

AUSTRALIAN
insights 6



Growing Deeper

- Faith
- Love
- Kindness
- Humility
- Patience
- Obedience
- Correction



Are you resisting **GOD's PLAN** for your life?



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GOD'S WILL ?

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CEO Insight For Living
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Dear Reader, I hope you enjoy this issue of our Insights magazine. We have worked hard to provide you with a range of thoughtful articles we hope will inspire and challenge you to grow deeper in your knowledge and faith of our Lord and Master—Jesus Christ. If you have any stories about your life or experiences you think might be of interest and value to our Christian readers, please feel free to send them in to our head office.

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MARKING THE MILESTONES *of* GOD'S GRACE

by CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

Milestones . . . provide us opportunities to . . . see the memorable ways that God has graciously worked in our lives to impact others.

— Charles R. Swindoll



Originally, the word referred to a stone used as a mile marker. But it can also refer to a significant point in development — a turning point in life. God showed His interest in milestones when He created ways of measuring time. He gives us all kinds of

milestones. For instance, seven days make a week, and 52 weeks make a year. Holidays and seasons come around annually to signal a repeat of something significant. Milestones such as these offer us points in our journey that allow us to measure our development.

They provide us opportunities to look back over time and see the memorable ways that God has graciously worked in our lives to impact others.

As we turn our calendars to 2016, we naturally look forward. But we also need to look back and see how far we've come. Insight for Living Ministries celebrates 37 years of broadcasting this year. As I reflect on those years, I'm humbled by God's grace in bringing us this far. It's hard to believe the impact our Lord has made on people's lives through this ministry. From foreign-language broadcasts to regional offices to a global Web presence, God has stretched our simple desire to minister over a few radio stations so that now Insight for Living is heard, literally, around the world. Our bold **Vision 195** purposes to permeate all 195 countries of the world with the message of God's majesty, the authenticity of His Word, the power of the cross, and His amazing grace.

The consistent flow of letters, e-mails, and phone calls continues to serve as a daily testimony to the work God has done and is doing in so many lives, including yours. It's for that I am most grateful. In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul, needing a letter of commendation to confirm his status as a minister of the gospel, proclaimed that the Corinthian believers *"are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men"* (2 Corinthians 3:2).

I can't think of a better way to describe my feelings about our listeners. Your commitment to the Lord—to seeing the good news proclaimed all over the world—testifies to

God's faithfulness to use Insight for Living Ministries as an instrument of His grace.

British scholar and author C. S. Lewis once wrote,

"Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one — the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."¹

If we don't stop at the milestones and remember, if we don't celebrate and evaluate where we are on the road, we risk losing our connection to God and our relationship with one another.

Over the last 37 years, there have been many stories of lives changed because of Insight for Living Ministries. Each of these individuals, whether he or she knows it, serves as a testimony—"our letter"—to God's wonderful grace. As we approach our 37-year milestone, it's exciting to realize that God still uses Insight for Living Ministries as an instrument to impact individuals scattered all around the globe. . . . **now that's grace!** ■



Charles R. Swindoll serves as the senior pastor-teacher of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas.

ENDNOTE

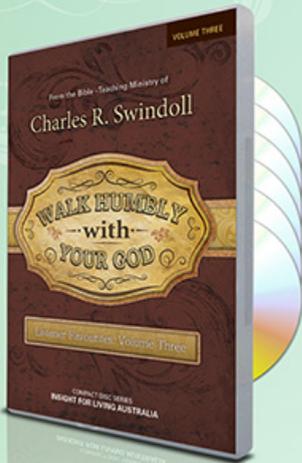
1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 54.



2016
A YEAR OF
*Growing
Deeper*

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GOD

HAD A PLAN

(and still does)

by CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

For the longest time, I didn't understand the new-car industry. I had always thought when a person wanted an automobile, he or she dropped by the local dealership, kicked a few tyres, and placed the order with the salesperson. I figured that when headquarters got the specs, they'd scurry around the shop to find the right steering wheel, chrome strips, and navigation system and put it all together. You know, kind of like whipping up a last-minute meal in the kitchen. Simple, right? Wrong.

