

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

THEY, BEING DEAD, STILL SPEAK

HEBREWS 11:32–38



The Heart of the Matter

Over the vast expanse of Scripture, a variety of admirable people cross our paths. Because God not only preserved the record of their lives but also used each one to model particular character traits, it seems appropriate for us to become better acquainted with both the people and their individual qualities, which are worth emulating. By way of introduction, we want to get our foot in the door of this series by looking at the great biographical chapter in the New Testament—Hebrews 11—which has been called “God’s Hall of Faith.” These men and women lived lives worthy of being remembered, so let’s remember them—for they, being dead, still speak.



Discovering the Way

1. The Lasting Legacy of Character Greatness

Character is the moral, ethical, and spiritual undergirding that rests on truth, that reinforces a life, and that resists the temptation to compromise. Four conclusions frame our understanding of character’s presence in our lives.

2. A List of Lives Worth Honoring (Hebrews 11:32–38)

Hebrews 11 is filled with imperfect people who, in spite of that, possessed greatness of character.



Starting Your Journey

Be mindful of three easily forgotten reminders that will enhance the development of good character:

1. Character tends to flourish in later life when good seeds are planted in early life.
2. Character seems more possible in us when we see it modeled in others.
3. Character can withstand the hard times if it’s cultivated during days of ease.



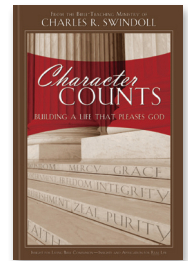
Original outline copyright © 1988 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



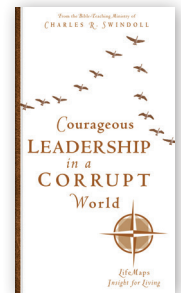
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

THE DISCERNMENT OF ABIGAIL

1 SAMUEL 25:1-42



The Heart of the Matter

She appeared suddenly, fading away almost as quickly. Abigail made the most of her brief moment in the spotlight, even though she entered the biblical story in the presence of one of the most significant figures in all of Scripture—David, the future king of Israel. With conflict brewing between David and Nabal, Abigail's husband, Abigail intervened just in time. Because she possessed such depth of character she was able to discern the rising tempers and act to alleviate them. As a result of Abigail's godly character, a murder was restrained and God was given room to work His will in a most surprising way.



Discovering the Way

1. A Little Background Information

While on the run from Saul, David, who was the king-elect, showed up in Carmel with 600 men.

2. Let's Meet the Main Characters (1 Samuel 25:1-4)

A conflict between Nabal and David forced Abigail, Nabal's wife, to defuse the conflict through her discerning character.

3. Natural Conflicts . . . Discerning Solutions (1 Samuel 25:5-42)

Conflicts between husband-wife and employer-employee create an opportunity to see Abigail's discernment on display.

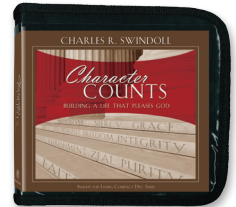


Starting Your Journey

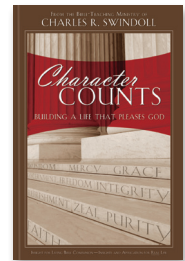
When there is discernment, there need not be a great display of strength, and wisdom is rewarded with relief from above.



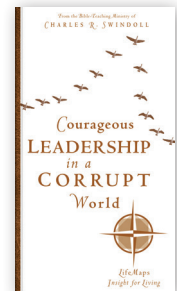
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

THE REFRESHMENT OF ONESIPHORUS

2 TIMOTHY 1:15–18



The Heart of the Matter

Our thoughts turn to one of the lesser-known people in Scripture. A man whose fame was eclipsed by Paul's, he played a vital role in the life of his better-known counterpart. His name? Onesiphorus, pronounced "Oh-neh-SIF-ah-russ." His contribution in character? Refreshment . . . that rare yet wonderful ability to give breathing room, to provide cooling relief, to help in the healing process. How we need such people today!



Discovering the Way

1. Spiritual Gifts Versus Spiritual Ministries

Spiritual gifts are for individuals, while spiritual ministries, such as refreshment, are for everyone.

