

# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Ministering Amidst the Crazies

#### 1 Timothy 4:1–6



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

We live in unusual times. Surrounded by a sea of cults, false doctrines, religious extremism, political polarization, and media madness, absolute truth seems like a lonely island—sparsely populated and uncharted on the cultural map. Of course where we find ourselves today should come as no surprise . . . at least not to those who’ve read their Bibles closely. Jesus and His apostles warned, more than two millennia ago, that the world would tumble down this rabbit hole, especially as the end of time draws near. Today, we live and minister amidst the *crazies*. And if you doubt it, just look around. This isn’t your father’s world anymore. So what are we to do? Bunch tightly in our holy huddles, hoping to keep the world at bay? Not on your life!



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Brief Review: The Role of the Church

Paul ended 1 Timothy 3 with a concise statement about the purpose of his letter and the purpose of Christ’s church (1 Timothy 3:14–16). Paul began chapter 4 with a strong contrast to the truth the church was to preach.



### Quotable

*It should come as  
no surprise that  
the crazy world  
in which we live  
is exactly on  
schedule with  
God’s timetable.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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#### *1 Timothy 4:1–6*

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#### 2. The “Later Times”: An Analysis of Apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1–6)

Ministry would be so much easier if everyone conducted themselves appropriately within God’s household (1 Timothy 3:15), adhering to the godliness modeled by Christ (3:16). But people—even church people—are nothing if they’re not consistently fickle and selfish. Since the beginning, lies have cropped up, threatening to choke off the truth. It happened in the garden of Eden and in the church at Ephesus, and it is happening in our churches today. These are times of hypocrisy, lies, and apostasy.

A Known Fact (4:1)

A Vivid Description (4:1–3)

A Direct Answer (4:3–5)



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#### *1 Timothy 4:1–6*

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### LET'S LIVE IT

It'd be great to think we live in an age of faithfulness, but we don't. We live in an age of apostasy, as did Paul and Timothy . . . and as will all Christians until Christ returns for His church. Until that day, however, there are a few lessons to learn and take to heart.

*The constant threat of apostasy is a constant reminder that we live in the last days.*

*Satan is the source of all lies.*

*Satan has his spokesmen, just as God has His.*

*A sign of maturity is enjoying God's provisions, not rejecting them.*

*A good, nourishing ministry is one that exposes heresy.*

How do you detect false teaching, according to Acts 17:11?



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#### 1 Timothy 4:1–6

## FIRST TIMOTHY

Greeting (1:1–2)	<b>Personal Encouragement and Exhortation</b>	<b>The Ministry</b>	<b>The Minister</b>	Conclusion (6:21)
	<u>Timothy’s task</u> <u>Paul’s testimony</u> <u>Gospel’s trustworthiness</u>	Men and women (2) (Prayer and submission)  Elders and deacons (3) (Qualifications for leadership)	<b>Seeing the importance of (4):</b> <u>Faithful teaching</u> <u>True godliness</u> <u>Sound doctrine</u> <u>Perseverance</u>  <b>Paying attention to (5):</b> <u>Various age groups</u> <u>Elders</u> <u>Widows</u> <u>Wisdom</u>  <b>Developing a new perspective toward (6):</b> <u>Masters and slaves</u> <u>Internals and externals</u> <u>Rich and poor</u> <u>Eternal vs. temporal</u>	
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTERS 2–3	CHAPTERS 4–6	
<b>Emphasis</b>	The work of ministry		The one who ministers	
<b>Command</b>	Be true!	Be wise!	Be strong and faithful!	
<b>Theme</b>	Leadership of the church, the household of God			
<b>Key Verses</b>	3:14–15			
<b>Christ in 1 Timothy</b>	Jesus is the Mediator between God and people, the ransom for all, who came in the flesh and was taken up in glory (2:5–6; 3:16).			

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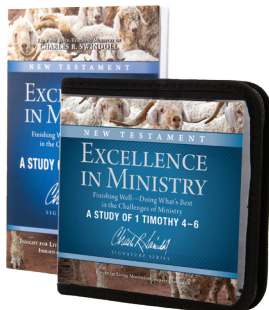
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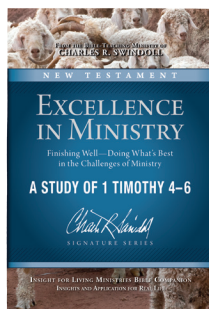
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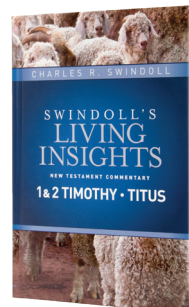
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### The Dos and Don’ts of Ministry

#### 1 Timothy 4:6–16



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Let’s see a show of hands. Who in their professional lives wants to be unsuccessful? No one, right? Most professions have a set of procedures—a list of dos and don’ts—that, if followed, promote success. Ministry is no different. Beginning in 1 Timothy 4:6 and continuing through the rest of the letter, Paul turns our attention to the one who seeks to be “a good servant of Christ Jesus,” namely, the minister. Paul starts off by outlining a list of dos and don’ts for effective ministry, focusing first on the pastor’s personal ministry (1 Timothy 4:7–11) and then on the pastor’s public ministry (4:12–16).



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A Major Goal of All Ministry (1 Timothy 4:6)

No church makes it a goal to inflict spiritual frostbite on its people. But many do so unwittingly by the pastors they choose. Some want a man they can intimidate, manipulate, and control—a virtual slave to the congregation’s whims and wants. Others want a celebrity—one who can wow a crowd and attract media attention. But neither is what God looks for in a pastor. God wants a heart ablaze for Him.

