

# STRAIGHT TALK FOR SEMINARY STUDENTS

## STUDY THREE

### Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

*I think an attitude of gratitude is one of the most contagious of all attitudes we can sustain. Being around a person who is grateful and frequently uses those two marvelous words, “Thank you,” often is just good therapy.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**H**AVE you noticed the happiness of grateful people compared to the unappreciative? Gratitude and happiness seem to stick together, like two tight-stitched friends. Where we find one, we find the other. Those who speak the language of gratitude will regularly find happiness. But what can fuel our gratitude?

Let it be your connection with Christ, our closest of friends. Because of Him, we can speak with a grateful heart. “Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love?” asked the apostle Paul (Romans 8:35). Nope . . . *Nothing!* Jesus has secured us a future with Him after this vale of tears, and, no matter the calamities we face, Christ promises He is with us through it all. It’s that Spirit-driven, eternal union with Christ, which begins in the present, that empowers us to follow Paul’s otherwise impossible appeal, “Be thankful in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

In his sermon on 1 Thessalonians 5:12–18, Chuck Swindoll calls to our attention that imperative to be thankful. Chuck encourages all of us—particularly those in ministry—to sustain an attitude of gratitude. In doing so, you will see how, in fact, Jesus uses it to sustain you.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

1 Thessalonians 5:12–18



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before excavating the divine treasure that enriches our souls, take a moment to complete the list below, very specifically naming what you are most grateful for.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Next write a prayer asking our Father for the Spirit's aid during this study.

*At the risk of being simplistic in my analysis, I think a major reason for ingratitude is pride. Proud people don't say, "Thank you." They don't think, Thank you. Pride is, of course, filled with self, and when that is true, we hold back our thanks because we're so self-important.*  
—Chuck Swindoll



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Just after Paul, Silas, and Timothy brought the gospel to Thessalonica, the storm of persecution drove them out (Acts 17:1–10). However, the spiritual seed they had planted produced a church thriving in faith, hope, and love. Only months after fleeing, Timothy returned to Thessalonica, witnessed how the church had grown, and returned with a promising report to Paul and Silas in Corinth. This prompted them to write what we know as 1 Thessalonians.



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11, Paul detailed their new hope based on Christ's resurrection and His second coming. Paul then articulated in 1 Thessalonians 5:12–18 how this unshakable future transforms our present lives.<sup>1</sup>



### Observation: Rejoice Always

In light of the context mentioned above, observe *1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*. After slowly reading the passage multiple times in various translations, list your top observation from each verse below.

1 Thessalonians 5:12

1 Thessalonians 5:13

1 Thessalonians 5:14

1 Thessalonians 5:15

1 Thessalonians 5:16



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

1 Thessalonians 5:12–18

*“Rejoice always.” There’s the shortest verse. Shortest in all the Bible, but what a grand command. I want to be around people like that. I want to be around those who are finding joy in life in spite of their circumstances. —Chuck Swindoll*

1 Thessalonians 5:17

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Why rejoice? Paul gave us the answer in 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10:

*For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.*

All these commands flow from one radical event: in Jesus Christ, God came to rescue us, securing our deliverance from judgment and safeguarding our eternal joy.



### Interpretation: God’s Will for You

After we absorb what the text says, we then must interpret it. This gives us an understanding of the author’s intention, how the first readers would have understood the text, and the biblical truths which surpass the bounds of time.

For this portion, remember to consult your resources. Chuck recommends you add at least one resource to your library a month—like a commentary, atlas, or Bible dictionary. Also, you can access excellent free help at [NETBible.org](http://NETBible.org).



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

### Our Spiritual Leaders—1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

Why would Paul's commands in these verses remain vital for this new Thessalonian church's continued growth?

What did the Thessalonian church risk by not living peacefully and by not honoring their spiritual leaders?

Research and explain the three functions of the spiritual leaders mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

How might these verses have encouraged the spiritual leaders even though the verses were directed to the congregation?



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

What part would gratitude play in following the commands described in 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13?

*It is very easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements in comparison to what we owe others. —Chuck Swindoll*

### Our Fellow Believers—1 Thessalonians 5:14–15

Whom did Paul address in this section, and what three character traits did he emphasize?

Why did Paul add the fourth command, to be patient, after the first three commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:14?

According to verse 15, what must Christians avoid, and what must they pursue? Why?