2. Paul's Need for Refreshment (2 Timothy 1:15)

Paul sat alone in a dungeon, having been deserted by many friends.

3. A Friend Worth Remembering (2 Timothy 1:16–18)

Onesiphorus served as a cooling presence of refreshment for Paul, often bringing help and comfort to the apostle.

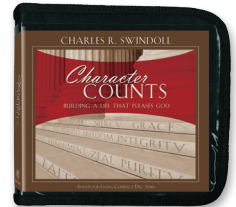


Starting Your Journey

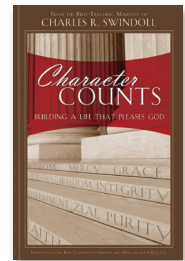
Six qualities are necessary to engage in the ministry of refreshment: *unselfishness, availability, sensitivity, determination, a positive attitude, and compassion.*



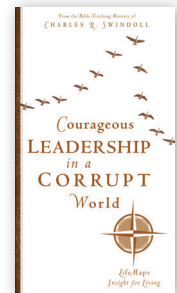
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



Original outline copyright © 1988 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

A PLEA FOR INTEGRITY

DANIEL 6:1–23



The Heart of the Matter

Ours is a day of bending the rules and rationalizing the wrong. A growing number of Christians are buying into the mentality that says, “Grace covers *whatever* . . . go ahead, God understands and forgives.” The results are somewhere between embarrassing and scandalous. Issues such as marital commitment, sexual purity, intellectual honesty, and financial accountability are up for discussion rather than character traits to embrace. Even the ranks of ministry have been tainted. The need? A return to *integrity* . . . not sinless perfection but absolute honesty and an absence of duplicity. Impossible? Let’s let Daniel’s life answer that for us.



Discovering the Way

1. Integrity: What It Is and Isn’t

Do you follow through on the promises you make? Having integrity means sticking to your word and avoiding duplicity. Integrity isn’t sinless perfection but a pursuit of inner excellence.

2. Daniel: A Biblical Example (Daniel 6:1–23)

When undeserved affliction fell upon Daniel, he stayed true to his faith, even at the risk of death.



Starting Your Journey

An examination of integrity leads to three enduring principles:

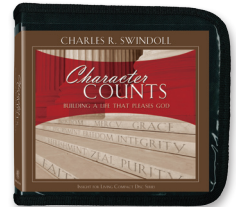
1. True integrity —
2. Real integrity —
3. Broken integrity —



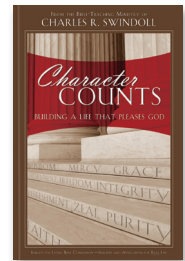
Original outline copyright © 1987 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



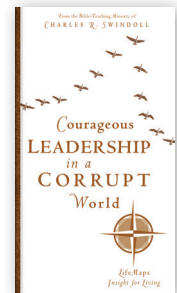
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

REINSTATEMENT OF A RUNAWAY

PHILEMON



The Heart of the Matter

Philemon is the shortest and most personal letter we have from the pen of Paul the apostle. Grasping its implications rests upon an understanding of the life of a slave in the first century, who was nothing more than a piece of property in the hands of his or her master. Paul addressed Philemon, a slave owner, on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's former slave. Onesimus had escaped from Philemon and fled to Rome. While there he came to know Christ as Savior under the influence of Paul. This letter requested that Philemon reinstate his runaway slave and accept him back in a spirit of forgiveness.



Discovering the Way

1. Introduction (Philemon 1–3)

Paul, a prisoner in Rome, wrote a letter to his friend Philemon.

2. Commendation (Philemon 4–7)

Philemon's faith and love comforted and encouraged Paul, who prayed that Philemon might be effective in living out his faith.

3. Intercession (Philemon 8–17)

Paul appealed to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, urging Philemon to welcome him back as a brother in Christ.

4. Obligation (Philemon 18–22)

Both Paul and Philemon were obligated to cover debts for one another.