#### 2. Guidelines to Follow in Pursuing the Goal (1 Timothy 4:7–16)

Like a hot bowl of soup on a cold winter’s day, so a constant diet of God’s Word served from an authentic, engaged, and growing pastor will help all of us meet the goal of being good servants of Christ. But what distinguishes a good servant? Paul provided a list of dos and don’ts—positive and negative commands—that will keep the spiritual fires burning.



### Quotable

*There’s no more effective style of preaching than exposition—proclaiming and explaining the Scriptures.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### The Dos and Don’ts of Ministry

#### 1 Timothy 4:6–16



#### GETTING TO THE ROOT

*Godliness: Awe—Then Action!*

Professor Howard Hendricks shocked a class of young seminarians with this statement attributed to Robert Murray M’Cheyne: “My people’s greatest need is my personal holiness.”<sup>1</sup> Few, if any, of those sitting in class that day had ever thought their personal godliness was so important to the needs of their future congregations. If surveyed, the students would have indicated that the faithful preaching of God’s Word was a congregation’s greatest need. What those students didn’t know then—and what many pastors don’t know now—is that few things sour the spiritual stomach more than a biblical meal served with the dirty hands of deceit, by one covered in the stench of sin.

When Paul told Timothy to exercise himself for “godliness,” he used the word *eusebeia*, which means “reverence, respect, piety toward God.”<sup>2</sup> The term occurs fifteen times in the New Testament, thirteen in the Pastoral Letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and a whopping nine times in 1 Timothy alone (2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11). Because the Pastoral Letters are the last written by Paul, his call to godliness is hot with urgency.

*Godliness*, however, is not a stained glass word for worship. It doesn’t describe serene expressions, bowed heads, or folded hands. It’s not a word for the monastery or nunnery. *Godliness* is alive and active. It marches out into the world and shines the light of faith. It’s the Isaiah-like obedience of a man awestruck by the person and presence of God, rising to his feet and saying, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). It is “Awe—then action!”<sup>3</sup> Only the God-struck doers of the Word are rightfully called godly.



#### LET’S LIVE IT

Paul’s dos and don’ts provide a practical checklist for effective ministry. But five lasting lessons are worth remembering as we close out this message.

First, *there’s no higher goal in ministry than servanthood.*

Second, *there’s no greater temptation in ministry than extremism.*



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### The Dos and Don’ts of Ministry

#### *1 Timothy 4:6–16*

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Third, *there’s no more important responsibility in ministry than the public reading and explanation of Scripture, followed by application and exhortation.*

Fourth, *there’s no more effective means of spiritual leadership than a growing minister.*

Fifth, *there’s no better proof of an authentic ministry than perseverance.*

What did Paul command Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 2:1–5? Why?

What would Paul’s command to Timothy look like in your life or ministry?

#### ENDNOTES

1. Howard G. Hendricks, “Teaching Objectives,” in class Dynamics of Leadership (lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Sept. 7, 1989).
2. Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in Wuest’s *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 70.
3. R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 105.



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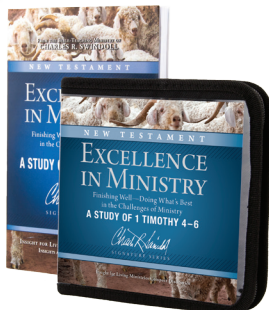
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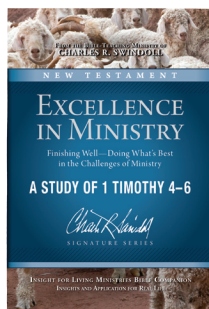
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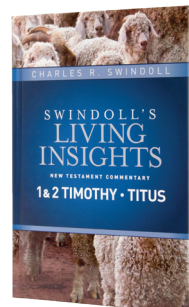
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Respecting and Rebuking the Saints

*1 Timothy 5:1–2, 17–20*



#### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Paul made clear the purpose of his first letter to Timothy: “So that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15). We’ve noted that ministry would be easier if everyone in the congregation pursued godliness. But it doesn’t work that way. Some do, and some don’t. Those who do, deserve our respect. And those who don’t, deserve a rebuke. But how should the church go about respecting and rebuking the saints? What is appropriate and what isn’t? Thank God He gave us 1 Timothy to answer these questions and serve as our guide.



#### LET’S DIG DEEPER

##### 1. Generally, a Glance at 1 Timothy 5

If it’s true, as some say, that all politics is local, it’s equally true that all ministry is intimate. And chapter 5 of 1 Timothy is all about the intimacy of ministry—of the roles and relationships the minister has with the people who make up the church.



#### Quotable

*Those who can’t  
deal with difficult  
people will find  
ministry miserable.  
Those who succeed  
at it will find  
ministry delightful.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Respecting and Rebuking the Saints

#### *1 Timothy 5:1–2, 17–20*

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#### 2. Specifically, Care and Concern for Certain Ones (1 Timothy 5:1–2, 17–20)

The church isn’t a collection of unrelated strangers; it’s a family. Paul called it “the household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15). And in chapter 5, he spoke of believers using familial terms: *fathers* and *brothers*, *mothers* and *sisters*, and *widows*. As members of the kin of Christ who are adopted into God’s household, Christians should treat each other as family, not as strangers. .

