what truly keeps us standing amid life's storms, just as it did for Daniel—the first Bible character in our series on heroes of the faith who model how to walk with integrity in times of adversity.



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The Essential Ingredient for a Godly Life

Daniel 6:1–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. You may wish to pray as Pastor Chuck prays before he studies the Word: “I often pray, ‘Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.’”¹ Write your prayer here if you wish.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we study the Bible using a method featuring four vital steps:

1. **Observation:** *what does this biblical passage say?*
2. **Interpretation:** *what does this biblical passage mean?*
3. **Correlation:** *how does this biblical passage relate to other similar biblical passages?*
4. **Application:** *how should I respond to the truth of this biblical passage?*

For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck Swindoll on this method, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online instructional web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).” There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



The Essential Ingredient for a Godly Life

Daniel 6:1–10



Observation: A Biblical Model of Integrity

We start by observing the passage, looking for answers to the questions *who*, *when*, *where*, and *what*. *Who* are the characters introduced in *Daniel 1:1–3* and how does the text describe Daniel?



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool: Historical Setting

Using resources such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, we can determine the *when* and *where*. Darius ruled after the Babylonian Empire fell in 539 BC. Some Bible scholars identify him as “King Cyrus of Persia” (Daniel 10:1) or as Cyrus’ appointed ruler, named, Gubaru. The Persian Empire ultimately encompassed “provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia” (Esther 1:1). No wonder Darius needed 120 governors to help him oversee this growing kingdom!

According to *Daniel 6:4–5*, *what* do the jealous “administrators and high officials” first do to bring down Daniel and stop him from becoming Darius’ top official?



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When that strategy failed, what scheme did Daniel’s enemies try next, according to *Daniel 6:6–9*? Observe their words carefully. What half-truths and manipulations do you see?

What ungodly character qualities did these men display?

What godly character qualities do you see in Daniel, according to *Daniel 6:10*? Don’t miss key lines that give hints to Daniel’s integrity, such as, “as usual” and “just as he had always done.”

We read not one word of panic in Daniel. When we have integrity, we have nothing to hide. There’s no dirt for anyone to find, no scandal to uncover. Integrity is like a warm blanket on a cold night. It gives us comfort and security. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Daniel 6:1–10



Interpretation: What Integrity Is and Isn't

In the interpretation phase, we seek to understand the meaning of Daniel's example of integrity. How does the English dictionary define *integrity*? Look up the definition online or in your own dictionary and write your finding below.

The Hebrew counterpart, *tom*, includes a similar meaning, conveying “the fundamental idea of completeness.”² A person of integrity lives a life of complete truthfulness because there are no gaps of sin to hide. Their character is solid and whole.

No hairline cracks of compromise lined Daniel's motives or actions; they were sound and complete. Does living a life of integrity imply perfection? No. Daniel certainly wasn't sinless. However, people with integrity don't try to smooth things over when they sin. Instead, how do people of integrity handle their failures, particularly when their failures hurt someone else?

Summarize the main idea of integrity as modeled by Daniel in the form of a principle. A *principle* is a statement of truth that applies to all people in all times. When writing a principle, it helps to include a “should” statement—to express the *what*; and a “by” statement—to illustrate the *how*. For example, “When adversity strikes, we should . . . by”



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Carefully review what you observed in Daniel 6:1–10 and use this “we should . . . by . . .” formula to write one principle based on the qualities you see in Daniel’s life.

Put yourself in Daniel’s sandals for a while. Consider the unfairness of his situation. From what other parts of his example can you draw a principle? Consider these starters:

“When we don’t get what we deserve, we should . . . by”

“When others spread lies about us, we should . . . by”

“When we are tempted to defend ourselves or retaliate, we should . . . by”

God never gives us a standard we’re not able to achieve. He empowers us. He enables us. He smiles on our actions and He finds great delight when His people walk in integrity.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Supporting Passages on Integrity

Correlation includes exploring other passages in Scripture that clarify or expand upon the teaching in our main passage. Look up the following verses and write down what they say about integrity.

Bible Verses	Teaching on Integrity
<i>Psalm 78:70–72</i>	
<i>Proverbs 10:9</i>	
<i>Proverbs 11:3</i>	
<i>Proverbs 20:6–7</i>	

Daniel’s stability through adversity reminds us of Jesus’ words in *Matthew 7:24–25*. How does Daniel represent the kind of person Jesus had in mind?



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Unlike Daniel, we can stand on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and His words to stabilize us in the fiercest storm. With Christ as our Lord, we follow His way of truth and light, which is the ultimate expression of integrity.

How did the winds of opposition surge to gale force and how did Daniel stand strong, according to *Daniel 6:11–23*? Who was with Daniel in the lion's den? Who promised to be with you through any storm, according to *Matthew 28:18–20*?

It's always amazing to me that Daniel didn't wind up in the lion's den because he did something wrong. He was there because he did things right. He wasn't worried about those envious men. He answered to his God. We're not called to please people; we're called to live our lives before an audience of One. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Integrity through Adversity in Our Day

The final step of *Searching the Scriptures* is to incorporate into our lives the truths we've learned. Following Daniel's example, what does walking with integrity in times of adversity look like today?

Twenty-first-century Daniels . . .

- Speak the truth
- Don't live a double life
- Model personal purity
- Stay faithful at work and have an excellent attitude
- Don't blame others for their mistakes
- Refuse to participate in corruption
- Don't take unfair advantage of others
- Have a consistent walk with God



The Essential Ingredient for a Godly Life

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As you reflect on the spheres of your life—your personal life, family life, work life, community life, church life—in what ways might you need to confess and turn from a sin in which you acted without integrity?

We have many principles before us! Look back at the principles you wrote down during interpretation and those just above. Jot down a few specific ways you can put into action one or two of those principles.

Daniel didn't spend time worrying about what his enemies might do. Instead, he focused on walking with God. He stayed true to the path God set for him, despite the fierce winds that could have easily blown him off course. As you close this study, pray for God to empower you to walk through your storms with a Daniel-like resolve.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the inspiring example of Daniel. In this world of fallen heroes, I need a strong model to follow—a person who anchored himself to the rock of Your Word and stayed true despite the adversity. Give me the strength to walk in integrity and live only for You. In the name of Jesus, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. J. Barton Payne, "2252 (*tāmam*) Be Complete," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 973.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

STUDY TWO

The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

This series is about the importance of being people of integrity at every turn, without compromise, without duplicity, and without hypocrisy.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PEOPLE of integrity refuse to waver in their principles, regardless the temptation. They follow God's way—day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade—even though no one else goes with them, even though everyone else opposes them.

Noah was such a man. He lived in a world of universal evil, saturated with violence, manipulation, and godlessness. Yet, he and his family stood out as the *only* people on earth who walked with God.

Can you imagine the pressure on them to conform to the lifestyle of those around them? To join the circus of sin outside their front door? The bright lights, however, never lured Noah away from his God, and that's the reason God recruited him for a mission that altered the course of history.

Let's get to know this ordinary hero who saved civilization, not by using special skills or powers but by exhibiting a single quality available to us all . . . *the integrity of enduring obedience.*



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps you have known the loneliness of being the only follower of God and the pressure of conforming. Pause now to ask God to use His Word and Spirit to reveal His presence to you in lonely times. Pray for wisdom, strength, and faith.



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The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll encourages a careful reading of Scripture:

In order to become astute observers, we need to read as if for the first time. When we train ourselves to see God’s Word with fresh eyes, chances are good that we’ll notice details we’ve never seen there before.¹



Searching the Scriptures Tip

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](#).” There, you’ll find a helpful overview of the four necessary steps to studying the Bible: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application.



Observation: Noah, the Only Blameless Man on Earth

The account of Noah is a study in contrasts. Noah stands out in this passage like a gleaming star in a morally dark sky. Read [Genesis 6:1–6](#) in three Bible versions, including Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase, *The Message*.

The Darkness of Humanity and the Grief of God—Genesis 6:5–6

Describe the extent of human wickedness and the grief God felt in [Genesis 6:5–6](#).



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

What do these verses state about the nature of God?

“But Noah”—*Genesis 6:7–8*

What contrast do you see in *Genesis 6:7–8*, and what makes this contrast so significant?

Noah’s Obedience in the Story of God’s Judgment and Salvation—*Genesis 6:9–22*

What further contrasts between Noah and sinful humanity do you observe in *Genesis 6:9–12*? *The Message* can help you find the words to write down as you observe the passage.



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

What steps did God tell Noah to take to save created life and continue the human race, according to *Genesis 6:13–21*? What features of the ark stand out to you?

What character qualities did Noah exhibit in *6:22*? What was at stake if Noah didn't follow God's instructions precisely and not give up?

Faithfully and consistently, decade after decade, Noah did everything exactly as God commanded. He was meticulous in following God's instructions, and he finished the task.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding Two Biblical Concepts

In the interpretation phase, we look for the meaning the biblical author intended to communicate to his audience. Here, two key words encapsulate that meaning: *favor* and *covenant*.

Everyone in Noah's day rested content to act godlessly—casting aside God's ways, shunning God's presence, and sinking deeper and deeper into sin. Noah, however, couldn't rest without Him. As a man of integrity, Noah "walked in close fellowship with God" (*Genesis 6:9*). Everyone eventually found only God's judgment. But Noah "found favor with the LORD" (*6:8*).



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

The Hebrew word for “favor” is *chen*. It also means, “grace.” In fact, Genesis 6:8 is the first occurrence in Scripture of this theologically rich word. Here, *chen* simply means that God gladly opened Himself to Noah like a royal king removing all social barriers to befriend a peasant. God smiled at Noah and delighted in their relationship.

God expresses both grace and judgment in Genesis 6. Use the following chart to list the ways He did so.

God's Grace	God's Judgment

As an expression of His grace, God established a “covenant” with Noah (Genesis 6:18). The Hebrew word is *berith*, and it appears here for the first time in Scripture. In the Old Testament, God's covenants with His people are like the types of pledges an ancient king might make with a subject he wishes to favor.

When God makes a covenant of grace with an individual, He does so unconditionally, and He often includes a sign to guarantee His pledge. God is the royal sovereign who chooses to bless His subjects, and all God asks in return is faith in Him.

What “pledge” did God make Noah, according to [Genesis 6:17–19](#)? What did Noah have to do in response?



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

What foundational principles about our salvation do you see emerging in this passage regarding God’s judgment, grace, and provision? How do these concepts help strengthen our faith to help us follow Jesus with enduring obedience?

