

# THINGS TO STOP AND START

## Stop Blaming and Start Forgiving

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

On June 17, 2015, a young man entered Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and joined a prayer meeting already in progress. For the next hour, he talked and participated in the experience. He cordially addressed the pastor.

The people gathered in the church were black parishioners who had come to their place of worship. Without warning, the young white man with evil in his heart killed nine of them in cold blood.

Days later reports came in that the daughter of Ethel Lance, one of the elderly women who died that day, had offered the person who murdered her mother full forgiveness for his heinous act.<sup>1</sup>

Could you do that? Forgive your mother's murderer? Before he repented? Whether he repented?

Forgiveness is hard, otherworldly work. In order to forgive, we have to walk the same path as our Savior, fully enabled by His Spirit. Jesus, after all, while hanging on the cross prayed for His Father to forgive the ones who cruelly nailed Him there (Luke 23:34).



### Digging Deeper: Be Reconciled

In Matthew 5:23–24, Jesus adjured His listeners:

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”

The crux of this verse is to *stop* what you are doing—even if it is worship!—and first and foremost, be reconciled to the person you have wronged. But what does it mean to “be reconciled”?

## Quotable

*Forgiveness 101  
is not an elective  
course in the school  
of Christian Life;  
it's a required  
subject.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Chuck Swindoll breaks down the phrase “be reconciled” this way: “So it’s the idea of going through a process that results in change. You, the offender, take the action and you find reconciliation.” One of the keys to delving into the Bible with increased depth and meaning is to *observe the words and context*. Before Chuck was able to break down the meaning behind “be reconciled,” he needed to have a clear notion of the original Greek word or phrase, how it was used in the Bible and in Greek literature, and *then* he translated it to our everyday terminology. That’s what Chuck Swindoll refers to as a *word study*.

We’re sometimes tempted to speed-read through a given text in order to get the big picture. Word studies demand that we do the opposite . . . slow down and observe the impact of a single word.

**Let’s do a word study now on “be reconciled.”**

What is the Greek root verb for “be reconciled”? (There are free interlinear Greek/English texts complete with Strong’s Concordance online that can help you if you don’t have a concordance or dictionary at home.)

The Greek root verb for “be reconciled” is *diallasso*. The word *diallasso* is used in the New Testament **only here**. When a word is employed only once in the New Testament, it is referred to as *hapax legomenon*; Latin for “once said.”

Though *diallasso* was used only once in the New Testament, it was employed six times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), and in that context, it was used the most in the book of Job.

Look up Job 5:12; 12:20, 24. Read it in your preferred translation, and see if you can choose the word or phrase for *diallasso*. Write down any observations.



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In the book of Job, the word *diallasso* is used to describe a reversal—the frustration of going from prominence to humility.

Judges 19:3 and 1 Samuel 29:4 also mention *diallasso* in the Greek Old Testament. Judges 19:3 translates the Hebrew word *shuv*: “to return or bring back”—a word the prophets used to implore the people of Israel to return to God. First Samuel 29:4 uses *diallasso* to translate the Hebrew word *ratsah*: “to be well pleased with, or find acceptable.”

Read both verses now for context. Note any observations.

From conducting a word study, we have discovered the range of meaning for the word *diallasso* in both the Old and New Testaments, giving us a fuller understanding of the phrase “be reconciled” found in Matthew 5:24.

#### Your Turn in the Scriptures

You don’t have to be a Greek or Hebrew scholar to do a word study. Using your Bible and a concordance (online or from your library), conduct a study for the word *forgive*, using Matthew 18:21 as your base.

How many times does the word *forgive* occur in the New Testament?

How many times does the word *forgive* occur in the Old Testament?



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What are some synonyms for the word *forgive* found in the Bible?

What is the Greek word for *forgive*? Use an interlinear Bible to find out.

What are the ranges of meaning for *aphiemi*? (See Strong's concordance for assistance.)



#### Apply This to Your Life

You can do a thousand word studies on forgiveness and reconciliation, but studying God's Word without *doing* what it says is a fruitless and futile effort.

The Bible is a mirror. God wants you to look at yourself in light of the words of the Book in order to see yourself clearly.

When you read Jesus' words to His disciples in Matthew 5:23–24 and Matthew 18:21–35, what is revealed?



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**Is there anyone with whom you need to make things right?** If so, write the person's name below, and write a brief script of what you will say in the effort to reconcile.

**Is there anyone you need to forgive?** If so, write the person's name down below. Write a prayer to the Lord asking for help in this specific situation and the courage and grace to follow through.



#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord, you have forgiven me. You have set me free from the condemnation I well deserve. How great is Your mercy toward me! Freely I have received Your grace; I should give it freely too. Help me to follow Your Son's example when it comes to forgiveness and reconciliation.*

#### Endnote

1. Mark Berman, "‘I Forgive You.’ Relatives of Charleston Church Shooting Victims Address Dylann Roof," *The Washington Post*, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/19/i-forgive-you-relatives-of-charleston-church-victims-address-dylann-roof/?utm\\_term=.08189107a779](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/19/i-forgive-you-relatives-of-charleston-church-victims-address-dylann-roof/?utm_term=.08189107a779), accessed January 26, 2017.



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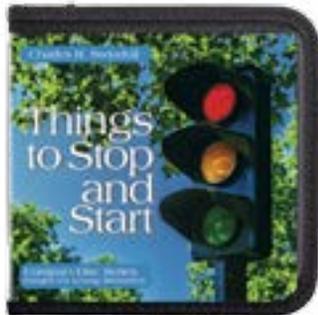
Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



### Tools for Digging Deeper



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



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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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