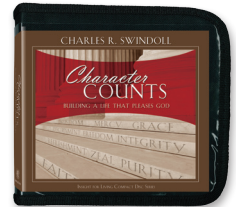


Starting Your Journey

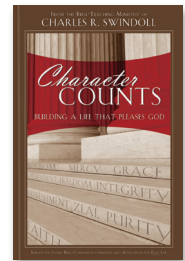
As we read this first-century chronicle of a runaway slave returned to the fold, we see five comparisons in the relationship between God and His people: *Every Christian was once a spiritual fugitive; our guilt was great and the penalty was severe; grace allowed the right of appeal; Christ said, "Charge that to my account"; and our master has now accepted us back.*



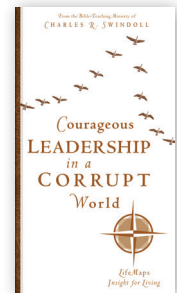
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

COPING WITH THE "SLOUGH OF DESPOND"

1 KINGS 19



The Heart of the Matter

"You will break the bow, if you keep it always bent." So goes an ancient Greek saying. Perhaps it was because of Elijah's "bent bow" that he finally broke under the strain. In 1 Kings 19, we find him disillusioned, downcast, and discouraged. But why? And in light of his depression, how did God deal with His broken servant? Elijah's story helps us understand how we can handle those days when we, too, get discouraged.



Discovering the Way

1. The Henpecked Husband (1 Kings 19:1)

King Ahab of Israel ran to his wife for a decision about Elijah.

2. The Domineering Wife (1 Kings 19:2)

Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah for his role in the demise of Baal's prophets.

3. The Defeated Prophet (1 Kings 19:3–4)

Elijah feared for his life, ran, and hid from Queen Jezebel in the desert. Once there, he despaired and asked God to take his life.

4. The Faithful God (1 Kings 19:5–21)

God revealed Himself to Elijah, providing him refreshment, His presence, and a companion.



Starting Your Journey

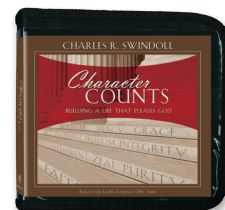
Elijah's story reminds us of three things: *we must recognize our neediness, we must reach out for friends, and we must remember to give God thanks and devotion.*



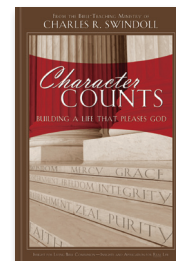
Original outline copyright © 1980 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



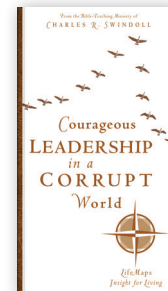
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

BEING A BALANCED WOMAN OF GOD

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

It is doubtful that there is a tougher role to fill today than that of the Christian woman who desires to walk with God. The tightrope is most precarious, stretched high above numerous perils, with dangerous gusts of wind from the world pushing her off balance. Advice comes from every source, some of it strong and convincing. And then there are those undeniable feelings within that shout (and occasionally scream) for attention and satisfaction . . . not all of them wrong or bad, but many of them unfulfilled. What's a woman to do? Become a balanced woman of God.



Discovering the Way

1. Two Extremes—Neither Very Attractive

Our culture has produced two extremes among women—the overly aggressive woman and the inordinately passive woman.

2. Why? What Has Caused Such Extremism?

The extremes are a result of four factors: a misunderstanding of submission, the failures of men, disconnected women, and an overreaction to all of this in the church.

3. Balance—A Scriptural Analysis (Acts 16:1–2, 11–15; 21:7–14)

The balanced woman of God is committed to the Scriptures, sees her giftedness and value, and trusts in the Lord as her refuge.

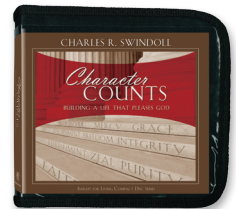


Starting Your Journey

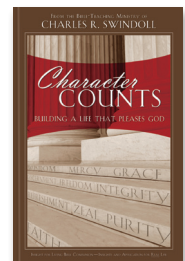
Three practical suggestions for being a balanced woman of God: *become a serious student of the Scriptures, guard against either extreme, and commit yourself to working through conflicts rather than running from them.*



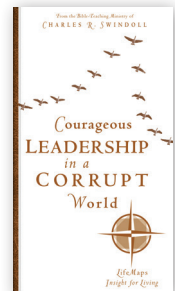
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

BEYOND CHARM AND BEAUTY

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Today's woman faces greater pressures than ever. The options open to her continue to increase, whether it be in education, social standing, or employment opportunities. But more choices result in more avenues of temptation. With pitfalls around every corner, it is wise to take a fresh look at the qualities of godly womanhood provided by the book of Proverbs—especially the most detailed portrait of all—chapter 31.