The Older Men and Younger Men (5:1)

The Older Women and Younger Women (5:2)

The Elders Who Rule Well (5:17–18)

The Elders Who Receive an Accusation (5:19–20)



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### Respecting and Rebuking the Saints

*1 Timothy 5:1–2, 17–20*

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#### LET’S LIVE IT

Respect is much easier to give than rebuke. And while no one enjoys hard conversations, if we spend enough time in church, we’re bound to have a few. When those times come, what should we keep in mind? Here are a few practical guidelines to remember.

*Even if others fall into sin, we have no right to bully or despise them.*

*There’s a place in the church for personal rebuke and discipline when it’s done scripturally.*

*The most severe judgment is self-judgment.*

Read Matthew 18:15–17. What steps did Jesus outline for rebuking and restoring a sinning brother or sister? (Note: there are five “steps” set off by the conditional word “if.”)

How did Paul prescribe the restoration of one caught in sin, according to Galatians 6:1?



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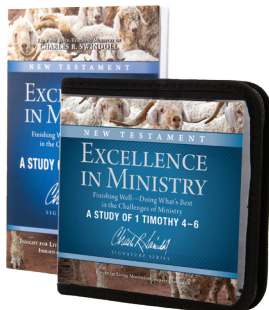
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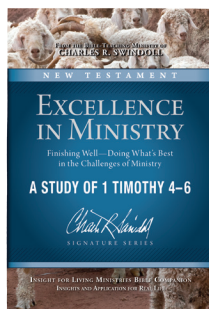
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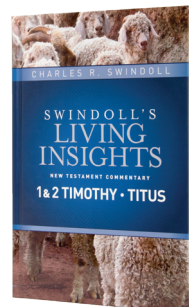
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### What About Widows?

#### 1 Timothy 5:3–16



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

For the individual follower of Christ, the single most practical book in the Bible is probably James. For the church, it’s got to be 1 Timothy. And as we’ve seen throughout our study, Paul has practically left no proverbial stone unturned, addressing a wide variety of issues confronting the church. We’ve also seen that these issues are just as relevant in the twenty-first century as they were in the first century. But just when we think Paul has exhausted all important topics, he comes up with one more—how the church ought to treat widows (1 Timothy 5:3–16). What he said might surprise us.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Observations Regarding Widows

Paul never mentioned it, but underlying his instructions about widows are two important biblical themes. One recalls the fifth commandment to the children of Israel—honor your fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16), and the second recalls the example of how God “executes justice for . . . the widow” (Deuteronomy 10:18). As Paul would tell Timothy, in some cases families must cease shirking their responsibilities, and in others the church must step up its care to those who are “widows indeed” (1 Timothy 5:3).



### Quotable

*There will always be more needs than a local church can meet. Every good opportunity is not a call from God.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### What About Widows?

#### 1 Timothy 5:3–16



#### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

##### *A Brief Biblical History on Widows*

In the ancient warrior culture of Sparta, only two groups were awarded marked graves: soldiers who died in battle and mothers who died giving birth to sons. Spartan women were esteemed like goddesses only because of their ability to bear sons. Similar to other ancient cultures, women were defined by their relationship to men—fathers, husbands, and sons. Single women, widows, and the childless were second-class citizens.

This is not the view presented in the Bible in which women are valued for who they are, period. In fact, those without husbands or children are deemed worthy of special devotion, honor, and care. In the Old Testament, God described Himself as “a judge for the widows” (Psalm 68:5). And anyone who took advantage of widows received God’s wrath (Isaiah 1:23; Jeremiah 7:6–7; 22:3–6; Zechariah 7:8–12; Malachi 3:5), including His own people (Exodus 22:22–24). In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled God’s commands by showing compassion on the widow of Nain, raising her son from the dead (Luke 7:11–15). He commended both the persistent widow who badgered the unjust judge (18:1–8) and the widow who gave her all to God (Mark 12:38–44). And on the cross, He cared for His widowed mother by placing her under the protection of John (John 19:26–27).

The early church learned the lesson from the Old Testament and Jesus’ example. The Jerusalem church cared for the widows in their midst, even assigning seven godly men to that specific ministry (Acts 6:1–3). From there, the practice of caring for widows spread with the spread of the gospel.

## 2. Responsibilities to Widows (1 Timothy 5:3–16)

By the time Paul wrote to Timothy in AD 63, the custom of caring for widows was being abused. The abuse wasn’t perpetrated *against* widows; it was perpetrated *by* widows and widows’ families. Every widow in the Ephesian church was being supported by the congregation, and that placed a heavy burden on the ministry. In 1 Timothy 5:3–16, Paul prescribed a policy on how to correct this abusive situation.