By his actions, Noah faithfully declared the good news that there was a way of escape. When he set the door of the ark in place, I am certain Noah reminded the people watching that this door was the way to escape the coming flood. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Noah, a Preacher of Righteousness

Interestingly, Peter called Noah “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5 NASB). According to [2 Peter 2:5](#), what message do you think Noah preached for decades through his behavior while he was building the ark?

Like Noah, Jesus also warned about a future storm of judgment. What message did Jesus preach, according to [Matthew 24:37–39](#)? How will Christ’s return be like the flood in Noah’s day?



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

According to *Ephesians 2:4–10*, what is the means of grace that will deliver us from this coming judgment?

Noah declared a similar kind of message to his world that we share with sinners in our world—except, the “ark” that saves us is not made of wood, but our Savior’s flesh and blood. In the space below, summarize the message of hope we have to offer in Christ.

As with the ark, only one door leads to safety. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The door to salvation is still open, and we may come into that door by faith in Jesus Christ.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Long-Term Obedience Today

Noah was one of a kind! No one in history walked to the beat of a different drummer more than Noah did. Think how ridiculous he must have seemed to his neighbors as he built his boat at a time when it had never rained before (Genesis 2:4–6). The ark was massive—longer than a football field, seventy-five feet wide, and about four stories high. No one had seen anything like it!

Yet, despite how outrageous the project, Noah obeyed God. He believed God would keep His word. So Noah acted in obedient faith for decades without a drop of rain.



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22

Perhaps you are following God in a dry season in which all you have to hope in is a promise from God. What pressures do you face to give up and join the crowd of unbelievers?

What do you think kept Noah from giving up during the years of boat-building? From his example, what can help you stay faithful in your situation?

What can you do today to rest in God's grace and covenant with you through Christ until He comes again?

Noah calls to us from the pages of Scripture, *don't give up!* He implores us to abide in the safe shelter of God's grace and to keep spreading the message of God's gracious offer on earth. God doesn't want anyone to perish and has provided a way to escape His judgment: our Savior, Jesus Christ. Each time we see a rainbow in the sky, we know God will keep His word.



The Integrity of Enduring Obedience

Genesis 6:5–17, 21–22



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me to faithfully declare the way of salvation through the door of Jesus Christ. Keep me faithful in following Your plan for my life and guide me in Your way. Thank You for opening Your grace to me and giving me the assurance of salvation. In the name of Jesus, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 95.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

STUDY THREE

The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

We come to the finest examples of personal integrity in the area of moral purity in the entire Bible: the account of Joseph and his victory over sexual temptation.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

In a series of Bible studies delivered to clergy in April 1937, German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave this sobering description of temptation.

In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret, smouldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames. . . . Joy in God is in course of being extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us. . . . Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God.¹

When our “slumbering inclination towards desire” awakens, temptation’s appeal is strong, but it is possible to say no to the flesh. Joseph successfully resisted sexual temptation when he was most vulnerable. What shielded him from flesh’s flame? Let’s take a look at Genesis 39 and discover Joseph’s strategies for staying morally pure.



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The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Thankfully, God does not leave us on our own to struggle against temptation. Read the following reminder of God's faithfulness and pray for insight from God's Word so you can overcome temptation in your hour of need.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13)



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Temptation strikes when we least expect it, often when we're doing well and our guard is down.

Although Joseph's brothers had mistreated him and sold him into slavery, the Lord was with Joseph in Egypt, and "he succeeded in everything he did" (Genesis 39:2). He became the personal attendant of the captain of Pharaoh's guard, Potiphar, who was impressed by Joseph's strong character and could see "that the LORD was with Joseph" (39:3). With this reliable and capable young man in charge of all his affairs, Potiphar "didn't worry about a thing" (39:6).

Just as the sunshine of success beamed over Joseph and it seemed his dark days of mistreatment and adversity had passed, suddenly, a scheming temptress entered the scene.



Observation: Uninvited Appeal, Untrue Accusation

The first step in *Searching the Scriptures* is to observe the passage carefully, noting here how the author develops the narrative's action and themes. The Lord was faithful to Joseph (Genesis 39:2-3), but how would Joseph hold up under pressure? Would young Joseph, who was far from home and alone in a city of decadent idolators, prove faithful to God under an extreme test of character?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

The Test—Genesis 39:6–12

How does the author set the scene for Joseph's test in *Genesis 39:6*? What possible character flaws in Joseph could his situation have exposed?

What secret sin in Potiphar's wife led up to her propositioning Joseph, according to *39:7*?

When Joseph refused her, what reasons did he give, according to *39:8–9*? What did Joseph call extra-marital sex? Whom would the act offend?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

What did Joseph do when Potiphar's wife kept "putting pressure" on him, according to [Genesis 39:10](#)?
What strategy for maintaining moral purity was Joseph modeling?

Put yourself in Joseph's place. With his promotions came privileges—greater trust, less oversight, and more privacy. What circumstances in [39:11–12](#) intensified the pressure on Joseph to sin? What rationalizations could Joseph have made to give in to temptation? Instead, what action did he take as the only recourse when tempted to commit sexual sin?

The Aftermath—Genesis 39:13–21

Joseph passed the test! Instead of a commendation, however, what "reward" did Joseph receive for keeping himself pure, according to [39:13–20](#)?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

Once again, Joseph was mistreated without cause. Identify the rays of hope in [Genesis 39:21–23](#) that the author shines into Joseph’s cell. What phrases in this passage does the author repeat from [39:1–6](#) that reveal a central theme?

We read again and again that God was with Joseph. His hand was on him. God was there, seeing Joseph and protecting him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Staying Pure in a Foreign Land

To decipher the meaning of a passage, we try to understand what the author (Moses) intended to communicate to his audience, the newly formed Hebrew nation. By recounting Joseph’s experiences in Egypt, Moses taught the people how they must follow God in their new homeland—decadent, idolatrous Canaan.

What truths does the account of Joseph in Genesis 39 teach about God—namely, His nature and His relationship with His people?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

What dangers of living in a sinful world does the passage illustrate that overlap with our day?

What admirable character qualities did Joseph display as he was entrusted with higher levels of responsibilities and privileges?

What strategies from Joseph's example can you list for handling temptation and staying sexually pure in a morally decaying society?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

Joseph did what was right, but he was wrongly treated. What principle was Moses communicating about the realities of living in a fallen world?

God is our almighty, holy, magnificent heavenly Father who always has the long view in mind. He had great plans for Joseph, some of which will only be understood through mistreatment. God never forgot Joseph. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: What Happens When We're Tempted

James takes us behind the scenes to show us how temptation works inside our hearts. Read [James 1:14–15](#).

What is the source of all temptation, whether we are tempted by material possessions, personal power, or physical pleasure?

According to 1:14, what are the two components of temptation, which we can illustrate with a bait and hook?



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

What are the consequences of temptation once it leads to sin, according to James 1:15?

In Joseph's case, Potiphar's wife enticed Joseph and would have dragged him into sin, but Joseph doused temptation's fire by focusing his desires on God and His righteousness. Joseph saw sin for what it was—a twisted, satanic misuse of what God created as good and an offense against those Joseph cared about. In addition, he feared the deadly consequences of sin and wanted nothing to do with it. **So, he ran!** Joseph modeled what Paul counseled centuries later: "Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace" (2 Timothy 2:22 NASB).

Joseph did exactly what God says to do. If you're in a car, and the person you're with is making moves, get out of the car and run. If you're in an office, open the door and get out of the room. Don't play around, leave! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: Four "Must Nots"

What lessons from Joseph's example shine like stars to guide us in our morally dark world? Pastor Chuck offers four vital principles to light our way.

First, *we must not be weakened by our situation*. It's easy to violate the trust of others and allow our freedom to become an occasion for sin. We must constantly remind ourselves that our good gifts come from God (James 1:17), and we are accountable to Him.

Second, *we must not be deceived by persuasion*. What enticements does the temptress of our culture whisper in our ears? Recognize them for what they are: pathways to destruction and heartache. We need to train ourselves to recognize the falsehoods in these deceptive messages.

Third, *we must not be gentle with our emotions*. Joseph didn't give himself time to consider his feelings. He acted swiftly. Temptation must be doused immediately, no smoldering allowed.



The Integrity of Moral Purity

Selections from Genesis 39

Fourth, *we must not be confused by the immediate results*. Resisting temptation once doesn't banish it forever. Like Potiphar's wife, it comes around again even when we try avoiding it. So be on guard.

Look back over the principles from this study and build your own battle plan for overcoming temptation. What strategies do you find most helpful for you? What current situations in your life will these principles prove most helpful?

You might want to share your list with a trusted friend and ask him or her to hold you to your plan. When the desire ignites, you'll be prepared like Joseph to do the right thing.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for being with me when I'm tempted to sin. When I struggle to be faithful to You, Your faithfulness toward me never dims. As You promised, light my way for me to flee temptation. Help me see beyond my sin, that I might desire only You and Your ways and the sweetness of the good gifts You offer. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall and Temptation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone, 1997), 132.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

STUDY FOUR

The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Wisdom isn't afraid to act alone and do something courageous.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN jewelers show off a high-quality diamond, they place it on a black felt pad and shine a bright light on it. The diamond sparkles as the gem's facets, like a hundred tiny prisms, refract the light and array it in brilliant colors. The diamond's integrity—clarity, flawlessness, and the precision of its cuts—glistens for all to see and admire.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we showcase Abigail, a gem of a woman who appears only briefly in the grand narrative of Scripture but who sparkles with wisdom and faith.

She came to light through an encounter with David, who had been anointed king-elect of Israel but was still on the run from King Saul. The dark backdrop in her life was her marriage to Nabal, a brutish man who kept her in his shadow until a crisis allowed her true value to shine. Let's take a closer look at this grand woman and the exceptional integrity she displayed when adversity struck her world.



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The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25



PREPARE YOUR HEART

What do you hope to learn from this *Searching the Scriptures* study? Anytime we turn to God's Word we must first turn to the God of the Word to ask for guidance and blessing on our study. So, turn your hope into a prayer by expressing to God your need for Christ to work in your heart and mind.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We meet Abigail in 1 Samuel 25, where the account unfolds like a play in three acts. The curtain is rising, so let's take our seats and view the dramatic action in God's Word.