Discovering the Way

1. A Little Background Information

The book of Proverbs reserves its final verses for the portrait of a godly woman. These verses present her with an acrostic and may have been written by Solomon under a pseudonym.

2. Priorities of a Godly Woman (Proverbs 31:10–31)

A godly woman knows her value before God, understands her role as a wife, possesses admirable characteristics, and when she speaks, there is wisdom.



Starting Your Journey

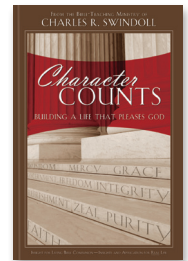
Four questions every woman should ask herself: *Do you find yourself more attracted by the shadows than the substance? Are you convinced of your value in God's eyes? Have you been challenged by character traits that have been emphasized above? Do you find yourself too tired to be the woman God has called you to be?*



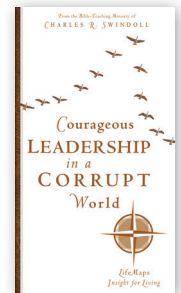
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



Original outline copyright © 1990 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

A VOTE IN FAVOR OF FATHERHOOD

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Fathers get a bad rap these days. Some weren't there enough. Some didn't provide enough. Others weren't strong enough. The list seems to go on and on. But when we come to Proverbs, we find a markedly different picture. Fathers are mentioned at least 26 times in this famous book of wisdom, and interestingly, each time it's a positive reference. Solomon doesn't berate dads and their failures but looks for opportunities to laud their significance in who they are and how they relate to us. In times like these, we need a vote in favor of fatherhood.



Discovering the Way

1. Appreciating Our Fathers

Today's culture encourages finding fault with our fathers. Proverbs presents a very different picture.

2. A Father's Role (Proverbs 4:1–5; 19:14; 22:28)

Every father has three distinctive roles to maintain: provider, maintainer, and instructor.

3. A Father's Relationships (Proverbs 5:15–19; 15:20)

Fathers have the opportunity for vibrant relationships in their home—with their wives and with their children.

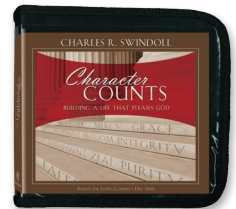


Starting Your Journey

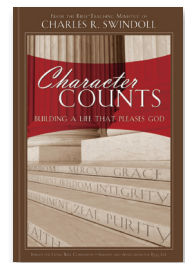
As you seek to pursue godly character in being a father, *embrace your role* and *encourage your relationships*.



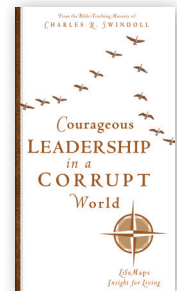
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



Original outline copyright © 1987 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

TOP TEMPTATIONS FATHERS FACE

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

The world can be a dangerous place for fathers. Temptation lurks around every corner. Instability threatens to knock us off balance and send us plummeting into darkness. We've become accommodated to a new idea of fatherhood in contemporary culture—a vision that is defined more by a father's absence and distance than by his engaged and vibrant presence in the home. Fathers have too often been caught up in the malaise of day-to-day living. Tired from the long hours at the office, they have little resistance to several temptations common to dads. But what can be done to avoid the fall away from godly character?



Discovering the Way

1. An Analogy for Temptation

Temptation possesses four distinct features similar to those of an appealing and mysterious lake.

2. All Fathers, All the Time (James 1:5–16)

Every father is always going through a trial, just like every father always has the sweet scent of temptation wafting across his path.

3. Top Temptations Fathers Face

Six top temptations plague fathers. We need to know what they are so that we can strategize about how to avoid them.



Starting Your Journey

How do we make sure we aren't falling into the trap of these six temptations? First, *ask your wife*. And second, *pursue authentic living*.