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### What About Widows? *1 Timothy 5:3–16*

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#### LET’S LIVE IT

When it comes to caring for widows, it’s easy to be pulled by emotions into unwise decisions. That’s why Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 5:3–16 are so helpful. And so are these practical reminders:

*Caring for one’s dependent parents is a serious, scriptural responsibility.*

*Grief doesn’t always result in godliness.*

*The church is never expected to support everyone in need.*

*A full, busy life is much safer than an idle one.*

**In light of this study, what is your opinion about placing elderly widows in nursing or retirement homes?**

**Single mothers are, in a way, “widows.” What is the church’s responsibility to them, and what ministries does your church provide?**



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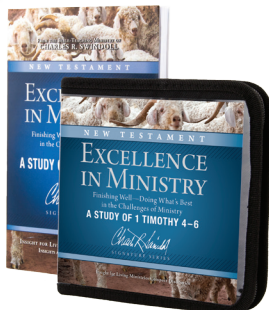
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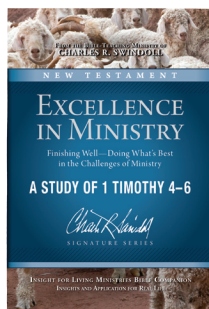
### What About Widows? *1 Timothy 5:3–16*



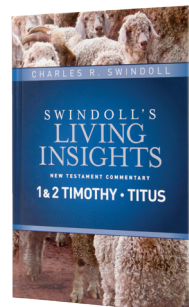
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Prescription for Pastoral Health

#### 1 Timothy 5:21–25



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Like a chronic illness, a persistent falsehood often lingers in the minds of believers and unbelievers alike: God is a cosmic killjoy, and the Bible is His ruler to whack anyone having a good time. It’s a lie, of course. God is the giver of abundant life (John 10:10), and His Word enables us to live fulfilling lives. It’s true that the Bible is filled with thou shalts and thou shalt nots, which serve as a sort of preventative checkup. But it’s also a book of “hints” rather than commands, kind of like when our mothers tell us when we have a cold to get plenty of rest and to eat our chicken noodle soup. Our doctors and mothers are necessary, but life is happier with chicken noodle soup . . . and in heeding Paul’s hints found in the last five verses of 1 Timothy 5.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Categories Found in the Letter of 1 Timothy

Paul wasn’t one to beat around the bush when there was something specific Timothy needed to do. As we have seen in this study, his first letter to Timothy includes some clear prescriptions, black-and-white instructions on the duty of pastors (1 Timothy 1:3–20), the priority of prayer (2:1–8), the role of women (2:9–15), the qualifications for elders and deacons (3:1–13), the why of ministry (3:14–16), how to spot false teaching (4:1–5), the need for godliness (4:6–10), the importance of public proclamation (4:11–16), how to respect and reprimand members and leaders (5:1–2, 17–20), and how to treat widows (5:3–16). In 1 Timothy 6, Paul addressed issues concerning slaves and masters (6:1–2), doctrine, godliness, and contentment (6:3–8), money (6:9–10, 17), and how to press on in the faith (6:11–16, 18–21). Because Paul loved Timothy, he was adamant about these black and white instructions. But he also left room for Timothy to make his own decisions, offering what we might call some good advice.

#### 2. Warnings Found in Chapter Five of 1 Timothy

Narrowing our focus to 1 Timothy 5:1–20, we discover even more starkly contrasting commands about older and younger men and women, widows, and elders.



### Quotable

*There is  
hope because  
change and  
recovery are  
always possible  
with God.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Prescription for Pastoral Health

#### *1 Timothy 5:21–25*

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### 3. Guidance for Gray Areas

Notwithstanding all the black-and-white commands found in 1 Timothy, Paul moved into some gray areas, some “good advice” areas in verses 21–25 of chapter 5. Within the context of how to treat elders “who rule well” and elders under accusation (1 Timothy 5:17–20), Paul mentioned five concerns and prescribed the necessary character traits to deal with them. He addressed a practical matter calling for objectivity, an ecclesiastical matter calling for discernment, a personal matter calling for sensitivity, a physical matter calling for self-control, and a spiritual matter calling for shrewdness.

*A Practical Matter*

*An Ecclesiastical Matter*

*A Personal Matter*

*A Physical Matter*



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Prescription for Pastoral Health

#### 1 Timothy 5:21–25



#### A CLOSER LOOK

##### *Dirty Water, Prohibition, and the Bible*

Water is life. It is also death. For much of human history, whether because of humanity’s ignorance or inability to dispose of and treat sewage, or because of animal dung and rotting corpses in rivers and streams, waterborne pathogens such as cholera, dysentery, and malaria resulted in epidemics and mass deaths. The city of Ephesus, where Timothy lived and ministered, boasted a freshwater delivery and sewage removal system complete with aqueducts and terracotta pipes for distribution and disposal at sea. But, even with such sophisticated systems, water in ancient days was often infected with disease.

Because pure drinking water was often unavailable, beer and wine have long been staples of the human diet, including that of Jews and Christians. Wine was used during times of worship, festivals, and celebrations (Numbers 15:10; Luke 22:14–20; John 2:1–11) but was also part of Jewish daily life (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 10:19). Early Christian monks brewed beer and fermented wine. Martin Luther is recorded to have consumed a gallon of beer a day. And the Pilgrims came to America with kegs of beer.

It wasn’t until modern times, when water became safe to drink in industrialized countries, that Christians, for theological reasons, began to abstain from drinking beer and wine. Some people claim the Bible outlaws the drinking of alcohol and that wine referred to in the Bible was unfermented grape juice. What some people fail to realize or recognize is that biblical wine wasn’t grape juice. According to respected Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest, “wine” as referenced in 1 Timothy 5:23, “as everywhere else, means *wine, fermented, and capable of intoxicating*, and not a sweet syrup made by boiling down grape-juice.”<sup>1</sup>

If true (and it is), how could the Bible prohibit the drinking of wine? It doesn’t. It prohibits drunkenness and promotes discipline (Deuteronomy 21:20–21; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:16–19, 21; Ephesians 5:18). And while there are good reasons not to drink—personal moral objections, past and present struggles with alcohol, and care for weaker Christians’ spiritual development (Romans 14:1–18; 1 Corinthians 8:7–13)—Christians are free to drink alcohol in moderation. But we must always do so under the watchwords of *grace, discretion, and self-control*.



# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Prescription for Pastoral Health

#### 1 Timothy 5:21–25

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### LET’S LIVE IT

Thankfully, we’re not left alone in the gray areas of life. The Lord is there dispensing objectivity, discernment, sensitivity, self-control, and shrewdness, and promising to make all things right when we err. This gives Christians tremendous hope for a bright future, on earth and in heaven.

*We have unseen and intangible hope because heavenly witnesses care for us.*

*We have tangible and earthly hope for recovery and change.*

*We have personal hope that the diseased and disabled will find healing.*

*We have a spiritual and relational hope that God is at work even when we err.*

**How might the fact that the Father, Son, and holy angels are watching give you hope?**

#### ENDNOTE

1. Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 88.



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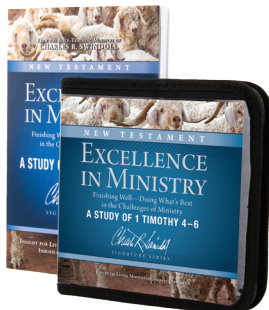
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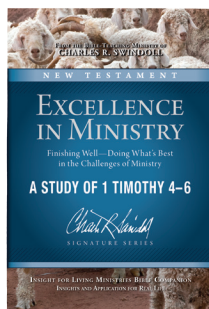
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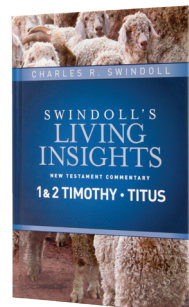
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Responding Correctly to Authority

#### 1 Timothy 6:1–6



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Few issues are more practical—and sometimes painful—than learning how to submit to authority. Children struggle to submit to parents. Students struggle to submit to teachers. Employees struggle to submit to employers. Citizens struggle to submit to laws. And congregations struggle to submit to pastors and elders. Submitting to authority was just as difficult in the first century as it is in the twenty-first century. So, let’s hear and heed Paul’s teaching on how to respond correctly to authority.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Let’s Admit It

Because everyone is under some kind of authority—and all of us are under the authority of God—we might as well come to grips with and admit some essential truths.

First, *submitting to authority isn’t natural.*

Second, *struggles with authority are complex and not easily solved.*

Third, *some in authority haven’t earned our respect.*

Fourth, *resistance against authority isn’t always wrong.*



### Quotable

*Submitting to authority isn’t natural for us as sinners. We prefer rebellion. But thankfully, God can change our hearts.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Responding Correctly to Authority

#### 1 Timothy 6:1–6



#### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

##### *Does the Bible Condone Slavery?*

Passages like 1 Timothy 6:1–2 are uncomfortable, partly because of the history of slavery in the West and partly because slavery continues today in many parts of the world. We want the Bible to demand, “Masters, free your slaves!” But it doesn’t. Paul *hinted* that Philemon should emancipate Onesimus (Philemon 10–17)—that’s all. And to believing slaves in Corinth, Paul said if they could obtain their freedom they should, but if they couldn’t, they shouldn’t fret over it (1 Corinthians 7:21–24).

Paul’s preaching emphasized freedom, grace, and equality in Christ, yet he never came right out and decried slavery. He believed slave trading was sin (1 Timothy 1:10 NIV), and by implication so was slavery itself. But Paul was no abolitionist. He wasn’t a social reformer or a cultural crusader. He believed the gospel of Jesus would lead to transformed lives and that transformed lives would lead to transformed civilizations. This formula proved true. In time, Christian societies rejected slavery, but in the first century, the practice was still rampant.

The truth is, slavery in Bible times was an acceptable, though never ideal, way to order society. First-century slavery, as well, differed *significantly* from our modern-day perspective. Under Roman law, masters did have complete control over the lives of their slaves, but most slave owners were not cruel. Besides the fact that slaves were expensive to purchase and keep, they also possessed most of the legal rights of a free citizen. Slaves in the Roman Empire had access to money, could marry and rear a family, and were tried in court according to the same laws as free men. And they often had better accommodations, food, and clothing than some free men.

Nevertheless, God’s character never changes. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, He reveals Himself as a God of justice (Amos 5:23–24). He never approves of oppression and violence against the vulnerable but instead rescues victims and punishes perpetrators (Psalm 72:4–14). We can be confident that He cares deeply about the spiritual and physical well-being of all people, regardless of their position in society. In His eyes “there is no distinction between . . . slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11).



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What's Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Responding Correctly to Authority

#### *1 Timothy 6:1–6*

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#### 2. Let's Hear It (1 Timothy 6:1–6)

In 1 Timothy 6, Paul addressed three areas of authority that impact all our lives: submitting to non-Christians (6:1), submitting to Christians (6:2), and submitting to the Word of God (6:3–6). And as difficult as Paul's instructions may be, hear and heed them we must.

*Submitting When the Authority Is a Non-Christian*

*Submitting When the Authority Is a Christian*

*Submitting When the Authority Is God's Truth*



#### LET'S LIVE IT

All of us must give an account to someone. Not one of us is exempt from that simple truth. We must pay our taxes, obey traffic laws, and do our duty before the court. If we choose to resist civil authorities we must be willing to pay the price. But few of us find it difficult, if joyless, to submit in these areas. The real challenge of submission comes in day-to-day life lived out at our places of employment. We've heard Paul's commands; now it's time to heed them.