Observation: The Drama in Three Acts

Use your observation skills to follow the action as it unfolds, beginning with an introduction of the main characters as they step on stage.

The Main Characters—1 Samuel 25:1–3

Read *1 Samuel 25:1–3* where the action immediately centers around Nabal, Abigail, and David. In the space below, write down what you learn about each individual.

Nabal:

Abigail:

David:



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Samuel had anointed David as king when the Lord rejected Saul. So Samuel's death likely delivered an emotional blow to the would-be king. Saul refused David's newly received divine right to Israel's throne, so he frequently sought to kill this young shepherd whom God favored.

Taking the high road by refusing to fight back, David often fled as a fugitive from King Saul to the rugged wilderness where he scratched out a living. Look up the locations mentioned in your Bible maps or find the town of *Maon* at bibleatlas.org. What do you observe about this region?

As you follow the action, picture each scene as if the action is happening in front of you. Listen for the hoofbeats of the horses and the rattling of the swords. Feel the intensity of the emotions in each of the characters, beginning with *Act 1: David's Conflict with Nabal*.

Act 1: David's Conflict with Nabal—1 Samuel 25:4–13

What service did David do for Nabal, and what did David ask in return, according to *1 Samuel 25:4–9*?



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

How did Nabal, whose name means “fool,” foolishly respond to David’s request, according to *1 Samuel 25:10–11*?

What was David’s rash reaction in *25:12–13*?

David loses it! He throws all restraint to the wind and tells his men to put on their swords. Four hundred of his men strap on their swords and gallop down the hillside to the camp of Nabal. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Act 2: Abigail’s Wise Intercession—1 Samuel 25:14–35

What actions did Abigail take that displayed her wisdom, according to *1 Samuel 25:14–19*?



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Abigail had learned from years of marriage to her foolish husband that trying to change his mind was a waste of time. So she rushed to David in a spirit of diplomacy and selflessness.

According to *1 Samuel 25:20–22*, what was David’s mind-set when Abigail found him?

How did Abigail display wisdom in softening David’s heart and changing his mind, according to *25:23–31*?

Summarize David’s response in *25:32–35*.

If not for Abigail coming to David’s rescue at a particularly vulnerable moment—just after Samuel’s death—David might have irreparably tarnished his good name. Abigail saved David not from an enemy but from himself!

*David melts! He was a man after God’s heart, and God used Abigail to reason with David.
Wisdom always finds a way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Act 3: God's Surprising Conclusion—1 Samuel 25:36–42

Tired and emotionally spent, did Abigail return home and fall into the arms of her grateful husband? No! She stumbled onto an appalling scene. Nabal was “very drunk” and oblivious to the fact that his wise wife had just saved his foolish neck (1 Samuel 25:36)!

In the end, however, God set things right. What surprise concludes the drama with a blessing for Abigail and David, according to *1 Samuel 25:37–42*?



Interpretation: The Theology in David's Response

In the interpretation phase, we seek to understand the theology taught in the biblical narrative. Let's look closer at the account to see what it reveals about God and His plan.

How did David understand God's hand moving through Abigail's actions, according to *1 Samuel 25:23–35*?



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

What principle about hearing God's voice through others does David's response model for you?

God preserved David—and not merely for David's sake. God protected David from shedding innocent blood because God had a kingdom for David to govern and a chosen people for the king-elect to bless through his upcoming God-centered rule.



Correlation: The Wisdom of God

The biblical authors address the topic of wisdom from beginning to end.

Lady Wisdom

Review the passages below and record what they teach about wisdom versus foolishness. Interestingly, in Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman, just like wise Abigail!

Proverbs 4:5–9



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Proverbs 4:14–23

Christ, the Wisdom of God

Jesus personifies wisdom in a unique way. He not only acted and spoke with wisdom; He was the perfect expression of wisdom in the flesh. What does [1 Corinthians 1:18–25](#) say about Christ as the power and wisdom of God? What “foolish” thing in the world’s eyes did He do to display divine wisdom?

How do we participate in His wisdom, according to [1:30–31](#)?

Through the power of Christ within us, we can do what David failed to do at first: forgive those who have offended us and wait on the Lord. Let’s see how we can put wisdom into action in our lives today.



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

For you who carry grudges, who keep your sword sharp, waiting for your moment to get revenge, please learn from David. Don't jump in, take revenge, and regret it for the rest of your life. Wait for the Lord. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: What Wisdom Can We Learn?

Abigail and David's happy ending warms our hearts, but it also teaches valuable lessons.

From David we learn that **rash and angry reactions lead to regret**. We are wise to cool our thoughts of retaliation and trust the Lord to handle the Nabals of our lives.

From Nabal we learn that **insensitive and selfish people make miserable marital partners**. If you are a Nabal, wake up! Break the proud habit of turning a deaf ear and thinking your way is the only way. Humble your pride and learn to appreciate the Abigails in your life.

From Abigail we learn that **wise and patient partners make the best use of timing and tact**. The Lord intervened in Abigail's life and blessed her with marriage to David. But had God not stepped in, Abigail's wise spirit would have helped her through many difficult years.

Which character in the drama of 1 Samuel 25 do you most identify with? What aspect of their positive or negative example are you taking with you?



The Integrity of a Wise Wife

Selections from 1 Samuel 25

Specifically, do you need Abigail's brand of wisdom to navigate a difficult relationship? What can you ask the Lord to help you with today?

Abigail wisely confronted David, but David also acted in wisdom. He took Abigail's advice to ignore foolish Nabal and trust God to work. Try that approach next time you're offended. Wait patiently and act wisely. In so doing, you'll be trusting the Lord to resolve the problem—a much better scenario than taking matters into your own hands.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me to be like Abigail in my relationships, to be the peacemaker to pour oil on troubled waters and soothe hurt feelings. All wisdom has its source in You, so I come to You for the words to say and the actions to take in the heat of the moment. Give me the grace I need to show grace to those I love. In Jesus' name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY FIVE

The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11

Although deceived by the man he trusted most, Uriah died with honor. How magnificent was this man of integrity!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN our study of walking with integrity, we've admired the courage of Daniel, the enduring obedience of Noah, the moral purity of Joseph, and the wisdom of Abigail. Each of these individuals proved their mettle in the fiery crucible of adversity.

Now, we come to a lesser-known man named Uriah, whose integrity shines like gold in his uncompromising loyalty. First, to his wife. But also to his nation, his king, and his Lord.

Uriah was a top-class soldier, named among David's mightiest warriors (2 Samuel 23:39). But it wasn't a military exploit that earned him his place in Scripture's integrity hall of fame. Uriah's character was proven at home rather than the battlefield, and the cause of his adversity came not from a sword-swinging enemy but from the person Uriah *least* expected: *his own king!*

Let's find out how Uriah earned his legacy of loyalty and, in the process, learn how we can keep our integrity, even when the people we most admire have completely lost theirs.



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11



PREPARE YOUR HEART

We begin our study by opening our hearts to receive the truth God has for us in Scripture. In the following space, write down an invitation to the Lord to light your path through His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Many years had passed since David and Abigail first met, which we learned about in our previous *Searching the Scriptures* study. David was young then, still on the run from King Saul. Now, David was middle-aged, sitting securely on his throne and enjoying the prestige of his position.

As king, David answered to no one and did whatever he pleased. He sent his commander, Joab, to fight the Ammonites while he “stayed behind in Jerusalem,” taking his ease (2 Samuel 11:1). By staying home, however, unaccountable David had made himself a target of a foe far more cunning and deadly than any enemy on the battlefield.

Lust overtook David when he eyed Bathsheba from his rooftop, sent for her, and “slept with her” (11:4). Their clandestine affair came to light “when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant” (11:5). Sadly, rather than confess his sin, David plotted a shameful cover-up involving Bathsheba’s loyal husband—Uriah.



Observation: Uriah, a Man of Integrity

As you observe the passage, follow the author’s progression of thought like stones along a path. With each step, observe Uriah remaining true to his convictions while David piled up one sin after another, taking him deeper and deeper into disgrace.



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11

David's First Cover-Up Attempt—2 Samuel 11:6–12

How did David first try to cover up his sin, according to *2 Samuel 11:6–8*?

According to *11:9–12*, what did Uriah do and what reasons did he give David the next morning? What character qualities did Uriah demonstrate?

David's Second Cover-Up Attempt—2 Samuel 11:13

What did David try next to soften Uriah's resolve, according to *2 Samuel 11:13*? What additional actions further demonstrated Uriah's character?

David assumed Uriah would give in to desire just as David had. But the king underestimated the strength of this loyal soldier's duty to God, his fellow soldiers, his commander, and even his king. So, David shifted tactics in his final and most contemptible plot.



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11

David's Final Cover-Up Attempt—2 Samuel 11:14–27

Exploiting Uriah's high sense of duty, David gave Uriah a letter to take to Joab, knowing Uriah would not open it. What treachery did Uriah deliver with his own hand, according to [2 Samuel 11:14–17](#)? What did Uriah do that demonstrated his character all the way to the end?

The appalling charade continued in the tragic aftermath when Joab sent word of Uriah's death to David. What sarcastic undertone do you observe in Joab's message to David, according to [11:18–25](#)? What hypocrisy drips from David's response?

How does the author conclude this dark chapter in [11:26–27](#)? Was David's cover-up scheme successful?

David never saw such integrity as in Uriah. Uriah was a better man drunk than David was sober. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11



Interpretation: Uriah and David in Contrast

To interpret the passage, we seek to understand the meaning that the author intended for his original audience. A clue is revealed in the number of times the author refers to Uriah as “the Hittite,” a foreigner (2 Samuel 11:3, 6, 17, 21, 24).

Uriah was probably a descendant of the native Canaanite tribe, called the Hittites, who occupied the land prior to the conquest. He adopted the worship of Yahweh and was a loyal convert, evidenced by his reverence for the ark of the covenant and obedience to David.

In boldest strokes, the author contrasted the indecency of the king with the nobility of the foreigner to give the strongest warning that no one is above God’s moral law.

Review your observations of 2 Samuel 11:6–27 and, in the chart below, list the positive and negative traits of each man the author was emphasizing.

Uriah’s Positive Traits	David’s Negative Traits

David broke almost every one of the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20:1–17*)! This sordid account ends with David sweeping the evidence of his broken commandments under the rug and marrying Bathsheba. Incident closed. *But was it, really?*

What truth does the author make in *2 Samuel 11:27* that every follower of God must understand?



