

DROPPING YOUR GUARD: THE VALUE OF OPEN RELATIONSHIPS

CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF

JOSHUA 24



The Heart of the Matter

There came a time when the ancient Hebrews had to make decisions on their own. No longer could they rely on their leader Joshua to stand before them and command that they go in this direction or that. He was soon to die, and they would be responsible for their own actions. So Joshua called the people together and confronted them with the facts. His final speech can be summarized in three words: “choose for yourselves” (Joshua 24:15). These three words apply so perfectly to us today as we consider how to build congregational relationships. In the final analysis, we either will or will not pull together, grow deeper, and become a caring body of believers. It’s really up to each of us to choose whether or not to bond with other believers.



Discovering the Way

1. Barriers That Hinder Relationships (Joshua 23:13; Revelation 3:15–18)

God commanded the Israelites to get rid of all of the Canaanites, so their pagan lifestyles would not become snares. Today, legalism, intolerance, suspicion, and pride are snares that obstruct meaningful relationships between believers and bring consequences for church unity.

2. Decisions That Encourage Relationships (Joshua 24:1–15)

As Joshua neared death, he gave the Israelites advice to follow as they lived in the lush Promised Land: *choose* to fear, serve, and obey the Lord.



Starting Your Journey

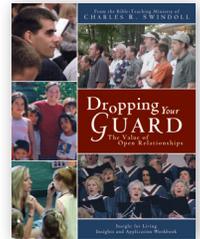
The bottom line: what do *you* choose? There are only three choices: risk reaching out, stay independent, or postpone your decision.



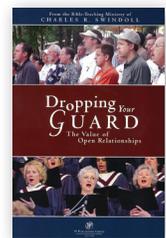
Tools for Digging Deeper



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