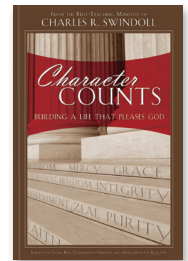
Original outline copyright © 1990 and Message Mate copyright © 2008 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



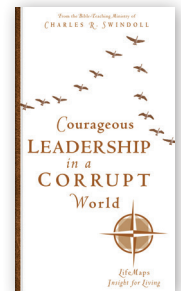
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleases God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org

CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

HOW TO MAKE THE TRUTH "STICK"

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Too often, we receive solid biblical teaching but do not take it with us. We read meaningful books, but they do not affect our lives. We hear a profound statement from a wise counselor, but it quickly fades into the background. How does the truth become more than just an abstract thought? How can it seep into our lives and become part of us, part of our very essence? The person of character is one who both knows the truth and can apply it to the circumstances life brings. But how does one make the transition from head to heart? How can we make the truth "stick"? God's Word makes it clear.



Discovering the Way

1. The Problem of Ignorance (1 Peter 3:13–16)

Our culture is becoming less knowledgeable about both general and biblical knowledge.

2. The Importance of Teachers (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Teachers need to know that their work is not in vain and their teaching is not fruitless.

3. A Foundation for Learning (Ezra 7:10)

Three commonalities with Ezra provide a fertile ground for learning.



Starting Your Journey

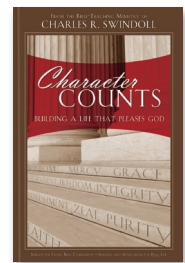
Every student needs to adopt four strategies to make sure the truth takes root in his or her life: *make a personal commitment, become a loyal student of the Bible, practice the truths of Scripture, and share Christ with someone else.*



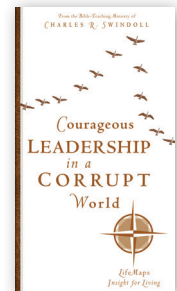
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org



CHARACTER COUNTS: BUILDING A LIFE THAT PLEASURES GOD

SURVIVAL TRAINING FOR THE SCHOOL JUNGLE

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Every autumn, another school year begins. Kindergartners tearfully kiss their parents good-bye. Children are placed back “on schedule.” Teenagers return to homerooms, gym class, pep rallies, and the old grind . . . as college students wave farewell and shout, “Send money!” Regardless of age or area, similar feelings take hold in each household. In many cases, young and tender lives are introduced to a whole new world of experiences and temptations and relationships. The Christian—both parent and student—often wrestles with these new encounters and asks, “Am I able to cope?” “Can my Christianity stand up under the pressure of such blows?” Let’s find direction and encouragement from God’s Word for the school years ongoing and yet to come.



Discovering the Way

1. The Biblical Picture of Education (Deuteronomy 6:4–7)

Education should begin in the home, but usually extends outside it as well.

2. Patterns of Belief (1 Samuel 2:18–26; Daniel 1:8–21; Hebrews 11:23–29)

Samuel, Daniel, and Moses each continued in their faith in spite of being educated in environments that were not always supportive of those commitments.

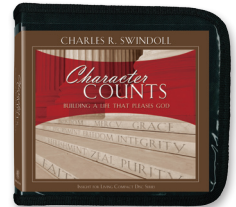


Starting Your Journey

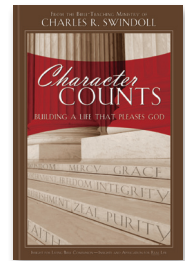
Students, *no pressure is greater than God’s power.* Parents, *no school can fully erase the impact of a godly home.*



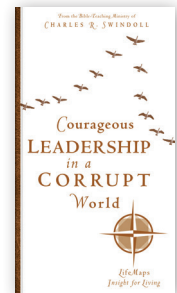
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Character Counts:
Building a Life That
Pleasures God Bible
Companion**
softcover book



**Courageous Leadership
in a Corrupt World**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For related resources, please call
USA 1-800-772-8888
AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444
CANADA 1-800-663-7639
UK 0800 787 9364
or visit www.insight.org
or www.insightworld.org