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11

Summarize the lesson the author teaches through his contrast of Uriah's integrity and David's sin.

David's life looks like a rooftop. From tending Jesse's sheep to his sin with Bathsheba, the roofline goes up. From Bathsheba to the end of his life, it goes down. Why the downward trend? "The LORD was displeased with what David had done" (2 Samuel 11:27). No sin is secret. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Uriah's Good Name, David's Lingering Shame

The legacy of Uriah's loyalty lived on after his death . . . and so did the hangover from David's shameful deed.

How did David's sin detrimentally impact his life, according to [Psalm 32:3–4](#)?

[Psalm 51](#) records David confessing to God his sin with Bathsheba and asking Him for forgiveness. Which lines stand out to you as a model of confession for us when we sin?



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11

When we reach a certain level in life and everyone looks up to us, we can lose our self-awareness. Hypocrisy replaces what was once integrity and responsibility. Our minds play tricks on us when we become the “king.” Hypocrisy can take the place of integrity so easily. Be careful. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Four Lessons to Ponder

Step back from Uriah’s portrait in the integrity hall of fame and ponder the lessons his life’s story teaches.

First, *we learn how magnificently a man of integrity and loyalty like Uriah can live his life.* In our day of moral darkness, a person of honorable character lights up the sky like a comet. How magnificent! Ask God to help you be the Uriah in your family, at work, and in your community.

Second, *we learn how hypocritically a person of importance and authority can hide his or her sins like David did.* When we receive promotions, people respect us and look up to us. Not once did Uriah question David or think his king capable of such evil. Learn from David’s tragic fall to stay accountable and humble for the sake of those who trust you.

Third, *we learn how treacherously a man under the authority of another like Joab can assist in his leader’s wrongdoing.* Joab was a coconspirator in Uriah’s death. He knew it was wrong to have the man killed. Be careful about blindly following a leader and not confronting his or her sin.

Fourth, *we learn how completely our God knows, sees, and hears everything about us.* We may be accountable to no one on earth, but all remain accountable to heaven.

What lesson from Uriah’s account do you find most fitting to your situation? What should you do this week to follow this principle?

Uriah’s voice calls out from his grave, urging us to stay loyal to our commitments and true to our convictions. We must never forget to whom we ultimately answer, not to any commander or earthly king but to Christ, our Lord.



The Integrity of a Loyal Husband

2 Samuel 11



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, when I'm tempted to compromise my convictions and break my vows, remind me of Uriah's example of loyalty to the end. May those who look up to me find me faithful to my promises and bold to always do right, even when those I admire are doing wrong. In the end, all honor and praise for everything I do well goes to You, my King. In Jesus' name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY STUDY SIX

The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

The goal of confrontation is not simply to reprove, it's to restore. It's not simply to point out what's wrong, it's to bring the person to repentance.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN a great leader commits a great sin, he or she can usually pull the wool over the public's eyes and keep it secret. Those closest to that leader, however, aren't so easily fooled.

No doubt, in the aftermath of David's adultery with Bathsheba, the arranged murder of her husband, and the quick wedding, eyebrows were raised and scandalous whispers buzzed throughout the palace. But no one said a word to David or laid a charge against him.

Even so, David was hardly free. The memory of his sin hounded his conscience day and night. Riddled with guilt, David began to deteriorate physically. Listen to his moans of suffering in this psalm:

*When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.
Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. (Psalm 32:3–4)*

Despite his agony, David hardened his heart and did not admit his sin, until finally the courageous prophet Nathan knocked on David's door with a message from God.



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Scripture encourages us to “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will . . . find grace to help us when we need it most” (Hebrews 4:16). Draw near to God’s throne in prayer right now. Express to Him your desire for grace as you turn to His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When Nathan came to David, about a year had passed since the adulterous affair. Bathsheba had given birth to a son, which likely prompted joyful celebrations throughout Jerusalem. David, however, was miserable. “My sin is ever before me,” David later lamented (Psalm 51:3 NASB) and pleaded with God, “Oh, give me back my joy again” (51:8).

God gave David plenty of time to repent on his own. Month after month, the Lord waited for sin’s wretchedness to sufficiently soften David’s guilty heart. At just the right time (which may seem like a long time to us), the Lord stepped in. “*Then the LORD sent Nathan to David*” (2 Samuel 12:1 NASB, emphasis added).



Observation: Nathan’s Moment of Truth

Observation is an important first step in *Searching the Scriptures* as we let the words and images of the passage soak into our minds. Read slowly and thoughtfully and take time to experience the swells of emotion. Picture Nathan’s piercing eyes and hear the intensity and passion in his voice. Feel the conflict erupting inside David, the pent-up guilt and heart-wrenching remorse he had suppressed for months.



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

Nathan's Disarming Story—2 Samuel 12:1–6

Read Nathan's opening story in *2 Samuel 12:1–4*, noting the sympathy he creates for the poor man and antipathy for the rich man. Why do you think Nathan didn't burst into the throne room shouting accusations? What was Nathan's purpose for first telling a story that David could relate to?

How did David respond, according to *12:5–6*? How do you think David's past played into his outrage (*1 Samuel 16:6–12; 17:28*)?

Nathan's Direct Rebuke—2 Samuel 12:7–12

David's pity for the poor man and anger at evil opened David's heart just enough for Nathan to land his rebuke. According to *2 Samuel 12:7–10*, how did Nathan turn the tables on David? What comparisons did Nathan make between David and the wicked rich man?



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

How did the consequences match David's crimes, according to 2 Samuel 12:11–12?

David's Repentance and Restoration—2 Samuel 12:13–14

Instead of rationalizing, justifying, shifting blame, or making excuses for his sin, David simply told the truth: “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Samuel 12:13). What pent up emotions do you think David unleashed when, after months of reluctance, he finally confessed?

Despite the severity of the consequences, how did the Lord show grace to David in 2 Samuel 12:13–14?

David's confession, “I have sinned against the Lord,” is an epochal moment. All his hypocrisy screeched to a halt. Nathan's story did the job helping David repent like nothing else could have done. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14



Interpretation: Principles for Effective Confrontation

Although God was “displeased with what David had done” (2 Samuel 11:27), He didn’t send Nathan to confront David until a year after David’s behavior toward Bathsheba and Uriah. What does the Lord’s delay teach about His character and response to sinful people?

What does an emotional word picture or story accomplish in confronting a resistant person?

After telling the story, Nathan focused on the facts of David’s sin. What principle does Nathan’s facts-based confrontation exemplify?



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

Nathan didn't approach David with a vindictive or superior attitude. Most likely, soft tears flowed from the tenderhearted prophet. What principle does Nathan's attitude convey about the proper tone for confrontation?

Can you think of any other principles from Nathan's example? Record them here.

David's story was not preserved that we might shame him for his wrongdoing. As a consequence of his sin, David's children committed rape and murder. It was dreadful. Though David was forgiven by God . . . David suffered the consequences. And Nathan had warned him properly as any prophet would do. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Confrontation Methods in the New Testament

The teaching on confrontation in the New Testament mirrors Nathan's effective methods. What do the following verses teach about godly confrontation?



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

According to *Ephesians 4:14–15*, what do we keep in balance as we select our words and display our attitude?

What did Paul teach in *Galatians 6:1–3* regarding our reasons, goals, and attitudes toward confrontation? What warning did Paul give?

I will tell you from my own experience, confronting is something that is done with great reluctance and often with tears. It's never easy. Confronting isn't about judging but restoring a person in a spirit of meekness. It's about caring enough to confront—never done out of pride and always in private. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Lessons about Confrontation and Confession

Through Nathan's confrontation, David's broken relationship with God was mended. Later, forgiven David declared in relief,

*“Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!” (Psalm 32:2)*

If the red light on the moral dashboard of your conscience is flashing your guilt, don't wait to confess your sin like David did. Openly admit the truth. Be sincere in your desire to break from the sin and display a broken and humble spirit.



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

Has the Spirit been revealing a sin to your conscience? If so, use David’s own words from Psalm 51 in a prayer to the Lord: “wash me clean,” “purify me” (51:2), “create in me a clean heart” (51:10), and “forgive me” (51:14). Draw near to the throne of God through Christ and receive His grace. If you wish, you can use the following space to write your prayer.

On the other hand, you might feel the Lord sending you like a Nathan to confront a David. If so, what guidelines from Nathan’s example can you follow?

What word picture or story might you use with this person? Think it through carefully and try to match the sin to the story in a way that touches the person’s emotions.



The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

What are the facts that you might want to point out, rather than getting sidetracked into conjecture and hearsay?

Write a prayer seeking God's timing, courage, and help. Remember, the Holy Spirit does the convicting; we simply say the truth.

Confrontations are never easy. We always run the risk of straining a relationship or even losing a friend, but the risk is worth the reward when the person is restored. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6 NASB).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, when I must confront someone, please send me. I don't want to go on my own or in my own strength. I need Your words, Your wisdom, and Your love. You long to restore Your sinning child, and I join You in that purpose. May tears of sorrow flow, followed by tears of joy when forgiveness follows confession. In Jesus' name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY SEVEN

The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

*Jabez prayed for a bold vision despite the fact that he came from obscurity.
He is a classic example that obscurity need not overshadow any life.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE books of 1 and 2 Chronicles trace God's faithfulness to the Jews as He brought His people through times of adversity when enemies, like the Babylonians, threatened the small nation.

Israel's heroes, like David and Hezekiah, take centerstage in the Chronicles, but the author didn't forget the lesser-knowns. In the middle of a nine-chapter-long genealogy that seems to go on like rows of tombstones in a cemetery, he paused by the grave of one man who never was a king or a prophet but whose epitaph bears recognition.

So, in this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we will pause to admire an obscure man named Jabez who, although long dead, has etched a momentary, meteoric streak across the dark sky of Israel's history.

**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Jabez's life reminds us that under God's all-seeing eye, obscurity need not impede any life. Begin this study in prayer, asking God to reveal His vision for your life through the lens of Jabez's example. Open your heart to the possibilities that a bold vision might unveil.



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The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In just two verses, the chronicler captures Jabez's remarkable life of faith and hope.