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## Finishing Well—Doing What's Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Responding Correctly to Authority

#### *1 Timothy 6:1–6*

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*If you work for a non-Christian, leave no reason for him or her to question your faith.*

*If you work for a Christian, refuse to take unfair advantage of your faith relationship.*

*Regardless of whom you work for or supervise, apply Scripture more than discuss Scripture.*

How can you work for your non-Christian boss so that your faith is never questioned? What Scripture can you think of to support your answer?

How can you work for your Christian boss or supervise your Christian employee so that you don't take advantage of him or her? What Scripture can you think of to support your answer?



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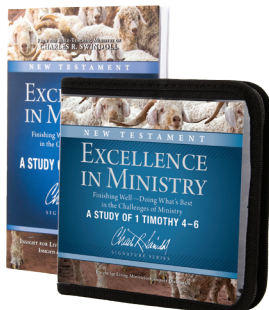
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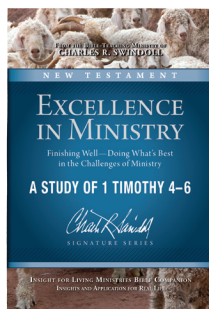
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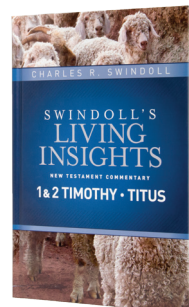
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

Contentment . . . and How to Miss It  
*1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19*



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Contentment is a commodity so valuable because it’s so rare. Few doubt it’s the secret to happiness, but most find it elusive. It doesn’t rain down like pennies from heaven. And as we’ll discover in this message, all the pennies in heaven and earth can’t buy it. In fact, money might be the very hindrance to contentment, though it need not be. If a pot of gold is found at the end of a rainbow, contentment is only found there if you bring it with you. And that’s the trick—to possess it, regardless of your possessions. To find contentment, let’s take into account some of Paul’s warnings on how we might *miss* contentment.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Contentment Analyzed

Contentment is often confused with complacency, but these aren’t the same concepts. Complacency is a self-satisfaction that settles for mediocrity. Contentment, for the Christian at least, is Christ-satisfaction that strives for excellence. One congratulates self-sufficiency; the other appreciates God’s sufficiency.

*The Meaning of Contentment*



### Quotable

*We miss  
contentment if  
something other  
than food, clothing,  
and shelter becomes  
essential to our  
physical lives.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Contentment . . . and How to Miss It

#### 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

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#### GETTING TO THE ROOT

##### *Contentment: Christ-Sufficiency, not Self-Sufficiency*

*Contentment* is a curious word. It comes from the Greek *autarkeia*, and according to Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest, “it speaks of an inward self-sufficiency as opposed to the lack or the desire of outward things.”<sup>1</sup> It was a favorite word of the Stoic philosophers, because it expresses the pinnacle of their philosophy—that man is sufficient in himself for all things and can, by himself, resist the push and pull of outward circumstances. But in the hands of Paul, especially in the context of 1 Timothy 6:6–10, *autarkeia* represents “the possession of a godly piety [that] makes a person independent of outward circumstances . . . enabling him to maintain a spiritual equilibrium in the midst of both favorable circumstances and those which are adverse.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, contentment in the Christian life is defined by Christ-sufficiency, not self-sufficiency.

#### *The Benefits of Contentment*

## 2. Contentment Amplified (1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19)

As we turn to Paul’s instructions on living contented lives, remember that the context centers on false teachers who believed ministry was a means of financial gain (1 Timothy 6:5). Therefore, Paul’s immediate focus in verses 6–10 has to do with people in the ministry. He broadens his consideration in verses 17–19 to include all believers, especially the rich. Out of these two general concerns arise four specific themes: contentment and godliness (6:6), contentment and possessions (6:7–8), contentment and riches (6:9–10, 17), and contentment and character (6:18–19).

#### *Contentment and Godliness*



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Contentment . . . and How to Miss It

#### *1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19*

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*Contentment and Possessions*

*Contentment and Riches*

*Contentment and Character*



### LET’S LIVE IT

Contentment is the key to happiness. We all agree on that. We just don’t want to go through what we have to go through to get it. We’d prefer to be born with contentment, but we’re not. We have to *learn* it. That’s what Paul said. He “learned to be content in whatever circumstances” (Philippians 4:11), and he “learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need” (4:12). Learning is hard. And many refuse to put forth the effort. So for those who want to continue in their unhappy state, here are three surefire ways to *miss* contentment.

First, *you’ll miss contentment if something other than food, clothing, and shelter becomes essential.*



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## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Contentment . . . and How to Miss It

#### *1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19*

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Second, you’ll miss contentment if having more money than you currently have consumes your thoughts.

Third, you’ll miss contentment if keeping money rather than releasing money becomes your goal in life.

What is your honest opinion of how much money you earn?

What are some of your hopes and goals for your financial future?

Brainstorm several specific ways you can guard against missing the joy of contentment as you pursue your goals.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 94.
2. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2, 94.



