

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE . . . THE INESCAPABLE ISSUE

A Time for Strong Resolve

Selected Scriptures



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Courage is just another word for inner strength. Courage is the determination to hang in there, to persevere, endure hardship, fear, and all manner of difficulty. The fact is, it's impossible to live victoriously for Jesus Christ without courage. We cannot honor God in a godless culture without courage. The real test of courage isn't so much for those fighting on the battlefield . . . or for witnessing in the midst of opposition . . . or even for facing down a burglar in our homes. Real courage demands a strong resolve that goes much deeper than all of that . . . and is much more demanding. Be assured that in some way, your resolve will be tested today and every day. Your test of courage may not be as exciting as a beachhead landing or sailing around Cape Horn or making a spacewalk. Instead, it may be as simple as saying no to an improper invitation. It may be as uneventful as facing a pile of laundry with a positive attitude. It may be a private or unknown struggle within you between right and wrong. Remember, God's Medal of Honor winners are made in secret, because our most courageous acts occur down deep inside . . . away from the view of the general public. That takes courage. It takes a strong resolve.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Four Thoughts About Moral Purity

Our society, with its lax morals and permissiveness, makes living a pure life difficult. But within the church, Christians also face challenges to our theology and our resolve. From legalism to accounts of moral defection from the pulpit all the way down to the pew, Christians often struggle to live in obedience to God's Word.

As Christians seek to honor God with our lives, we must remember these four truths:

- *The enemy is hard at work.* Satan, our great adversary, lurks around the corner waiting to trip us. We must be aware of his methods and prepare ourselves to withstand them. Peter reminds us: "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8 NLT).



Quotable

*Refuse to
slacken, surrender,
or quit the path
of obedience
to God no matter
how intense
the pressure.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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- *The pressures and the needs are enormous.* The cares of life put pressure on all of us and can weaken us to temptation. This is especially true for those engaged in spiritual leadership. We must take to heart Peter’s admonition: “Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are” (1 Peter 5:9 NLT).
- *The temptation to overreact is great.* When faced with trials and challenges to our faith, it’s easy to do one of three things: succumb and surrender, fight in the energy of our flesh, or simply quit.
- *This is the time for strong resolve.* Maybe there have been times when we could have lived the Christian life without much drive or determination . . . when a person could sort of drift along almost carelessly. But no longer! The stakes are simply too high!

2. Some Lessons from the Psalms

Psalm 102 is the work of a troubled man—the prayer of an afflicted, faint believer. Though he was once a fervent spiritual leader, for reasons we don’t know, apathy and depression had set in. The psalmist felt a loss of motivation (Psalm 102:1–4), a loss of appetite (102:4–5), and a loss of self-respect and determination (102:6–7).

Whether or not we are in a Christian leadership role, all believers face criticism and trials that tempt us to quit, give up, and throw in the towel. But Psalm 5 reminds us that we can’t face trials in our own strength. We need the Lord to intervene and give us supernatural courage. Psalm 5:8 is a prayer we all should pray often, “Lord, lead me as you promised you would; otherwise my enemies will conquer me. Tell me clearly what to do, which way to turn” (NLT).



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A CLOSER LOOK

Finding Courage in Trying Times

When we face trials or are mistreated, it's easy to doubt God's love. And when we doubt God's love, we lose our rudder in life and eventually drift into sin. So how did David stay on course when his enemies victimized him? David resolved to keep his eyes fixed on God's "lovingkindness"—His covenant faithfulness. The Lord revealed this central attribute in Exodus 34 in response to Moses' desire to see God's glory. The Lord passed before Moses and declared His name: "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). With this picture of God in mind, David sought to honor Him in times of struggle and victory. With laser focus, Christians must zero in on God's love when we are mistreated. Let's read and reread Exodus 34:6 and surround ourselves with like-minded believers who will encourage us when our circumstances and feelings tempt us to doubt.



LET'S LIVE IT

So how can Christians stay strong against temptation?

- *Resolved: to be alert to the presence of evil and the strategy of the adversary*
- *Resolved: to stay fervent in prayer, not hesitant to call down supernatural assistance and, when necessary, divine discipline*
- *Resolved: to refuse to retaliate in the energy of the flesh*
- *Resolved: to refuse to slacken, surrender, or quit the path of obedience no matter how intense the battle*
- *Resolved: to seek to glorify the Lord and trust the Word of God, regardless of the consequences*

Do you view yourself as a courageous Christian? Why, or why not? Which resolution do you need to focus on this week?



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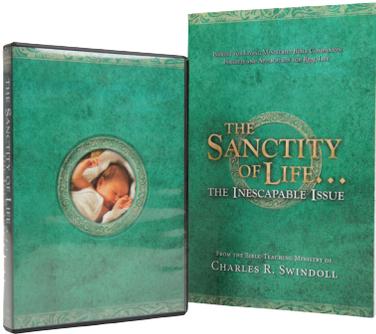
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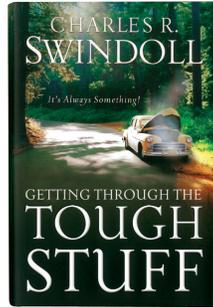
Selected Scriptures



Tools for Digging Deeper



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