There was a man named Jabez who was more honorable than any of his brothers. His mother named him Jabez because his birth had been so painful. He was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!" And God granted him his request. (1 Chronicles 4:9–10)



Observation: Painful Past to Bold Vision

The first step of observation is to break the text into manageable parts. Each sentence, phrase, or even word may contain key ideas worth hovering over before moving on. For an explanation of the four steps of *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—visit "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](https://www.insight.org/how-to-study-the-bible-for-yourself)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

A Hebrew-speaking Jew reading, "There was a man named Jabez," (1 Chronicles 4:9) would have immediately paused at Jabez's unusual name. What word does the footnote in the *New Living Translation* indicate Jabez's name sounds like? Drawing only from his name, what might the Jewish reader conclude about Jabez's character?

Despite his negative moniker, Jabez "was more honorable than any of his brothers" (4:9), which begs two questions. First, how did Jabez get his name? Write down the answer from the last phrase in 4:9.



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

Second, how did Jabez rise above his name? The chronicler's answer is in the first phrase of 1 Chronicles 4:10, Jabez "prayed to the God of Israel." By calling on God, Jabez found freedom from the chokehold his name and its implications had on his life.

Identify the four components of Jabez's prayer in *1 Chronicles 4:10*, and write them in the lines below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Jabez's heartfelt prayer moved the Lord's hand of mercy on Jabez: "God granted him his request" (4:10). By answering Jabez's prayer, the Lord elevated him as an honorable, distinguished, and respected man in Israel.

We greatly admire people who come out of nothing and emerge into greatness. We're drawn with admiration to a boy named, "Pain," who distinguished himself among his brothers. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Rising Above a Negative Self-Image

Shedding light on the historical context helps unlock the meaning of the text. The chronicler was writing to Jews who had come back to Jerusalem many decades after the city was destroyed in 586 BC. Under God's discipline for their rebellion, the Jews had endured a lengthy and difficult exile in Babylon. These returning refugees could identify with a man named "Jabez," because they, too, bore the pain of their past.

We're not told the details of Jabez's naming, other than "his birth had been so painful" (1 Chronicles 4:9). *Painful* may refer to the birth itself or the circumstances surrounding the birth. We don't exactly know the situation, but we can assume that each mention of Jabez's name was a reminder that his existence brought pain. He must have grown up with a devastating and negative self-image.

Similarly, an equally dark cloud hung over the heads of the returning Jews who had been born in painful exile. Put yourself in their place and in the space below, write down the principles that each of the four requests in Jabez's model prayer might communicate to them. Try to keep in the forefront of your thinking how the original audience would have interpreted Jabez's statements.



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

Request for Divine Engagement

“Oh, that you would bless me” (1 Chronicles 4:10).

Request for Divine Enlargement

“Expand my territory!” (4:10).

Request for Divine Empowerment

“Please be with me in all that I do” (4:10).



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

Request for Divine Enablement

“Keep me from all trouble and pain!” (4:10).

Jabez rose above his pain in his prayer to God. He said, “Oh, that You would come to my rescue. Engage Yourself in my life. I long for You to break through the cloud that has covered me and the pain and the shame that has surrounded me since birth. You can do that, God. I call out to You! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: A Boy’s Cry to the God Who Hears

Like Jabez’s birth, the circumstances surrounding Ishmael’s birth was full of strife and pain. Because Sarai had not been able to bear a child, Abram slept with Sarai’s handmaiden, Hagar, and she got pregnant. In response, jealous Sarai mistreated Hagar until finally Hagar ran away. Read how “the angel of the LORD” comforted Hagar beside a spring in [Genesis 16:7–12](#). What did the messenger from God say to Hagar about her son? What does *Ishmael* mean?



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, and years later, she and the boy were sent away into the wilderness. Abandoned and with no hope of survival, she put the boy under a shady bush while she walked a little further and collapsed. Both of them on the edge of death. Both of them crying.

What did God say to Hagar regarding Ishmael, whose name means “God hears,” according to Genesis 21:17–21? How did God rescue them?

Hagar could have named her son, “pain,” because of all the mistreatment that she and her son suffered. But she named him Ishmael because God hears the crying of every child born in pain. He heard the *crying* of Ishmael and the *crying out* of Jabez. He also hears our prayers forged in the crucible of our pain.

Jabez prayed to God, “I’ve been called Pain all my life, but I pray that You will be such a guiding presence and protective power, Lord, that I will outlive my name.” And God granted his request. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Three Lessons and a Question

If the painful patterns of Jabez’s past match yours, then consider the following three lessons his life models and one question it poses of us.

First, *a struggling start doesn’t necessitate a limited life*. Our critics might convince us that we should expect our future to be no different than our past. But God says to us, “You can live beyond your limitations through Me.”

Second, *no measure of success is safe without God’s presence*. We need to continually recognize and rely upon God’s protective hand to shield us each step of the way.

Third, *when God blesses a life, there is no reason for guilt*. God granted Jabez’s request to broaden his vision and enlarge his world. When Jabez occupied a place of honor as a result, Jabez had no need to feel false guilt. As long as God is glorified in our successes, we need not feel ashamed.



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

Now, here's the question: *What large thing are you asking of God?* Personally apply the following outline from Jabez's prayer as you ask the Lord to remove the pain of your past and replace it with a bold vision for the future.

My prayer for divine engagement:

My prayer for divine enlargement:

My prayer for divine empowerment:



The Integrity of a Bold Vision

1 Chronicles 4:9–10

My prayer for divine enablement:

Remember, limitations need not limit us when we serve a limitless God. Ask Him to bless you, extend the borders of your influence, be with you, and protect you. Who knows what blessings God may have in store for you!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, bless me, indeed! Enlarge my world. Broaden my vision. Help me move past the abuses of my past. Give me the courage to act in faith and go beyond the expected, so that I might serve You in a way that is only possible because of You. May Your hand be with me and protect me. In Your Son's name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY EIGHT

The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Everyone is waiting for something. Everyone has a deep heartache, a serious prayer that still has not been answered. Habakkuk speaks with relevance to all of us.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN his introduction to the book of Habakkuk in *The Swindoll Study Bible*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll expresses the central theme of this ancient book:

Habakkuk provides us with one of the most remarkable sections in all of Scripture—an extended dialogue between God and one of His prophets. Habakkuk initiated this conversation because of his distress about God’s seeming inaction in the world. He wanted to see God do something more, particularly in the area of bringing justice to evildoers.¹

Habakkuk’s complaints about unchecked evil echo throughout the halls of history. We could even make the very same complaints today! We live in a violent and shameless culture in which right is ridiculed and wrong is legitimized. Like Habakkuk, we are surrounded by people “who love to argue and fight” and “justice has become perverted” (Habakkuk 1:3–4).

Why doesn’t God intervene?

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll hear God’s answer. But first we must follow Habakkuk’s example to *wait* on the Lord and *listen* to His voice in Scriptures. Only then will we find the faith to trust God through times of adversity and feel His peace when we can’t make sense of our world.



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The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As we open, we turn to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I call to You, my great God. Speak to me through this ancient book. Talk in terms that I can understand, and begin a work of changing my thinking so that I can change my way of living. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Take the next few moments to familiarize yourself with the small book of *Habakkuk*. Notice how it begins with a sob, “How long, O LORD, must I call for help?” (Habakkuk 1:2), and ends with a song, “The Sovereign LORD is my strength!” (3:19).

These three chapters trace a personal struggle within the prophet rather than a public address to the people. Chapters 1–2 focus on Habakkuk’s *dialogue with God*. Chapter 3 records his *praise to God*, after Habakkuk waited on God and listened to His words of reassurance.



Observation: Dialogue with God and Praise

Most Bibles include headings added by modern editors that divide the chapters of a book into sections. Although they are not in the earliest texts, they can help us in the observation phase to see the structure and flow of the book.

What headings do you find in the New Living Translation of Habakkuk? Write them in the lines below.

1:2–4: _____

1:5–11: _____

1:12–2:1: _____

2:2–20: _____

3:1–19: _____



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Habakkuk was a man of integrity living in a nation without integrity, and it became *unbearable* for him! Summarize his first complaint to the Lord in *Habakkuk 1:1–4*. What tearful questions tumbled out of his heart? Have you asked questions like these?

Summarize the Lord’s response to Habakkuk’s first complaint in *1:5–11*. What shocking news did the Lord reveal to Habakkuk that must have taken the prophet’s breath away?

Habakkuk struggled emotionally with God’s plan. What didn’t make sense to Habakkuk about God’s plan, according to *1:12–17*?

After Habakkuk poured out his heartache and fear to the Lord, he climbed up to his watchtower and said,

*“There I will wait to see what the LORD says
and how he will answer my complaint.” (2:1)*



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Habakkuk knew when to speak and when to listen to the Lord in quiet humility. How did the Lord answer Habakkuk's core fear in [Habakkuk 2:4](#)?

The Lord revealed to Habakkuk a vision of the future in which the Babylonians would pay for their arrogance and brutality. Find the five “woes” against the Babylonians in [2:6–20](#) in the New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), or New International Version (NIV), and summarize these judgments in the space below.

How foolish of the Babylonians to put their faith in their lifeless wooden idols rather than in the Lord! God would eventually judge the wicked and greedy idolators, but not before He used the Babylonians to deliver judgment on Judah.

The news of coming judgment was a hard pill for Habakkuk to swallow, but his heart could rest in God's sovereign plan. Pick a couple of lines from the prophet's prayer in [chapter 3](#) that describe God's awesome power and write them below.



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Habakkuk concludes his book at peace, quietly waiting for the day “when disaster will strike the people who invade us” (Habakkuk 3:16). His soaring anthem of faith in 3:17–19 has touched the hearts of countless people of God who have walked through adversity in tears. In the interpretation section, let’s look closer at the meaning of these lines and the principles we can draw from them.

After his complaints, Habakkuk concluded, “I must let God be God as I stand back and wait for Him to work.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Habakkuk’s Song of Faith and Ours

When Habakkuk understood the power and character of the Lord, he could rest from his worries. Out of his quiet listening to God emerged a prayerful song that follows a simple rhythm: “Even though . . . even though . . . even though . . . yet I will . . . I will” (Habakkuk 3:17–18).

What do the “even though” parts of Habakkuk’s prayer represent, in [Habakkuk 3:17](#)? What was Habakkuk referring to? What “even thoughts” exist in our day?

The prophet responded to his world falling apart in a surprising way. Instead of wailing, he rejoiced! Not in the adversity but “in the LORD” and “in the God of my salvation” (3:18). What lesson was he teaching his readers, and us, in [3:18](#)?



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

What truth was the foundation of Habakkuk's joyful confidence, according to *Habakkuk 3:19*?