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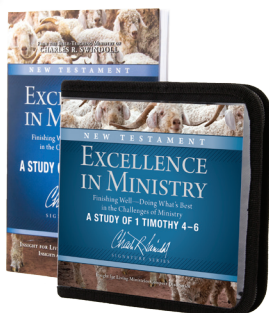
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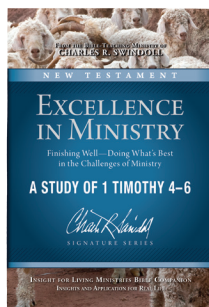
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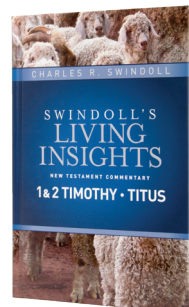
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MM07



# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Clear Commandments of Godliness

#### 1 Timothy 6:11–16



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Some pastors pray, either before or after their sermons, that their congregations would have ears to hear and eyes to see the truth in God’s Word, adding that their hands be diligent in good works and their feet swift in obedience. It’s not necessarily glamorous or exciting, but living the Christian life really does come down to one word: *obedience*. It can be difficult to follow God’s clear commands. However, obedience doesn’t have to involve a grin-and-bear-it kind of attitude, not if we keep in mind that obedience is always for our good and God’s glory.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Some Things to Remember About Commandments

Scripture is filled with principles and precepts—general guidelines and specific commands. We see both in Paul’s first letter to Timothy. But as Paul closed out his letter, he became more pointed and personal, issuing specific commands to Timothy.

*Commands are brief, simple, and clear.*

*Commands are for our good and God’s glory.*



### Quotable

*God’s commands  
are always  
for our good  
and His glory.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Clear Commandments of Godliness

#### *1 Timothy 6:11–16*

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*Commands call for one response: obedience.*

*Commands come with a price: disobedience demands consequences.*

## 2. Some Commandments Regarding Ministry (1 Timothy 6:11–16)

In 1 Timothy 6:11–16, Paul contrasted Timothy’s way of life and ministry with that of the false teachers, commanding him to flee, follow, fight, and fasten onto eternal life (1 Timothy 6:11–12). Paul also charged Timothy to keep without “stain or reproach” the commandment entrusted to Timothy’s care (6:14).

*What to Flee (6:11)*



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*1 Timothy 6:11–16*

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*What to Pursue (6:11–12)*

*How to Obey (6:13–16)*

*Why Obey (6:16)*



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Clear Commandments of Godliness

#### 1 Timothy 6:11–16



### LET’S LIVE IT

The New Testament contains fewer commands than does the Old Testament, so when we come across them, we should pay particular attention. The six verses we’ve studied in this message contain four commands, all requiring direct obedience. But if we really want what’s best for us and to glorify God in our obedience, we must also maintain the following attitudes:

1. *Unswerving devotion* to an authentic Christian life (1 Timothy 6:11)
2. *Disciplined determination* to keep our Christian life fresh and relevant (6:12)
3. *Absolute purity* in our personal and public lives (6:13–14)
4. *True humility* before the sovereign King and Lord of the universe (6:15–16)

Being honest at this moment, take a spiritual snapshot of your attitude. Place an “X” in the box that best describes you right now.

	Yes!		Maybe		No!
Unswerving Devotion					
Disciplined Determination					
Absolute Purity					
True Humility					

Which attitude(s) did you mark toward the “Maybe” and “No!” side? What can you do to change your attitude so it becomes more like “Yes!”?



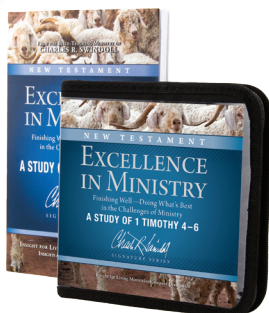
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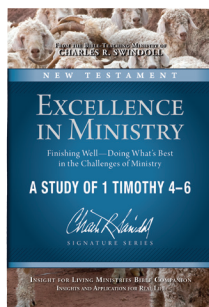
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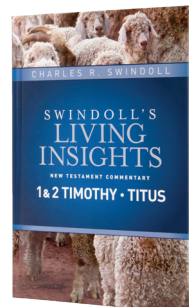
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Treasure Worth Guarding

#### 1 Timothy 6:20–21



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

On more than one occasion, Paul admonished Timothy to stand sentry at the strongbox of the faith, to defend the treasure vouchsafed to him (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14). Timothy was to guard the gospel with his life. But he didn’t stand this post alone; Paul and the apostles stood with him—as do all Christians who protect the truth of God’s Word, from the first century to the twenty-first century. In fact, everyone who ministers, whether as a vocation or as a volunteer, is commanded to “guard what has been entrusted” (1 Timothy 6:20); it’s an essential part of ministry.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. A General Overview of the Undertone

If we read all six chapters of 1 Timothy in one uninterrupted sitting, we’ll hear the letter’s unmistakable tone of urgency. False teachers—those “advocates [of] a different doctrine,” “doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1; 6:3)—had infiltrated the church at Ephesus. And Paul, as though ringing a warning bell, urged Timothy, time and again, to weed them out, root and all.



### Quotable

*In every generation  
the battle for  
truth wages on.  
Let’s remain in  
the right corner.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### A Treasure Worth Guarding

#### *1 Timothy 6:20–21*

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#### 2. A Calm Appraisal of Intense Imperatives (1 Timothy 6:20–21)

Paul usually closed his letters with a personal greeting, bearing a tone of cheerfulness. Not so in 1 Timothy. From beginning to end, Paul urged his young protégé to keep first things first—to treat the essentials as all important and the extraneous as unimportant. And as long as false teachers lurked in the corridors of the church, Timothy was to keep an ever watchful eye on the treasure entrusted to him.

