

THINGS TO STOP AND START

Stop Acting Perfect and Start Being Vulnerable

1 Corinthians 2:1–5; 2 Corinthians 4:1–7

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

We've been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *not* through our own good works; *not* through the family we were born into, or our zip code, or our careers, fame, education, bank account, or the success of our parents or children or spouse.

That means we're needy. We make mistakes. We fail. We need God's help, and we need other people in the believing community to walk with us, teach us, and, when necessary, call us out on our shortcomings.

Followers of Christ keep it real: We confess our sins and foibles. We ask for help. We know that every good gift we have comes from the Lord.



DIGGING DEEPER

The New Testament, similar to the Old, is comprised of the Gospels, history (Acts), letters (General Epistles and Paul's letters), and prophecy (Revelation). We owe a significant portion of the New Testament to the inspiration of God working through His faithful servant the apostle Paul. Paul aimed to nourish and grow baby churches through tough times and new challenges through his writings, from the book of Romans to the book of Philemon. He densely packed theology, exegesis, practices, and principles into each letter he wrote.

Paul was the epitome of authenticity. As Chuck Swindoll said, "What does it mean to be authentic? It means we're not afraid of exposure." Paul's life was authentic: He freely owned his sins and shortcomings, he took his ministerial responsibilities seriously, and he exercised maturity in discernment.

Read these passages for examples of Paul's authenticity. Jot down any attributes you observe.

Acts 26:9–18; Galatians 1:13

Quotable

If I had the power to change anything within the ranks of fellow Christians, it would be this: I would ask the Lord to bring the kid out in us again. Let the truth out. Be real.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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1 Corinthians 9:1

2 Corinthians 2:4

2 Corinthians 13:2

Galatians 1:10

1 Timothy 1:3



Stuff You Need; Stuff You Don't

In order to follow Christ, we need to stop pursuing our nearsighted path and turn around. We keep the Shepherd at the head, and we pursue Him. Jesus said in John 10:27, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” We cannot hear the Shepherd’s voice if our ears are not inclined to Him. We can read the Bible for hours every day for years, but without a heart that is quiet and humble before the Lord, our efforts are in vain. We must prepare our hearts before we ever open the Bible.



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How do you prepare your heart to hear from the Lord through the study of His Word?

Integrity. Examine your motives. We ought not study God’s Word in order to bludgeon someone else, or impress a potential spouse, or just to please our church or our parents. First Corinthians 13:2 says, “If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing.” Our motivation to learn God’s Word has integrity when it is rooted in knowing and loving God and loving others.

Write down a prayer to the Lord to search your heart and lead you toward integrity.

Willingness. It’s not sufficient to *know* God’s Word; we must be willing to act upon it. James 1:25 says, “But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.” (Check it out; God’s prescription for guaranteed blessing!)

Write down a short pledge to act on what the Lord reveals to you through His Word.

Passion. Lukewarm Christianity leaves a bad taste in God’s mouth (Revelation 3:15–16). God is in search of spirited, truthful worshipers, not wet-blanket believers. Bring your passion to the text.

Who are some passionate figures in the Bible whom you would like to emulate? How about people you know who have an unquenchable devotion to the Lord?

Time. Your schedule says a lot about who and what you value.



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Write below some times during the coming month that you will take time to read, reflect, study, and meditate on God’s Word. You can start with a 30-minute increment. Update your devices and your calendar with these times.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Let’s observe the text. Read 2 Corinthians 4 *in its entirety*. Next, jot down 25 observations from 2 Corinthians 4:1–7. Pay attention to pronouns, descriptions, idiomatic expressions (like “Good News”), parts of speech (conjunctions, verbs, etc.), and timing (how much time had elapsed). Who is the “we” in the passage? Who is the audience?



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In carefully observing the passage in its context, we can more accurately discover Paul's reasoning and his underlying motivation for writing the passage.

Based on your observations, what message was Paul conveying? Was it one of hope, rebuke, encouragement, fear? Write down your reflections.



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, I am keenly aware that I am a cracked pot. But I carry untold treasure: the Spirit of God and the hope of the Good News. Deflate any pride I may harbor, and be exalted in me. Lead me down the paths of righteousness for the sake of Your Name and so that others may be drawn to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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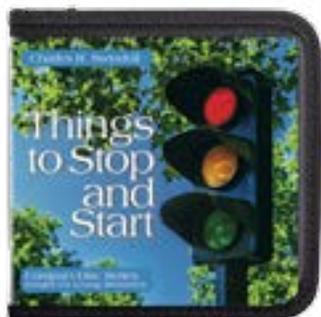
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Tools for Digging Deeper



Things to Stop and Start
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Leisure: How to Recharge
without Guilt**
by Charles R. Swindoll
booklet



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



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