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

How might gratitude fuel our obedience to the commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15?

### Our Saving Lord—1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Paul turned the church's attention from their relationship with each other to their relationship with God.

In what way are Paul's three commands related in this passage?

*Pray in that kind of consistency. Pray continually, constantly. Prayer on your heart. Prayer on your lips. Prayer for specific individuals. Specific needs. —Chuck Swindoll*

Distinguish between Paul's command to rejoice and his command to give thanks. How do these commands differ as they relate to Jesus, His works, and His provision?

Why would these commands be especially important for those in Christian leadership?



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1 Thessalonians 5:12–18



### Correlation: All These Things Will Be Added to You

Sometimes, our needs or concerns overshadow the good things God has given us, blinding us to the many reasons we have for thanking Him. Jesus understood how this plagued many, so He addressed this pervasive problem in our broken world through a teaching we call the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–7. As our Creator, He knows our needs before we ask them.

Take a moment to read and reflect upon [Matthew 6:25–34](#). Such a new way of thinking! So radically different from the punch-and-claw, fret-and-fear way of this world. How does this teaching from Jesus support our goal of maintaining an attitude of gratitude?

*Thank You, Lord, for Your sovereign control over our lives. All the details and every circumstance, thank You. Thank You that none of it is accidental, that all of it will work together for good. Thank You for Your holy character and for Your standard, in spite of our selfishness and sinfulness. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Living above Our Circumstances

The commands of 1 Thessalonians 5:12–18 need little exposition to understand the plain meaning and, therefore, the plain application. All serve as timeless principles to pursue from morning to evening, day to day. For this portion of our study, zero in on one principle from each of the three sections of our text and then specify how you will apply it.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

In what ways are you strong and in what ways are you weak in following these commands?



## **Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude**

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

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Pick one command you would like to grow in and record how you can specifically implement the principle week to week.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:14–15**

In what ways are you strong and in what ways are you weak in following these commands?

Pick one command you would like to grow in and record how you can specifically implement the principle week to week.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**

In what ways are you strong and in what ways are you weak in following these commands?



## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–18*

Pick one command you would like to grow in and record how you can specifically implement the principle week to week.

When we see the bigger picture of God’s plan for us through Jesus Christ, we can’t help but give thanks. God has given us so many blessings through Christ. Yet, they present only a foretaste of what we look forward to when He returns!



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your Word that shines in my life like a lamp in a dark room. It cleans my thoughts, restores my heart, and clarifies my purpose. Give me strength to live above my circumstances that I may give thanks in every situation. In the strong name of Jesus, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. See Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 3–10.

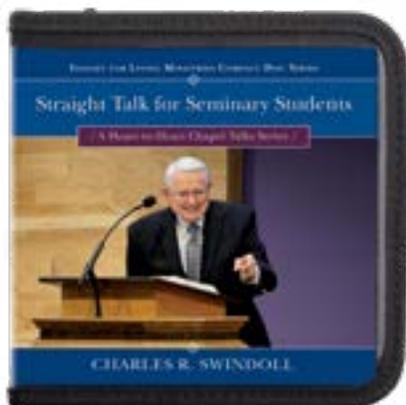


## Sustaining an Attitude of Gratitude

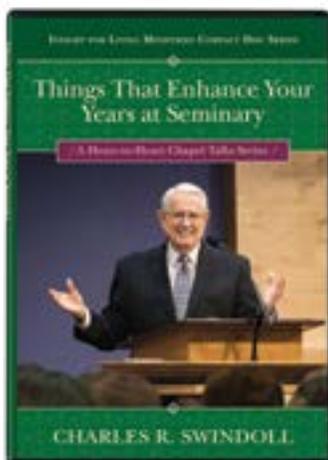
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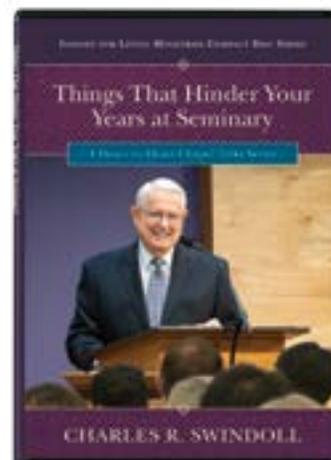
### Tools for Digging Deeper



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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.