To my amazement, I discovered that once a car is ordered from the dealer, a computer puts into motion dozens of contacts all over

the country. One location makes only engines; another provides the glass and plastic parts. Some other outfit does the steering wheels, and yet another manufactures the carpet and leather interior. And—hopefully—at just the right time, everything arrives at the assembly plant. Before long, a shiny new car rolls onto a transport truck and soon arrives at its proper destination.

What a remarkable arrangement! It takes a plan.

Now then—if people can come up with an organizational plan as complex as all that, imagine how much more efficient God's

arrangement was...more than two thousand years ago. I'm referring to the perfectly synchronized events surrounding our Saviour's birth. For sure, it was no afterthought.

God had a plan. Scripture assures us of that: **"When the right time came, God sent his Son."** (Galatians 4:4). What a statement! At just the right moment, precisely as God had arranged it, and in keeping with a plan that He formed before the foundation of the world, the Messiah entered the scene of humanity (John 17:24; Revelation 13:8; 17:8).

Hundreds of years prior, Micah prophesied that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem in Judah. He was. But I thought Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth in Galilee. They did. Aren't those places miles apart? Yes, in those times, travel between Bethlehem and Nazareth took—literally—days. Then...how? Well, you see, that's just a small part of the plan—especially when you consider Mary was approaching "term" in her pregnancy. To get Mary and Joseph all the way down to Bethlehem in time, the only way that could happen was if they were forced to travel. No problem. A required census from Caesar Augustus required Joseph to register in person in the city of his family roots. What town was that again, Micah? Yes—Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5; Luke 2:1-4).

But before a Saviour could be born, there also needed to be some natural means of common communication—a familiar language that could quickly spread the news. Easy enough. Thanks to Alexander the Great's Hellenization of the world centuries earlier, koine Greek provided a universal language by which the Gospel message could be disseminated rapidly through the pens of the evangelists and apostles. To get that all-im-

portant message around the world also required an international highway system through the Roman Empire—unheard of prior to the Roman takeover. Thanks to an inconvenient census, a universal language, and much-improved roads, the Messiah was born at just the right place and time.

The world hardly noticed this little baby. After all, the Romans were too busy building and conquering. And Caesar Augustus was occupied counting noses in his census. In reality, these world rulers were little more than wisps of lint on the prophetic page of history...mere pawns in the arrangement of a sovereign Lord. God had a plan...and He still does.

Each December, I ponder the ways God has led our lives over the previous 12 months. With growing excitement, we at Insight for Living Ministries are seeing His sovereign hand guide us in a direction He planned long before 2015! Our vision—to take the Word of God to all 195 countries of the world—is His plan. You are part of that plan, too, I'm convinced. We're in this together. And by God's grace, we'll keep pressing on together.

Christmas fascinates me every year. The things God pulled off to get His Son delivered to the right place at just the right time 21 centuries ago would make our modern-day automobile industry appear, by comparison, like a child playing with a box of Legos.

Come to think of it, the same sovereign arrangement is true of each of our lives, isn't it? God had a plan...and He still does. That's how God works. ■

Charles R. Swindoll serves as the senior pastor-teacher of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas.

How Can I Discover
GOD'S WILL ?

by CHARLES R. SWINDOLL



“I’m totally confused. How in the world do I find the will of God for my life?”

I cannot number how many times through the years I have heard that question. I could probably list at least ten ways that God leads His children today, but I will limit myself to the four that I think are the most significant methods of God’s leading.

1. **GOD LEADS US THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD.**

As the psalmist said:

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*
(Psalm 119:105)

Whenever you see the phrase “This is the will of God” in Scripture, you can count on it: that’s God’s will. You also know that to disobey is to reject His Word. Other clear indications of His leading are the precepts and principles in Scripture.

Precepts are clearly marked statements, such as “Abstain from sexual immorality.” That’s like saying, “Speed Limit 35.” What is speeding? Anything over 35 miles an hour. That’s a precept.