*Examining the Entrusted Treasure*

*Analyzing the Defensive Position*



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What's Best in the Challenges of Ministry

A Treasure Worth Guarding  
*1 Timothy 6:20–21*

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### LET'S LIVE IT

If Christians are to take seriously the command to guard the faith, then we need to keep the essentials essential and the nonessentials nonessential. That requires wisdom. We also need to speak the truth but in love. That requires grace. To help maintain a balanced approach, we should keep three things in mind.

First, *our message is fixed and inflexible, not our methods.*

Second, *our mandate is to defend, not offend.*

Third, *our manner is to be loving, not proving.*

Have you been in churches or in discussions with others where the inflexibility of the message and the flexibility of the method became reversed? Have you ever personally gotten the two mixed up? If yes, what was the result?

When you speak with others about the gospel or the faith in general, how do they react?



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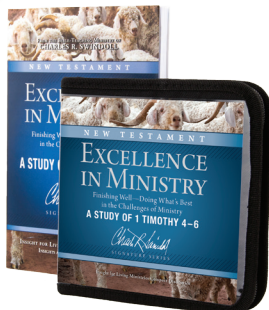
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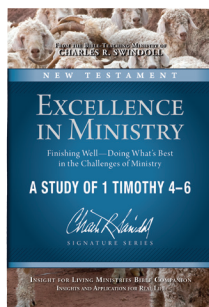
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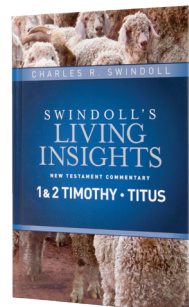
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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

Let’s Evaluate Your Ministry  
*A Review of 1 Timothy*



### LET’S BEGIN HERE

Ask any student getting ready to take a final exam how he or she feels, and you’ll likely get a contradictory answer. The student will be filled with trepidation because the test will reveal his or her knowledge (or ignorance) but also with elation because it’s the last test of the course. What is standard procedure in education and business—the evaluation of students and employees— isn’t necessarily standard procedure in ministry. Churches too often shirk the responsibility of evaluating how their ministries are doing. They shouldn’t. Because churches are populated and pastored by imperfect people, we should stop every once in a while to administer an examination against the standard of God’s Word. As we close our study of 1 Timothy, let’s do that—let’s evaluate your ministry.



### LET’S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Briefly, Let’s Think About Evaluation

Because our pastors and people aren’t perfect, our churches aren’t perfect. And because our churches aren’t perfect, our ministries aren’t perfect. That’s why we need to evaluate our ministries and our churches against what is perfect: God’s Word.



### Quotable

*To enter into  
leadership in  
ministry is to dive  
in to a goldfish  
bowl. Be an  
authentic model  
of Christ. People  
are watching.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What's Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Let's Evaluate Your Ministry

#### *A Review of 1 Timothy*

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### 2. Honestly, Let's Take an Examination

Those most resistant to change sometimes use the excuse that the past is obvious, the future is obscure. They may wonder, *Who's to say the examination is really objective or the prescription to change is best?* It's a fair question. That's why any evaluation of a ministry or church doesn't rest on common sense, congregational complaints, or human wisdom. Rather, an objective examination of a ministry or church depends on divine wisdom to discover God's standard revealed in His Word. Based on each chapter of the letter of 1 Timothy, every ministry or church must keep six principles primary. Though this isn't an exhaustive measure of evaluation, it is an extensive one, and if applied, it will transform a ministry or church.

*Principle One: A Ministry Must Maintain Balance*

*Principle Two: A Ministry Must Emphasize Prayer*

*Principle Three: A Ministry Must Have Qualified Leadership*



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Let's Evaluate Your Ministry  
*A Review of 1 Timothy*

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*Principle Four: A Ministry Must Reflect Excellence*

*Principle Five: A Ministry Must Meet Needs*

*Principle Six: A Ministry Must Maintain Purity*



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# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

### Let’s Evaluate Your Ministry

#### *A Review of 1 Timothy*

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### LET’S LIVE IT

Any ministry or church claiming the name of Christ must pause every once in a while and evaluate how things are going. The six principles found in 1 Timothy provide a good measuring stick. We can sum up these principles in three statements: *look up*—allow God and His Word to set our agenda (1 Timothy 1–2); *look within*—be committed to quality (3–4); *look around*—get serious about relationships (5–6).

**A ministry that squares with Scripture requires consistent scriptural input. How much of your ministry or church’s strategy comes from the Bible?**

**A ministry that remains on target requires strong, internal integrity. How often does your ministry or church perform quality-control evaluations? How often do you praise or reward integrity when you see it?**

**A ministry that earns the respect of others requires great personal attention. How would you evaluate the head/heart balance in your ministry or church?**



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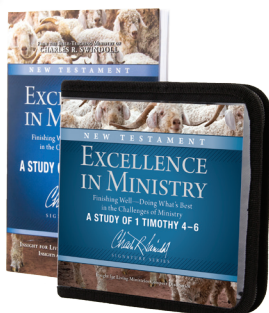
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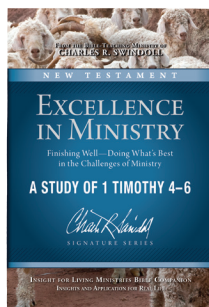
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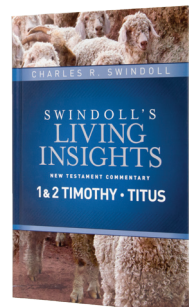
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