

# STRAIGHT TALK FOR SEMINARY STUDENTS

## STUDY SIX

### Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries

*Matthew 9:14–17*

*“Preach the Word.” Our goal isn’t to study the Word, it’s to preach the Word. It takes study to preach it well, but the goal is to deliver the goods. . . . I’m going to tell you from years of experience, congregations will love you for your hard work in this study. But they’ll appreciate the fact that you give attention to the delivery of the message and delivering it well. Saying it carefully. Articulating it with the right words. Preach the Word.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE esteemed professor from Dallas Theological Seminary, the late Howard Hendricks, got it right when he said, “It is not too difficult to be relevant if you don’t care about being biblical, but to be biblical AND relevant—that’s the goal!”<sup>1</sup>

That’s the goal of a seminary, the goal of the church, and the goal of the Christian. But this goal can be achieved only when the Holy Spirit animates divine truth in flesh and blood causing new life to blossom no matter the culture or context. Then God’s people shed old, unfruitful habits and toss out lifeless religiosity to give the gospel of Jesus a fresh expression, in word and deed throughout society. Jesus did not want traditions, however noble or profitable some may be, to hold priority over His message.

He said so Himself in Matthew 9:14–17. That short passage will be the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* study, which Chuck Swindoll uses to provide seven habits of highly effective seminaries—principles to help Christian organizations remain biblical and relevant.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries

Matthew 9:14–17



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before studying Matthew 9:14–17, pray for the Spirit to guide you in this study. Make Psalm 119:14–16 your own confession and petition so that His Word grips your mind and steers your heart.

*I have rejoiced in your laws  
as much as in riches.  
I will study your commandments  
and reflect on your ways.  
I will delight in your decrees  
and not forget your word. (Psalm 119:14–16)*



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In word and deed, Jesus did not follow the Jewish traditions of His day. His actions confused some. Others hated Him for breaking the mold. But Jesus knew excessive hand washing will not make you pure (Luke 11:38). God does not approve when you rebuff your parents to give to Him (Matthew 15:5). Eloquent prayers before a mass of faces will not place the Divine in your debt (6:5).

Why did Jesus create such a religious ruckus? In Matthew 9:14–17, Jesus explained His reasons.



### Observation: Why Don't They Fast?

Begin observation by slowly reading Matthew 9:14–17.

Who approached Jesus, and what confused them about Jesus' practices?

Jesus answered their question by referencing three norms from their daily lives to describe the reasons His disciples did what they did.



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### Matthew 9:15—Bridegroom

The \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ while celebrating with the \_\_\_\_\_.

But the wedding guests will \_\_\_\_\_ when the \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ from them.

### Matthew 9:16—Clothing

No one patches \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_.

Why?

### Matthew 9:17—Wineskins

No one puts \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_.

Why?

Instead, people put \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_.

Wedding guests, a bridegroom, clothing, and wine. The main point of Jesus' teaching comes into view as we step back from examining the details of these metaphors and take in the bigger picture. Every Bible study requires both "close-up" observation and "wide-angle" interpretation. No rushing in our reading. No contriving words not present nor importing alien ideas. How exciting it is, after diligent study, to have those light-bulb moments as the Holy Spirit grows us into the image of the Son!



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*Matthew 9:14–17*



### Interpretation: New Wine Goes into New Wineskins

After carefully observing what the text says, we study to gain a clear understanding of what it means. This passage requires that we understand Jesus' culture. Be sure to consult your commentaries. We recommend *Constable's Notes* and *William Barclay's Daily Study Bible*.

Jesus' imagery contains symbols that reflect His main point.

In Matthew 9:15, the wedding guests and groom represent whom? How does this image answer the question from John's disciples?

In Matthew 9:16–17, Jesus explained the reasoning for His answer in 9:15. What do the new patch and the new wine represent? What do the old clothing and the old wineskins represent?

What then is the theological point in Jesus' statement: "New wine is stored in new wineskins" (Matthew 9:17)?



## Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries

*Matthew 9:14–17*

Jesus ushered in a new time of God's activity requiring both Jews and non-Jews to encounter God afresh and walk with Him in a new way—by faith in the Son of God and in the power of the Spirit.



### Correlation: Following the Truth of the Gospel Message

After Jesus died and resurrected, the apostles still had to shed their old ways of living to keep in step with the truth of the gospel. Paul's narrative in *Galatians 2:11–21* gives us a peek into one such moment when Peter reverted to following Jewish tradition, invoking a sharp rebuke by Paul.

What did Peter do which did not follow the gospel (Galatians 2:11–13)?