What overarching principle does Habakkuk's prayer teach all followers of God who must travel the difficult road of adversity and confusion about God's ways?

Habakkuk and his people were living in evil times—about to be conquered by a merciless enemy who would destroy their temple, take their God-given land, and send them away to a godless country. Yet, Habakkuk modeled how we can live by faith—a theme that strikes at the heart of our hope of eternal life.



Correlation: Saved by Faith Alone in Christ Alone

Centuries later, the apostle Paul drew out of the obscure book of Habakkuk a line that has formed the bulwark of our salvation in Christ.

What line did Paul quote, according to *Romans 1:16–17*? What central truth about our salvation was Paul making?



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

How did Paul elaborate this truth in *Galatians 3:10–11*?

Upon this foundation stone, the Protestant Reformation was built as Martin Luther (1483–1546) championed the news of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. But it was faithful Habakkuk who first declared that life flows from a steadfast faith in God rather than pride in our own strength.

Faith is the only way we come to God, not by keeping every element of the law, which we can't. By faith we trust in our God. This truth landed solidly on Habakkuk. He got it, and it changed him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: From Habakkuk to Us

The righteous shall live by faith. What relief that simple truth brought to Habakkuk, to Paul, to Luther, and finally to us! How can we live out this salvation truth in our daily lives? We can begin by memorizing five statements about our sovereign God. Even though disasters strike and the world seems to be falling apart, remember:

1. God is able, and I am not.
2. God knows what's best, and I do not.
3. God sees the end from the beginning, and I cannot.
4. God should have His way, and I should not.
5. God must be glorified through this trial, and I must not.



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk

Are you in a situation in which you're calling out to the Lord, "How long, O Lord?" If so, what is the nature of your heartache?

How do the five truths above speak to you in your situation?

Write your version of Habakkuk's prayer from Habakkuk 3:17–19. What are your "even though" statements? What are your "I will" statements? With what truth about God can you conclude your prayer?

When we get a clear view of God, we change. His strength carries us not only through our adversity but above it, as we sing the jubilant song of the ancient prophet.

*"The Sovereign LORD is my strength!
He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights." (Habakkuk 3:19)*



The Integrity of Waiting . . . Not Worrying

Selections from Habakkuk



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in the pit of my struggles, I acknowledge that You are able. You know what's best. You know the end from the beginning. Your plan is far better than mine, and You are the one who will be glorified in the end. I rest in Christ alone, who is my salvation and my strength. In His name I pray, amen.

Endnote

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Swindoll Study Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 1092.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY NINE

The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

Nothing is more Christian than walking humbly with our God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS hung a garland around the neck of John the Baptizer that He gave no one else:

“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist.”

(Matthew 11:11)

That’s quite a character reference coming from Jesus! What made John the greatest human? Certainly, his simple devotion, deep conviction, godly vision, steel-hearted courage, and intense self-discipline. But at John’s core was a quality that outshone them all . . . humility.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll pinpoint four characteristics of humility that John modeled as we learn from the greatest how to walk humbly with our God.

**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

What does it mean to be a humble husband or wife? A humble student or teacher, employee or CEO, nurse or doctor, parishioner or pastor? Ask the Lord to help you learn true humility in *your* God-given roles as you open His Word and study John’s example.



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The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Our first passage about John the Baptizer comes on the heels of a brief but profound prologue about Jesus. While the deity of Jesus commands center stage in the opening of the gospel of John, in John 1:6, the spotlight suddenly swings to the man, John the Baptizer. In so doing, the gospel writer draws a dramatic distinction between Jesus who “was God” (John 1:1) and John, “a man” sent by God (1:6).

Let’s take a closer look at this remarkable man sent by God—his mission, his role, his acclaim, and his secret for staying humble.



Observation: John’s Mission, Role, Acclaim, and Credo

Observation is the first of four steps in *Searching the Scriptures*. For an overview of these steps, download this printable [chart](#) that you can use as a guide in your Bible study.

Observe [John 1:6–8](#), noting the contrasts between John the Baptizer and Jesus. How did the gospel writer describe who John was and who he was not?

What was John’s central mission?



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

John had a calling. He didn't just do what he felt like doing; he was sent by God. He had one purpose—to be the witness, to proclaim the truth regarding the one who was to come right after him. He was the forerunner. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to *John 1:19–23*, what specific roles did John *not* fill? What role did he fill?

As spokesperson for Christ, John did more than speak. He baptized people in the Jordan River as a sign of their repentance. “What right do you have to baptize?” questioned the Pharisees (*John 1:25*). What characteristics of John’s humility do you see in his response to them in *1:26–29*?

As an admired leader and authority figure, what temptations do you think John may have battled?



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

John's ministry grew and so did his fame. Soon, the itinerant wilderness preacher had his own congregation. John's disciples worried that Jesus' growing ministry would overshadow John's. When they asked him about it, how did John respond, according to [John 3:25–29](#), and what does his response reveal about his character?

It takes humility to avoid the pitfalls of competition and comparison which lead to the sins of envy and jealousy. Without humility, we view others as rivals, not brothers and sisters on the same level at the foot of the cross. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The downpour of public adulation could have waterlogged John's humble spirit with pride. What perspective about himself and Jesus kept his pride in check, according to [John 3:30](#)? How do you see this statement forming a basic rule of life for John?

*Our greatest delight is to enthrone Christ while dethroning ourselves.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Interpretation: Principles of Humility from John's Example

In the interpretation phase, we explore the meaning of John's example and formulate principles based on the truths we discover. Review the key verse from each section above and write a principle that begins with the phrase, "A truly humble person should . . ."



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

The Man and His Mission—John 1:6–8

Key verses: “God sent a man, John the Baptist. . . . John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light” (John 1:6, 8).

Principle: *A truly humble person should . . .*

The Role and Its Temptations—John 1:19–27

Key verses: “I am not the Messiah. . . . I am a voice shouting in the wilderness. . . . I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal” (John 1:20, 23, 27).

Principle: *A truly humble person should . . .*



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

The Public and Its Applause—John 3:25–29

Key verse: “I am filled with joy at [Jesus’] success” (John 3:29).

Principle: *A truly humble person should . . .*

The Basis of John’s Humility—John 3:30

Key verse: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 NASB).

Principle: *A truly humble person should . . .*

We look for ways to give him center stage, and then slip off behind the curtain and applaud with everyone else, as Jesus gets all the credit. We consistently reject praise for ourselves as we deliberately redirect it to our Lord and Savior. That’s the way we live our lives.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Fruit of Our Devotion to Christ

Since the church’s inception, the sinful weeds of envy and jealousy have invaded relationships between believers. Paul noticed some fellow church leaders “preaching out of jealousy and rivalry” (Philippians 1:15) and motivated by “selfish ambition” (1:17).



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

How did Paul avoid the competition-and-comparison trap? He focused on the big picture, *proclaiming Christ*, not petty rivalry. “The message about Christ is being preached . . . so I rejoice,” Paul declared (Philippians 1:18), echoing John’s sentiment, “I am filled with joy at [Jesus’] success” (John 3:29).

Paul’s humble response had root in a rule of life that centered around devotion to Christ. What was Paul’s credo, according to *Philippians 1:21*?

How did Paul’s devotion help him stay humble?

True humility flourishes in our *devotion to Christ* and crowds out the weeds of envy and jealousy. Both Paul and John’s devotion to Christ poured out of their hearts as everyday humble actions—just as our devotion to Christ can do the same for us.

“He must increase, I must decrease.” That’s not a motto we hang on the wall; we live it.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: Humbly Living Out Our Devotion to Christ

Let’s tie up our study with four characteristics of John’s true humility that we can emulate.



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

Accept your God-given role, including your limitations. You should be clear-minded about God’s purpose. Knowing what you’re to do and not do in life helps you be realistic and humble about your limitations.

Resist subtle temptations to be someone you’re not. John rested in his God-given role on this earth—the sidekick, the supporting actor, the assistant, the follower. Likewise, God made you to be you and not another. Rest in Him. You have a unique role to fulfill on this earth. Trying to fulfill another’s role simply won’t work . . . for you or anyone else.

See God’s hand in another person’s success and rejoice over it. Like the maid of honor or best man at a wedding, rejoice over the ones at the center. You avoid envy and jealousy when you humbly delight in the well-being of others.

Fully commit to exalting Christ and wholly submit yourself to Him. The motto, “Jesus must increase, I must decrease” is the cardinal secret, the only foundation on which you can build a humble life.

Which of these characteristics resonate with you today? How? Which one do you truly need to embrace the most?

Commentator Arthur W. Pink said, “The more I am occupied with Christ, the less shall I be occupied with myself. Humility is not the product of direct cultivation, rather it is a *by-product*.”¹ How can you occupy yourself with Christ today? What thanks can you give Christ for an undeserved blessing? What praise can you offer for one of His amazing attributes?



The Integrity of True Humility

John 1:6–8, 19–27; 3:25–30

Rather than talking about yourself, your problems, or your circumstances, begin your trek toward humility by sharing these praises with someone. Others will notice Christ increasing and not even realize that you are decreasing at the same time.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, broaden my vision of the greatness of Christ. Draw me nearer to Him so that He alone fills my view and I can see nothing else but His glory, His beauty, His grace. Then, help me to consider every event in my life as tribute to Him and an opportunity for me to give Him praise. In His name I pray, amen.

Endnote

1. Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 149, as quoted in Insight for Living, *John the Baptizer* (Anaheim, CA: Insight for Living, 1991), 27.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY TEN

The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

Peter and John are classic examples of integrity at work with great courage, for without courage, integrity simply lies dormant.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OUR world is growing increasingly hostile toward Christians and the values we hold. Young believers are more likely to endure bullying at school for defending their religious convictions. At the office, refusing to align with a particular anti-Christian movement can be cause for discipline, even dismissal. Standing against the decadent tide on any level of our culture is getting more and more risky.

In many places around the world, suffering Christians hide from hostile authorities and fear for their lives. For these faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, imprisonment, torture, and death are real possibilities. Most of us in the West will never endure their level of persecution, but, nevertheless, we are getting a taste of the world's hatred that Jesus told us to expect.

“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.” (John 15:18–19)

Walking with integrity through *this* kind of adversity takes courage, doesn't it? Not just *any* courage, but Spirit-empowered courage—the kind Peter and John demonstrated when they became targets of the first ever government-sponsored persecution of Jesus' church.



