

SO, YOU WANT TO BE LIKE CHRIST? EIGHT ESSENTIALS TO GET YOU THERE

INTIMACY: DEEPENING OUR LIVES

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

In the busyness of life—even the Christian life—the zeal of our “first love” often cools. To reverse the trend, believers must learn to cultivate intimacy with the Almighty. However, just as in a marriage relationship or close friendship, intimacy with God does not come automatically. It requires discipline. Our goal in disciplining our lives is to know God intimately, to rekindle our passion for Him, and to become like Christ.



Discovering the Way

1. A Healthy Dose of Nostalgia

Reflecting on our past often brings two realizations: how necessary are the changes we make in life, and how essential is perspective. This is true of the spiritual life, as we reflect on the beginning of our faith compared to our faith today.

2. Returning to Our First Love (Revelation 2:4)

The ancient church in Ephesus, once overflowing with love for the Lord (Ephesians 6:24), eventually lost its zeal for intimacy with God.

3. Discipline Yourself for Godliness (1 Timothy 4:7–8)

Intimacy does not come naturally, quickly, or easily. It requires godly discipline. Spiritual disciplines are not an end in themselves but a means toward intimacy with God.



Starting Your Journey

Each of us must reflect on the course our spiritual walks have taken and make a decision to restore the intimacy with God we enjoyed when our Christian lives were new, spontaneous, and exciting. In short, to be more like Christ requires a commitment to godly discipline.



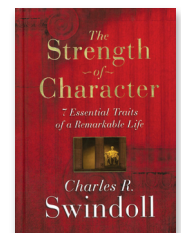
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SIMPLICITY: UNCLUTTERING OUR MINDS

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

A complicated, cluttered mind is easily distracted from the goal of Christlikeness. However, simplifying our lives frees up time and eliminates mental distractions, allowing us to focus on the disciplines of godliness and to nurture a deeper intimacy with God. This involves returning to the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ and has both personal and relational aspects.



Discovering the Way

1. Portrait of a Cluttered Life

Most people today live hectic, harried, and cluttered lives. When our physical space and schedule are cluttered, our spiritual lives often follow suit.

2. The Simplicity of Devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2–4)

Many things in this world complicate our Christian lives, seducing us from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.



Starting Your Journey

As we take steps to simplify our lives to make room for Christ, we should focus on uncluttering our internal world as well as our relationships with others.



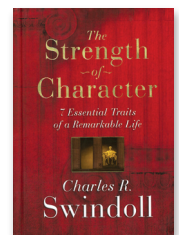
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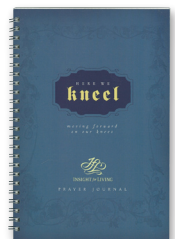
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SILENCE AND SOLITUDE: SLOWING OUR PACE

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

In our fast-paced world, most find it difficult to find silence and solitude. However, this twofold discipline is necessary to focus our attention on God and to receive spiritual nourishment from His Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit speaks in ways that noisy crowds can often drown out. Following Christ's example of silence and solitude prepares us to hear God's "noiseless voice" as He ministers the gifts of rest, clarity, and peace in a wearying, confusing, and tumultuous world.



Discovering the Way

1. A Fortress in Times of Trouble (Psalm 46:1–11)

Even in the midst of tumultuous times, God Himself is our refuge of strength who calls us to "cease striving" and to rest in Him (Psalm 46:10).

2. The Sustenance of Solitude (Mark 1:35–38; 6:30–33)

Christ and His disciples provide examples of the need for silence and solitude for the purpose of spiritual rest, renewal, and preparation.

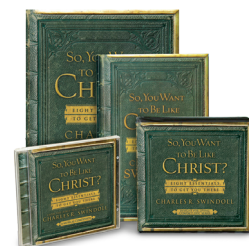


Starting Your Journey

If Jesus Himself took time for silence and solitude, shouldn't believers do the same? Silence is a gateway to spiritual depth; solitude is a gateway to spiritual discovery. So make this twin discipline a priority in your life.



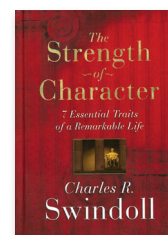
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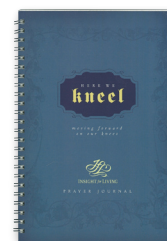
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SURRENDER: RELEASING OUR GRIP

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The Heart of the Matter

Christ exemplified the most perfect act of surrender when He gave up His place in glory to come to earth, take on a human nature, and die for us. When we follow Christ's example and we surrender to God by faith those things that encumber our fulfillment of His purpose, we will be surprised by the freedom that comes! As we release our grip, we discover that the things we thought we needed to hold on to were in reality holding on to us.



Discovering the Way

1. The Faithful Let Go (Hebrews 12:1–3)

Hebrews 12:1 exhorts us to “lay aside every encumbrance” in the race set before us, focusing on Christ, the premier example of surrender (12:2–3).

2. The Surrender of Christ (Philippians 2:3–11)

This great hymn of Christ's surrender demonstrates the extent to which we are expected to release our grip on the things that hold us back.



Starting Your Journey

Though surrender is necessary to become more like Christ, it doesn't come easy. In fact, four areas of surrender will be constant battlegrounds: your possessions, your position, your plans, and your people. However, surrender results in surprises and rewards we would never have otherwise experienced.