Then there are principles in Scripture, and these are general guidelines that require discernment and maturity if we are to grasp them. Paul writes of *“the peace of God”* guarding and guiding our hearts and our minds (Philippians 4:7). That’s like the sign that says, “Drive Carefully.” This may mean 40 miles an hour on a clear, uncongested road, or it may mean less than 10 miles an hour on an ice-covered curve. But it always means that we must be alert and aware of

conditions . . . we have to be discerning. There is no sign large enough to list all the options you have when you’re behind the wheel. So you must know the rules of the road, follow the signs that are there, and use all your best judgment combined with discernment.

You will never, ever go wrong in consulting Scripture. Just be sure you pay close attention to the context. Don’t use the “open-window method,” letting the wind blow across the pages of your Bible and then closing your eyes and pointing to a verse and saying, “This is God’s leading on that.” If you do that, you could end up with “Judas went away and hanged himself” as your verse for the day! Don’t go there.

2. **GOD LEADS US THROUGH THE INNER PROMPTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Read the following statement carefully:

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
(Philippians 2:12–13)

The inner prompting of the Holy Spirit gives us a sense of God’s leading, although that leading is not always what we might call a “feel-good” experience. In my own life, my decision to accept the presidency of Dallas Theological Seminary was not an easy one. Ultimately, it was an “at-peace” decision, but it was not what I would have wanted or chosen. I found all kinds of ways to resist when the position was first offered to me. I wrote the president and the chairman a

two-page letter, well thought through, carefully stated, and full of Scripture. It should have convinced anybody that I was the wrong person for the job. Except that God was busy convincing them—and, later, me—that I was the right person. Although it went against my own wishes at the time, I could not resist the compelling, all-powerful prompting of the Holy Spirit.

So I can testify from personal experience that you can believe you really know God's will, and you may be dead wrong. But if you are, the prompting of the Holy Spirit will be nudging you within.

*The mind of man plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.*
(Proverbs 16:9)

It's easier to steer a moving car—just get the car rolling and you can push it into the filling station to get the gas. But it's hard to get it moving from a dead stop. So you're on your way, you're making your plans, you're thinking it through. In the process, stay open. By doing so, you may well sense inner promptings from the Holy Spirit steering you.

That inner prompting is crucial, because much of the time we just can't figure it out.

*Man's steps are ordained by the LORD,
How then can man understand his way?*
(Proverbs 20:24)

(I love that!) When all is said and done, you'll say, "Honestly, I didn't figure this thing out. It must have been God." Talk about mysterious! The longer I live the Christian life, the less I

know about why He leads as He does. But I am absolutely confident that He leads.

3. GOD LEADS US THROUGH THE COUNSEL OF WISE, QUALIFIED, TRUSTWORTHY PEOPLE.

This does not mean some guru in Tibet or a serious-looking stranger at the bus stop. This refers to an individual who has proven himself or herself wise and trustworthy and, therefore, qualified to counsel on a given matter.

Usually, such individuals are older and more mature than we are. Furthermore, they have nothing to gain or lose. This also means that they are often not in our immediate family. (Immediate family members usually don't want us to do something that will take us away from them or cause us or them discomfort or worry.)

At critical moments in my own life, I have sought the counsel of seasoned individuals—and they've seldom been wrong. That's been my experience. However, you must choose your counsellors very carefully. And just as the best counsellors are usually not your family, often they are not your best friends either. Wise and trustworthy counsellors are persons who want for you only what God wants.

Such persons will stay objective, listen carefully, and answer slowly. Often they won't give you an answer at the time you ask for it. They want to sleep on it; they want to think and pray about it.

4. GOD LEADS US INTO HIS WILL BY GIVING US AN INNER ASSURANCE OF PEACE.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," Paul wrote to the Colossians, "to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).

God's inner assurance of peace will act as an umpire in your heart.

Although peace is an emotion, I have found it wonderfully reassuring as I've wrestled with the Lord's will. This deep-seated, God-given peace comes in spite of the obstacles or the odds, regardless the risk or danger. It's almost like God's way of saying, "I'm in this decision . . . press on . . . trust Me through it."