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The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin this *Searching the Scriptures* study on righteous resistance by joining hands through prayer with persecuted believers around the world. Use the following space to ask the Lord to strengthen them through their suffering. Make the same request for yourself in whatever trial you may be enduring for your faith.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

On the day the church was born on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers—indwelling and empowering them to boldly expand Jesus’ ministry on earth (Acts 2:1–42). Plugged into a supernatural power source, the disciples went out as “little” Christs, doing what Jesus did and teaching what He taught.

It follows, then, that Peter and John’s first miracle looked just like one of Jesus’ miracles. The religious authorities who crucified Jesus to get rid of Him couldn’t help but notice the resemblance.



Observation: Peter and John Carry On Jesus’ Ministry

What miracle did Peter and John perform at the gate to the temple, according to [Acts 3:1–11](#)? Carefully observe the biblical author’s account. What details did he want to impress upon his readers?



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

The miracle proved Christ's resurrection, for only faith in a *living* Christ could heal the lame man. "Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins will be wiped away" (Acts 3:19), Peter proclaimed to the awestruck crowd—in full view of the religious leaders.

How did these temple watchdogs react to Peter declaring the gospel, according to *Acts 4:1–4*?



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool: The Priests and Sadducees

Resources such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* offer helpful background information about Bible characters. The chief priests and Sadducees were among the religious ruling class that orchestrated Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 26:3, 59; 27:20). Politically, the Sadducees maintained their power by collaborating with the Romans; theologically, they denied the resurrection of the dead. So, they viewed Peter's preaching about a resurrected Savior as both subversive and heretical.

The high council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, gathered the next day to interrogate Peter and John. What techniques of intimidation and coercion do you observe in *Acts 4:5–7*?

If you've ever been in a courtroom, you understand intimidation. Intimidation is a technique used to strike fear in the hearts of those who are on trial. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

Not many weeks before, Jesus was on trial before this same group at Caiaphas' house. At that time, Peter was filled with fear as he watched from the courtyard (Matthew 26:69–75). Now what fills Peter according to *Acts 4:8–12*? What changes do you observe in Peter's **confidence**?

What judgments did he pass on these “judges”? From whom did Peter draw his **authority**? *Why not take a moment to memorize 4:12!*

In the author's comments in *4:13*, what specific qualities in Peter and John did the council observe?



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

The council couldn't deny the miracle. The "evidence" was smiling at them from the gallery! All they could do was fume and bluster. What order did the council give, and how did Peter and John respond, according to *Acts 4:14–22*?

How **effective** was Peter and John's response on these men who tried to stop the unstoppable spread of the gospel?

The council members were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John. Not arrogance. Arrogance stems from trying to cover up weakness. Boldness is a confidence that only Christ can give. Peter and John were Jesus' people, sounding like Jesus and doing the work of Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Characteristics of Spiritual Courage

Luke wrote Acts, in part, to encourage persecuted believers. The same Holy Spirit who filled the apostles also filled them. Jesus, whom the Jews had rejected, had truly been raised from the dead and set in place as "the cornerstone" of His church on which His followers could stand without fear (Acts 4:11). With the Spirit empowering them and God at work through them, ordinary Christians could do extraordinary things in Jesus' name.



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

Based on your observations, write three principles under the themes below that the author of Acts would have wanted his persecuted readers to live by.

Christians can have *confidence* when persecuted because . . .

Christians can speak with *authority* when persecuted because . . .

Christians can act with *effectiveness* when persecuted because . . .

Peter and John could resist the religious system in their day with *confidence* because they believed in Christ who held supreme *authority* and they trusted in the *effectiveness* of the Spirit's power.

We don't face the Sanhedrin, but we do face people who want to "cancel" us because we believe in eternal things. Take courage to respond like Peter in verse 20, "We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22



Correlation: “We Must Obey God”

Chained to their religious system, the authorities couldn’t conceive of God working in new ways through Christ. They were the prisoners . . . *but not Peter and John!* While the paper-tiger legalists sought to intimidate with their glares and growls, they lacked the real power of the Spirit.

Christ had set His followers free to follow Him under the banner of grace, and they were determined to live free . . . in or out of prison!

What happened when Peter and John were imprisoned again for ministering in Jesus’ name at the temple according to [Acts 5:17–21](#)?

God’s angelic jailbreak demonstrated His greater authority. When the religious leaders tracked down the freed apostles and arrested them again, the leaders raged, “We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man’s name!” (5:28).

What response did Peter and the apostles give in [5:29–32](#)?



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

Whether religious or secular, man-made systems may try to pull rank on us but, like the apostles, we answer to a higher authority who has set us free and holds the keys to life! We can boldly declare with the psalmist:

*“I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?”* (Psalm 56:11)



Application: Righteous Resistance in Your Sphere of Influence

What pressure do you feel to conform to ungodly ways of thinking and behaving? What is the context of that pressure—family, work, community?

Each of us has an opportunity in our sphere of influence to take a stand for Christ. Even quoting Acts 4:12 can spark controversy in some circles: “God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved”—the name of Jesus Christ!

Are you living under the risk of being singled out for your Christian convictions? Let the principles from this study encourage you to take a stand.

In what is your *confidence*? Who is your true *authority*? What faith do you have that your actions will be *effective*?



The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

Acts 4:1–22

Not much has changed since the days of Peter and John when Christians were forced to choose between obeying God or human authority. Take into your world the principles they modeled and see the influence God's Spirit can have through you today.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You that nothing can separate me from Your love. Not trouble. Not calamity. Not persecution, danger, or even death. I cling to Your promise: "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Help me live free today. In His name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY ELEVEN

The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14

Believing important truths is valuable. Standing on them in tough times is invaluable. That's when mere beliefs turn into convictions.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ON Sundays at church, we declare our beliefs when we recite a creed, such as the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed. We sing our beliefs in our hymns and we affirm our beliefs as we nod in agreement to the minister's sermon. But are we truly *convinced* about what we say we believe?

Often it takes a crisis to etch the beliefs we recite into the bedrock on which we build our lives. In times of adversity, we depend on our almighty Father in ways we didn't need to in times of ease, and we discover Him to be faithful and true, just as we professed Him to be. Hardships move us beyond credal faith to experiential faith, from profession into conviction.

Few believers in the history of Christianity endured more hardships than the apostle Paul. As he persevered through adversity, his beliefs grew stronger and deeper. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll learn from his example how to *press on* when adversities *pressure* us to quit. By persevering through adversity, we do more than give assent to our beliefs. We live them.



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The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Have you entered a season of adversity which is putting your faith to the test? If so, tell the Lord in prayer about the pressure you feel. Which of your beliefs is being tested by fire? As you open His Word, ask the Lord to firm up your faith and help you press on. Use this space to write your prayer.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Two passages from Paul's letter to the Philippians sum up his attitude toward adversity and his determination to persevere. As you read the verses below, look for evidence of Paul's indomitable attitude.

And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear. (Philippians 1:12–14)

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. 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. (Philippians 3:12–14)



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14



Observation: Paul's Strategy for Handling Adversity

We begin by observing the text, taking note of the words and phrases and literary devices Paul used. Do you notice the *irony* in *Philippians 1:12–14*? Where was Paul when he penned these words? What did the authorities hope to do by locking Paul away? And yet, what was Paul doing all the more? Use the space below to record your observations and discoveries as you look closely at the text.

What convictions about God's power and Christ's rule do you think Paul's imprisonment solidified in him?

The next passage, *Philippians 3:12–14*, features Paul's strategy when hardship strikes. Observe the repetition, emphatic statements, contrasts, and metaphors in these verses. What do you notice about Paul's attitude? Don't overlook the tone of Paul's strong action words.



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14

Let's dig deeper into Paul's metaphor of running a race and winning a prize. What was Paul teaching by his example?

Pressing on requires that we hang tough during times of suffering. Hard times are upon us now and harder times are coming. Beliefs won't get you through hard times; convictions will.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: What “Pressing On” Means

Biblical authors used metaphors to add insight to their points. Paul stated, “I press on to reach the end of the race” (Philippians 3:14). What kind of race? Probably not a quick sprint! Most likely, he imagined himself running a long cross-country race, perhaps similar to the ancient Greek marathon. What characteristics of a marathon runner do you see in *Philippians 3:12–14*?

Paul modeled the requirement of all who seek a high standard in any endeavor—in sports, in music, in education, or in the Christian life. We must have a *relentless pursuit of the right objectives*. What did Paul state were his objectives?



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14

The context helps us define the “things” Paul hoped to achieve and what Paul meant by “perfection.” Read *Philippians 3:4–10* and write down Paul’s primary life goal. For help with your interpretation of the term, *perfection*, consult the explanation of the word in 3:12 in *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.

Before Paul met Christ, he was still trusting his own righteousness to merit God’s favor. But when Paul encountered the resurrected Christ, he put his confidence in Jesus as his Savior. As a result, Paul received the righteousness that only comes through faith. Paul stated, “I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I became righteous through faith in Christ” (3:9).

From this spiritual starting line, Paul set out on his pursuit of knowing Christ and following Him with the goal of becoming more and more Christlike. What does Paul’s phrase, “press on,” imply about the nature of this lifelong race?

When we press on, we rid our lives of distractions. We spend our time and energy on essentials. We set our minds to endure any test and trial. We focus our attention on goals and priorities set forth in Scripture. And, we disciple ourselves to stay at it in order to finish well. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14



Correlation: Paul's Life of Pressing On through Suffering

We can trace Paul's pursuit of Christ back to the beginning of his spiritual journey when he was known as Saul. After Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, Saul met a believer named Ananias, who told the new convert God's calling for his life. What did the Lord tell Saul through Ananias, according to [Acts 9:15–16](#)?

Immediately, Saul started proclaiming the message of Christ in Damascus ([Acts 9:19–22](#)), but then, as some Bible scholars believe, Saul retreated into the desert for three years. What did Paul say about his time in Arabia in [Galatians 1:15–17](#)?

In the vast wasteland, Saul experienced solitude with His Savior. No crowds. No acclaim. Only time alone to pray, to meditate, to retool his theology in light of Christ's death and resurrection, and to commune with God. Perhaps it was during this time that Saul had the experience he mentioned in [2 Corinthians 12:1–4](#). What was Saul's experience, and how do you think it may have contributed to Saul's lifelong passion to know Christ and press on through adversity?