Summarize what Paul said to Peter when he rebuked him (2:14–16)?

What additional reasoning did Paul give to the Galatians for his rebuke to Peter (2:17–21)?



## Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries

*Matthew 9:14–17*

List two or three ways the truth of Galatians 2:11–21 might alter a tradition or habit either in your personal life or in your church.

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*  
(Galatians 2:20)



### Application: Same Message, Fresh Methods

The gospel of Jesus Christ compels us all not to equate old, unhelpful practices with the life-giving content of His message. This rings true in the lives of individuals, big churches, small churches, and even educational institutions. In his sermon, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries,” Chuck applies the truth of Matthew 9:14–17 for the students and faculty at his alma mater, Dallas Theological Seminary. Regarding seminary, he says:

- 1) *Highly effective seminaries stay focused on what’s essential.* They don’t swerve left or right but stay focused on the message and the mission.
- 2) *Highly effective seminaries exist for students.* Just as pastors serve the flock, so professors serve the students. Not vice versa.
- 3) *Highly effective seminaries have great-hearted board members.* The-sky-is-falling naysayers and doubters have no place on the board. Rather, the school needs passionate, visionary partners to govern the school.
- 4) *Highly effective seminaries prefer quality to quantity.* The lives of students matter more than the number of students. Character trumps bodies.
- 5) *Highly effective seminaries select and maintain an outstanding faculty.* Seminaries need sharp-thinking, clear-teaching professors—surgeons of the heart and experts of their discipline.



## Seven Habits of Highly Effective Seminaries

*Matthew 9:14–17*

- 6) *Highly effective seminaries attract and cultivate students who remain enthusiastic about God's work.* These students have tasted the joy of learning and relish the role of a servant leader.
- 7) *Highly effective seminaries have dreams that are greater than their memories.* These seminaries spend more time focusing on the striped asphalt ahead of them rather than admiring what's in the rearview mirror.

Are you thinking about seminary? Know someone who is? Perhaps you want to start supporting a seminary or seminarian but are not sure where to begin. Chuck's years in the president's chair taught him to look for the seven traits listed above.

Now it is your turn to apply to your life the truth of Matthew 9:14–17. Consider ways your routine of relating with God or engaging in God's work might need a fresh change. It might be something drastic, such as Peter's situation in Galatians 2:11–21, or it could be a small habit that hinders your spiritual growth or outreach. Think it over and record what God's Spirit brings to mind.

To be both biblical and relevant, faithful to God's Word, and helpful to our contemporary audience—that is our goal in gospel ministry. We don't change our methods because change is fun. We do so to be effective and timely as we share a timeless message.

*This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15)*



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### A FINAL PRAYER

End this study with a prayer asking God to keep you both biblical and relevant as you make His message known in your sphere of life.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Howard G. Hendricks, as quoted by Michael S. Lawson and Carisa Ash, "Howard G. Hendricks," Database: Christian Educators of the 20th Century, <https://www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/howard-g-hendricks>.



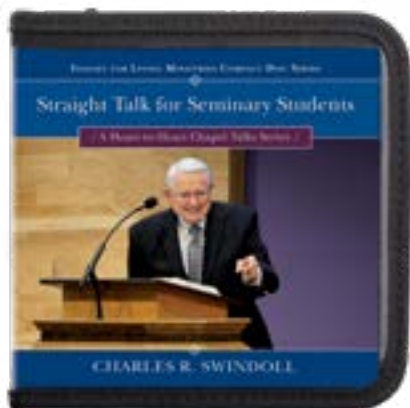


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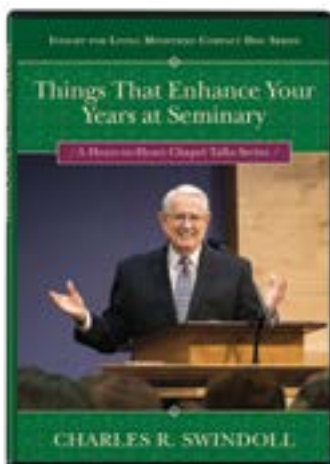
Matthew 9:14–17



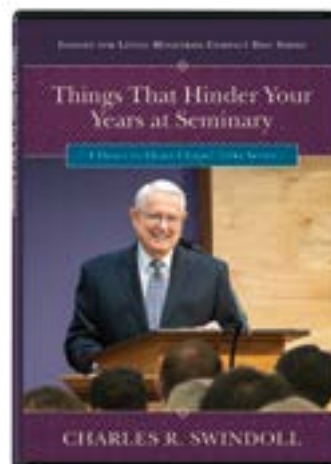
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