The will of God for our lives is not some high-sounding theory; it is reality. We have looked at some of the ways God leads us into His will. Now comes the bottom line: we have to live out His will in the real world.

Doing God's will demands a decision. And that decision requires faith and action. You can't see the end, so you have to trust Him in faith and then step out. You have to act. Faith and obedience are like twins; they go together.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

How about you? ■

Charles R. Swindoll serves as the senior pastor-teacher of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas.

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CORE S.T.R.E.N.G.T.H

by NATHAN POTTS



A personal milestone was achieved this past year as I committed to improving my physical well being by consistently working out at the local gym. While at times the discipline waned, overall the benefits of a healthier life style were felt and observed. It had been many years since I had been compelled to torture my body in such a way. As the personal trainer began to build the correct program for me some new terminology became the norm. He kept talking about “Core Strength” and “Core Stability”. To me this just sounded like an over zealous focus on the spare cushion accompanying my hips!

As I embarked upon the fitness program I made the fatal mistake of increasing the repetitions and weight too quickly. This resulted in my body ceasing up. My ability to stand up and spring out of bed like a gazelle disappeared, every muscle ached and each step became painful. In my pursuit of a quick fix that avoided the slow process of building core strength, great damage could have been done to my muscles and joints.

As I considered the process of increasing my fitness I saw many similarities that relate to my spiritual walk with the Lord. When we are called to follow Christ and become His disciples He grants us the Holy Spirit to guide and direct, convict and refine our walk. This is a marvelous gift of grace from God. However as with any discipline, either physical or spiritual, it is only through a steady and consistent approach that growth becomes enriching. To build core strength and stability in our daily walk with the Lord I would like you to consider the following disciplines.



PRAYER: Spend time each day in adoration for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ done at Calvary on your behalf. Keep short accounts before our Savior and Lord confessing your sins on a daily basis. Continually be thankful to the Lord for His sustaining and all sufficient grace in your life. Remember to pray for others partitioning before the throne of grace their spiritual and practical needs. Always pray for opportunity's to share your faith with those you come in contact with.

READING THE BIBLE: Spend time each day taking in the truths of God's Word. Start a daily bible reading plan. Get involved with a small group within your local church and dig deeper into the Word of God. This will help you to discover the truths of God's Word and encourage you to apply these truths throughout the week. I personally enjoy taking a bible passage and writing it out by hand. This enables me to focus on each phrase, word and sentence refreshing my heart as I mediate upon the passage as a whole.

FELLOWSHIP: We cannot successfully walk this road without consistent encouragement from others who are also walking with us. God designed the church, which has been bought with the precious blood of Christ, to be the organism that provides spiritual edification and encouragement. We are commanded not to forsake meeting together. Edification and growth are some of the primary goals for the church. We remember the Lord's death burial and resurrection through sharing communion together. We worship together, pray together and hear God's word being proclaimed together. As

Chuck Swindoll has said *"The church is God's body building program"*.

When I embarked upon my fitness program I did not understand that the key to increasing stability and strength required a slow and deliberate process over time. I now do! It is the same with our spiritual disciplines. We need to start with small steps. Start by praying daily and be committed to reading God's Word each day, not just reading but reading with a view to applying the truths that impact your heart. Perhaps start by reading the gospel of John and meditating on the words and works of Jesus. Fellowship with other Christians is also a very important aspect of our growth and walk with the Lord. The church is a place where God gifts all individuals to complement one another in service for him. Christ is the head of the church and it is through the church we are edified and grow into the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we build on these disciplines through the power of the Holy Spirit we will develop core strength and stability especially when the trials of life are at our doorstep. By consistently practicing these disciplines we will develop a biblical world-view that is Christ centered. So when the waves of trouble threaten to overcome us we have an anchor of the soul, which in the first instance applies God's Word to the issue discerning truth from error. When we pray, we pray with confidence that the Lord hears and answers our request. Comfort is also provided through the fellowship and encouragement of the saints. This is true stability and core biblical strength. ■

by Pastor Nathan Potts *Insight for Living Australia*.