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14

During his first missionary journey, Saul started being called by his Greek name, Paul (Acts 13:9), which means “little.” “Little” described Paul’s short stature, but it also described how Paul viewed himself in comparison to Christ. What lesson in weakness did God teach Paul through suffering that we all must learn, according to *2 Corinthians 12:5–10*?

Certainly, the power to press on in times of adversity does not come from ourselves, but from Christ in us, for when we are weak *then* we are strong.

Paul lived in pain. But he never whined. He never complained. He pressed on! He didn't quit. He stayed at it and didn't hold back. There's integrity in living a life like that.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: How to Press On through Times of Adversity

As we wrap up what it means to press on through times of adversity, we draw three conclusions based on Paul’s example. After each point, use the space provided to reflect on how you can apply this principle to your life.

First, *the plan is progress, not perfection*. Pressing on is not always easy. It can be painful and disappointing at times because we are imperfect people. However, we must remember that pressing on is about making progress, not being perfect.

Does your lack of perfection discourage you? How can focusing on progress in the Christian life help you move forward?



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14

Second, *the past is over, forget it!* Runners don't look back. They fix their eyes on the goal, and they push forward with each stride. If we are to press on toward the goal of knowing Christ through hardships, we can't get stuck on the past. Focus on the goal: Jesus!

Does dwelling on the past hold you back? How can looking to Christ help you press on?

Third, *the future holds hope, reach for it!* Pressing on means leaning forward even through headwinds of hardship. Don't quit your passionate pursuit of becoming like Christ.

What hope do you see in your future with Christ? How can dwelling on this vision help you endure present adversity?

Paul's extensive catalog of suffering included imprisonment, beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, sleepless nights, non-stop attacks from his enemies, and more pain than we can imagine (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). Yet, he pressed on through these hardships to know Christ, and as he did, his beliefs were proven reliable. In the crucible of suffering, convictions are forged. That's true for Paul . . . and for us.



The Integrity of Pressing On

Philippians 1:12–14; 3:12–14



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for a model like Paul. He wasn't perfect, but he was determined. He pressed on, in season and out of season. Give me the tenacity to do the same—to be a person of character, integrity, and convictions. May I not simply speak my faith but live it out in my lifelong pursuit of knowing Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.



WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY
STUDY TWELVE

The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

The apostle Paul looked back on his life and said, “The good struggle, I have struggled. The race, I have run. The faith, I have kept.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PAUL spent his final days in the dreaded Mamertine Prison in Rome awaiting his appointment with the executioner’s blade. The only light into his underground cell came from a hole above him, covered by a rusty grate. People could stroll by on the street level not even realizing there were ragged souls languishing in darkness below them. In this cramped, dingy, filthy, stone chamber, Paul lived his last days and wrote his final words—which, thankfully, we have preserved in his second letter to Timothy.

It doesn’t seem right for faithful Paul to finish his days in this musty, rat-infested dungeon, shivering and abandoned by all but Luke. Yet, we sense no self-pity or bitterness in Paul’s final words to Timothy. Instead, Paul expresses gratitude for his past accomplishments and anticipation of his future reward. Facing imminent death, Paul could write:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on the day of his return.” (2 Timothy 4:7–8)

Paul finished his life well, and in this *Searching the Scriptures* study we’ll learn from his hopeful words in 2 Timothy 4 how we can also finish well.



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The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18



PREPARE YOUR HEART

All those who suffer physical pain or feel the barbs of a friend's betrayal or the pangs of hunger, deprivation, and isolation can find hope in the apostle Paul's words in 2 Timothy. Consider his letter as an older pastor's wise counsel to you. Pause to pray, inviting the Lord into your dungeon of disappointment to encourage you through Paul's example.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For most prisoners, hope flickered and died the day they crossed the threshold of their dungeon cell and heard the iron gate clang shut. *But not for Paul.*

Read [2 Timothy 4:1–18](#). Notice how Paul described his hardships and how he interlaced his deep hope in Christ. Write down your initial impressions of these final words from the pen of the great apostle.



Observation: Looking Back and Looking Forward

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, a crucial first step is observation, which involves examining the text by asking questions such as where, who, what, when, how. We know where Paul was: in a Roman prison. And when: the end of life, perhaps around AD 67. We know to whom he was writing: his apprentice Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus.



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

Next comes the “what.” After encouraging and advising Timothy in the first three chapters of the letter, Paul seemed to reach through the page and grab young Timothy by the shoulders: “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 4:1). What exactly did Paul solemnly charge Timothy to do, according to 2 Timothy 4:2?

What reasons for his urgent charge did Paul list in 4:3–5? And what specific commands did Paul give?

Second Timothy 4 is becoming my favorite chapter in all the Scriptures. It drips with emotion. Paul was at the end, finishing his life well, and he left these words for Timothy to ponder. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Looking Back without Regret—2 Timothy 4:6–7

Paul acknowledged the reality of his present situation: “The time of my death is near” (2 Timothy 4:6). In his final days, vivid memories must have flooded Paul’s mind—His rigorous education as a Pharisee, his blinding-light conversion en route to Damascus, his missionary travels to the far corners of the known world, to Rome, and to the emperor himself.



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

Through sickness, death threats, and dangers, Paul had faithfully followed his calling to bear the message of Christ to the Gentiles. Now his sixty-year-old body, crippled from past tortures and scarred from beatings, was a broken shell. But his soul was as alive as the day he met Jesus.

What metaphors did Paul use to describe his life, his struggles, and his accomplishments, according to 2 Timothy 4:6–7?

Paul wasn't parading his pride but stating the facts on record. He was describing his life in a few words. This was Paul's honest appraisal of the struggles of life. Suffering means we're on the right track. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Looking Forward with Anticipation—2 Timothy 4:8

Observe Paul's hopeful anticipation in 2 Timothy 4:8 regarding his . . .

Confirmation of future reward: _____

Celebration of victory: _____

Encouragement for all believers: _____

Expressing Real Needs and Honest Warnings—2 Timothy 4:9–18

In 2 Timothy 4:9–18, Paul wrote about *real needs* and *honest warnings*. Write down the lines in this passage in which you observe Paul expressing . . .



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

Loneliness

Abandonment by trusted friends

Physical needs

Hunger for God's Word



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

What implicit warnings for Timothy did Paul weave through this passage?

When a man of God dies, his enemies are still around, doing mischief. Paul told Timothy, “Guard against them.” Part of finishing well is to pass along warnings.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Toward the end of his life, Paul passed on priceless treasures of wisdom to his younger friend, Timothy, which still have value for us today. Let’s zero in on Paul’s main ideas at the heart of his final words to Timothy.



Interpretation: The Treasures Hidden in Paul’s Metaphors

Use your interpretation skills to explore the meaning of Paul’s metaphors in 2 Timothy 4:6–8. Hidden in these metaphors are the secrets to finishing well!

Offering Our Lives to God

What did Paul mean when he stated that his life “has already been poured out as an offering to God” (2 Timothy 4:6)? Consider the temple practice of the priests pouring a “liquid offering” on the altar to accompany the main offering (*Exodus 29:40–41; Leviticus 23:13*). In what ways did Paul pour out his life to God?



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

Write down your explanation of what it means to give our lives as an offering (*Romans 12:1–2*)?

Fighting the Good Fight

The Greek word for “fight” (2 Timothy 4:7) refers to any athletic struggle or contest, not just boxing or wrestling. Paul often used athletic metaphors to describe his spiritual self-discipline:

“I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27)

What did Paul mean when he wrote, “I have fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7)?

Finishing the Race

In his earlier letter to the Philippians, Paul still saw the finish line far ahead: “I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize” (Philippians 3:14). But in 2 Timothy, his future perspective switched to past: “I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful” (2 Timothy 4:7).



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

What “race” was Paul referring to, and how had he been faithful in running it? A hint is in the context, in which Paul had just commanded Timothy, “fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5 NASB). What was Paul’s ministry calling (*Acts 9:15–16*; *2 Timothy 1:10–11*), and how did he fulfill it?

Reflect on how Paul’s metaphors picture what it means to follow Jesus. Write your thoughts into a principle on how we can finish our Christian life well based on Paul’s example.

Paul mentioned a prize awaiting him when Jesus returned. To decipher Paul’s meaning, let’s correlate what he wrote to Timothy with his other letters.



Correlation: The Prize That Awaits

In ancient times, athletes trained for years hoping to win a garland or laurel crown that the king would place on their heads. All that pain, sweat, and sacrifice for a withering wreath! How much better the “eternal prize” that Jesus awards than this temporal “prize that will fade away” (1 Corinthians 9:25)!

Paul anticipated receiving “the crown of righteousness” which His King will award “all who eagerly look forward to his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). While the glory of heaven is reward enough for those who have trusted in Christ as their Savior, He promises to heap on us specific rewards—special recognition for work done in His name.



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

Paul taught how believers earn rewards in *1 Corinthians 3:11–15*. What is the basis of receiving a reward?

Remember, reward is the subject of these verses, not salvation. Paul was saying that works of quality done for Christ's sake will endure, while works done in the flesh to glorify self will fade. When will we receive Christ's rewards, according to *2 Corinthians 5:9–10*?

Through the darkness of his dungeon cell, Paul saw the light of Jesus—the King who would soon welcome the weary apostle to his eternal home and reward his faithfulness. Paul endured his suffering by keeping his eyes fixed on that moment of heavenly bliss. How about you? Are you also eagerly looking forward to Christ's appearing and the prize that awaits? Yes, indeed! What a joy that will be! Let's conclude our study by anticipating Christ's reward for finishing well.

Application: On the Way to Finishing Well

Paul's godly character emerged as gold from the fire of his suffering. Reflecting on the final days of Paul's life, what principle stands out as a central truth that can help you finish your race well?



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

What obstacles in your current circumstances stand in the way of living by this principle?

What do you need from Christ to help you stay focused on your eternal prize?

Imagine yourself standing alongside Paul at the judgment of Christ receiving the “crown of righteousness”—the reward He will give all those who eagerly look forward to His appearing. What will that moment be like for you?

Being in Christ’s presence and hearing His affirmation echo in your ears for eternity—what better reward could there be? Certainly, nothing in this world compares to the glory that awaits! The hope of seeing the Savior face-to-face is the best inspiration to help us walk with integrity in times of adversity.



The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the accounts of Scriptures' ordinary people who followed You faithfully. They are my models of faith. I seek Your help as, together, we write my story of faithful devotion in a wicked world. May I praise You with my life which I pour out daily as an offering to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