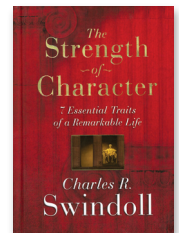
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PRAYER: CALLING OUT

ACTS 6:1-4



The Heart of the Matter

Can you name any command more often disobeyed than “Pray without ceasing”? Aside from a quick prayer before meals, can you honestly say that you are a person who consistently cultivates the discipline of prayer? If your answer is yes, you are the exception rather than the rule! Most of Christ’s followers would openly confess that they fail here more often than in any other area of the Christian life. Yet calling out to God is a necessary part of being like Christ.



Discovering the Way

1. Understanding What Prayer Is . . . and Isn’t (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Prayer is simply conversing with God. As a vital expression of trust, prayer involves laboring together with God and emerges from an intimate devotion and commitment to Him.

2. Prayer Practiced as a Priority (Acts 6:1-4)

Prayer should not be our last resort but our first priority. Especially in an age when anxiety, stress, and worry eat at our souls, prayer is the great relief (Philippians 4:6-7).



Starting Your Journey

As we engage in the discipline of prayer, we need to keep in mind four promises and four perils.

1. Four uncommon promises:

2. Four common perils:



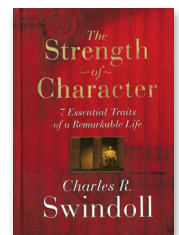
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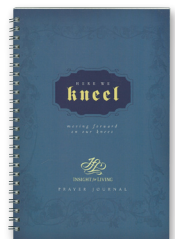
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HUMILITY: BOWING LOW

1 PETER 5:1-7



The Heart of the Matter

Humility is a spiritual discipline that does not come naturally or easily, because we are, by nature, self-absorbed creatures. We do not submit easily to others. We are preoccupied with how we appear, we protect our image and reputation, we fight for our personal rights, and we usually find it difficult to admit when we are wrong or have failed. Therefore, today we need to invite God's Word to instruct us . . . and, where necessary, to correct us and reprove us.



Discovering the Way

1. Initial Considerations on Humility

Though humility is a Christlike virtue, in the world it is not usually admired and it is rarely modeled. Many regard it as a sign of inferiority or insecurity. Therefore, it isn't easily demonstrated today.

2. Instruction from Three Significant Individuals

Biblical humility can be illustrated from three passages of the Bible: a day in the life of Jesus and His Twelve (Mark 10:35–45); an insightful reminder from Paul (Philippians 2:3–11); and a few penetrating words from Peter (1 Peter 5:1–7).



Starting Your Journey

We must all add humility to our walk with Christ. To do this, we need to *sit on* promoting ourselves, *stand up* for the needs of others, and *bow down* before our God.



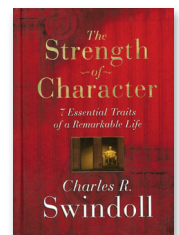
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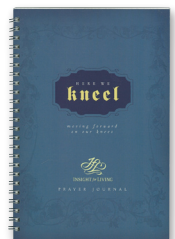
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SELF CONTROL: HOLDING BACK

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24–27



The Heart of the Matter

Even though we know better, we still yield to the inner pleadings of our sinful desires. When it comes to standing firm against the flesh, we need God's help. But we need to do more than simply analyze and theorize. Our hope is to come to terms with practical ways we can live outside the syndrome of daily defeat as we discover some of the biblical secrets of conquering by His Spirit. When that begins to happen, self-control becomes a reality.



Discovering the Way

1. A Start: Admitting the Battle (Romans 7:15–21)

The conflict should be obvious to most: we want to do what's right, but we do what's wrong. Besides the influences of the world and temptations of Satan, we're at war within ourselves.

2. An Analysis: Clarifying the Discipline (Galatians 5:16–23)

Only the discipline of self-control, itself a fruit of the Spirit, can prevent the sinful flesh from having full control of our attitudes, words, and actions.

3. An Example: Understanding the Process (1 Corinthians 9:24–27)

Only by self-control and discipline can an athlete hope to win the race. In the same way, for us to finish our Christian lives well, we need discipline.



Starting Your Journey

After we admit the battle, clarify the discipline of self-control, and understand the process, we must make a change to conquer the flesh.



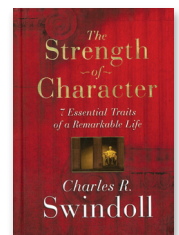
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SACRIFICE: GIVING OVER

MATTHEW 6:19–21, 25–34



The Heart of the Matter

Romans 12:1 exhorts us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord. But how easy it is to overlook the importance of personal sacrifice! This is especially true as we find ourselves in the midst of a self-absorbed culture, where personal comforts, rights, and privileges encourage an attitude of entitlement. However, we need to return to one of the disciplines modeled so well by Jesus Christ. We will see that it not only represents a completely different way of thinking and living, but that it is also one of the best-kept secrets of genuine and lasting joy.



Discovering the Way

1. The Meaning of Sacrifice

In a world of unprecedented affluence, the term *sacrifice* has become an archaic term. It means, essentially, voluntarily giving something up for the sake of something else.

2. Specific Areas of Sacrifice (Matthew 6:19–21, 25–34)

The inner character of sacrifice must manifest itself in outward actions. These can touch several areas of our lives, including personal sacrifice, relational sacrifice, and financial sacrifice.



Starting Your Journey

There are several warnings to those who exercise the discipline of sacrifice. First, your adversary will work against you. Second, your acquaintances will wonder what has happened. Third, your mind will start to play tricks on you. Fourth, your discipline will be tested repeatedly.



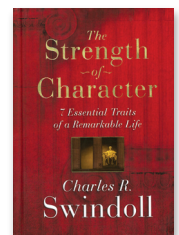
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