THE BATTLE FOR

Integrity

I must tell you that I have been troubled regarding the face of things in our country and within the family of God. My major battle has had to do with one word, one concept. My battle has to do with integrity.

In our nation—and in the church—there has been a falling away, a breakdown, and a compromise in integrity. Recent headlines have taught us that financial collapses were built on a foundation devoid of integrity. But compromise isn't limited to CEOs who greedily sell out their employees or to pork-happy politicians. All too often we find a moral laxity behind our pews and, even worse, behind the pulpit.

Let me define what I mean by integrity. Webster's tells us integrity means "**an unimpaired condition.**"¹ It means to be sound. The Hebrew word for integrity, **tom**, also means to be complete or solid.

So he shepherded them according to the integrity [tom] of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands. (Psalm 78:72)

Integrity is completeness or soundness. You have integrity if you complete a job even when no one is looking. You have integrity if you keep your word even when no one checks up on you. You have integrity if you keep your promises. Integrity means the absence of duplicity and is the opposite of hypocrisy. If you are a person of integrity, you will do what you say. What you declare, you will do your best to be. Integrity also includes financial accountability, personal reliability, and private purity. A person with integrity does not manipulate others. He or she is not prone to arrogance or self-praise. Integrity even invites constructive and necessary criticism because it applauds accountability. It's sound. It's solid. It's complete.

GOD'S
best way

YES
my way

NO
my way



Integrity is rock-like. It won't crack when it has to stand alone, and it won't crumble though the pressure mounts. Integrity keeps one from fearing the white light of examination or resisting the exacting demands of close scrutiny. It's honesty at all costs.

The words of Louis Adamic seem fitting, *"There is a certain blend of courage, integrity, character and principle which has no satisfactory dictionary name but has been called different things at different times in different countries. Our American name for it is 'guts.'"*²

I like that. Integrity is having the guts to tell the truth, even if it may hurt to do so. Integrity is having the guts to be honest, even though cheating may bring about a better grade. Integrity is having the guts to quote sources rather than to plagiarize.

But there are some things integrity is not. It is not sinless perfection. A person with integrity does not live a life absolutely free of sin. No one does. But one with integrity quickly acknowledges his failures and doesn't hide the wrong.

Now, in addressing this crucial mark of character, I could come across as the "white knight," but you know me better than that. I fail like everyone else. The sooner you remember that, the better we'll get along. But concerning the issue of integrity, I give you my word. You will know if I have failed or if Insight for Living has failed in some way. I will tell you. I will not lead you to believe something is true if it is false. That is the least I can do as a minister of the Gospel.

Integrity is essential in the church, in the marketplace, and especially in the home. When you walk in integrity, you leave it as a

legacy for your children to follow (Proverbs 20:7). It's what I call the father's thumbprint. Blessed are you if you had a father with integrity and a mother with guts.

When you work with integrity, you honor the Lord. Regardless of your profession, your character and conduct are methods of ministry. Over 50 years ago, Elton Trueblood wrote,

*"It is hard to think of any job in which the moral element is lacking. The skill of the dentist is wholly irrelevant if he is unprincipled and irresponsible. There is little, in that case, to keep him from extracting teeth unnecessarily, because the patient is usually in a helpless situation. It is easy to see the harm that can be done by an unprincipled lawyer. Indeed, such a man is far more dangerous if he is skilled than if he is not skilled."*³

Do you put wire in walls? Do you repair cars? Do you work with numbers? Do you sell clothes? Perhaps you practice law or medicine. The important thing is not what work you do, but whether you do your work with integrity. Perhaps you labor behind the scenes, and your only thanks is the inner satisfaction of a job done right. Do you cheat on your exams? Are you cheating on your mate? Some have the audacity to do such things and call themselves Christians. No wonder the world is confused!

You want to shock the world? Start here . . . demonstrating the guts to do what's right when no one is looking. It takes real guts to stand strong with integrity in a culture weakened by hypocrisy. **Start Today!** ■

Charles R. Swindoll serves as the senior pastor-teacher of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas.



IFL BROADCAST SCHEDULE

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- A Loyal Listener



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