

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF TEMPTATION

MATTHEW 4:1-11



The Heart of the Matter

Although Christ's life was marked by trials, He never succumbed to temptation. At each pressure point, He turned to His Father and to God's Word for strength to pass all of life's tests. With Christ accompanying us on life's journey, things that others might interpret as a tragedy or seduction to evil take on a different appearance. Both by His example and through His power, we, too, can get through the tough stuff of temptation.



Discovering the Way

1. Christ's Encounter with the Tempter (Matthew 4:1-2)

At the very beginning of Jesus's public ministry, Satan himself came to tempt Jesus at a moment of physical weakness.

2. Christ's Temptations (Matthew 4:3-10)

The first temptation was of a personal nature (Matthew 4:3-4). The second was of a public nature (4:5-7). The third temptation was of a power nature (4:8-10). In each case, Christ responded with God's Word.

3. The Outcome of the Temptations (Matthew 4:11)

After Christ resisted Satan's temptations, the devil departed to wait for a more opportune time.

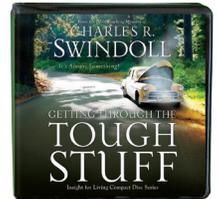


Starting Your Journey

When temptation crosses our paths, we should remember three simple but practical principles. First, don't be alarmed—*expect it*. Second, don't be blind—*detect it*. Third, don't be clever—*reject it*. Jesus Christ, being fully human, understands and sympathizes with our weakness (Hebrews 4:14-16). And being fully God, He can share His power to overcome.



Tools for Digging Deeper



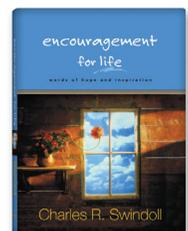
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF MISUNDERSTANDING

MARK 3:1-12, 20-35



The Heart of the Matter

Being misunderstood is one of the most common problems a Christian must face. People fail to understand our motives. Some jump to false conclusions. Others assume things about Christians that grow out of feelings rather than facts. Misunderstanding should not surprise Christians, however, when you stop to consider that Christ's journey to the cross was in many ways the result of being misunderstood. Take comfort in the fact that, as His disciples, we can connect with the One who can truly sympathize with us through the tough stuff of misunderstanding.



Discovering the Way

1. Misunderstood? You Are Not Alone

Not only does everyday life provide us with numerous examples of being misunderstood, but Scripture also presents us with astounding examples in Joseph, David, and Jesus.

2. Misunderstood? Meet Him Who Understands (Mark 3:1-35)

The misunderstanding that surrounded Jesus's earthly life reached a feverish pitch throughout His earthly ministry. He was misunderstood by Pharisees (Mark 3:1-6), His own people (3:20-21), the scribes (3:22-30), and His own family (3:31-35).

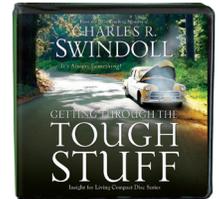


Starting Your Journey

If you are facing the tough stuff of misunderstanding, here are three things to consider to help you get through it. First, when misunderstanding occurs, consider the source. Second, if misunderstanding continues, examine the reason. Third, as misunderstanding ends, learn the lessons.



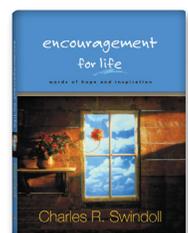
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF ANXIETY

LUKE 10:38-42



The Heart of the Matter

Almost without exception, people and anxiety go hand-in-hand. Though we should know better, we continue to manufacture worries and nurse fears. Yet anxiety is nothing more than wasting today's time and resources to clutter up tomorrow's possibilities with yesterday's struggles. In spite of that, it remains for some a continual preoccupation. This message takes a straight look at this energy-draining reality. By seeing it at work in another's life, we may gain sufficient perspective to get through the tough stuff of anxiety.



Discovering the Way

1. A Quick Analysis of Anxiety (Philippians 4:4-7)

First, anxiety strangles God's viewpoint, resulting in fear. Second, it chokes our discernment of the essentials, distracting us. Third, it takes away our ability to relax, so we become unfruitful. Fourth, it siphons our joy, making us negative and judgmental.

2. A First-Century Portrayal of the Problem (Luke 10:38-42)

When Jesus visited His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at their home in Bethany (Luke 10:38-39), Mary was content to sit quietly at Jesus's feet, while Martha worried over serving (10:39-40). The Lord counseled Martha to slow down, simplify, and prioritize (10:41-42).

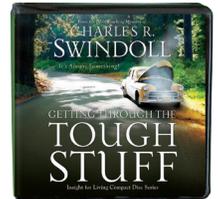


Starting Your Journey

If you struggle with worry, pause and pray. Ask the Lord to stop you in your tracks, to open your ears, to slow your pace, to enable you to see yourself in the mirror of the Word, and then to change your fear into faith. If we make an up-close-and-personal examination of our worry, we realize that worry makes us angry, doubtful, fearful, and forgetful.



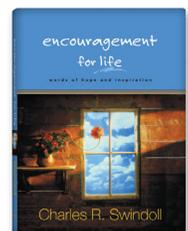
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF SHAME

JOHN 8:1-11



The Heart of the Matter

If pride precedes a fall, then shame follows it. Strong regret and public censure, mixed with humiliation and embarrassment, comprise one of the most devastating of all human emotions: shame. Who hasn't known the sting of shame? The anguish cannot be adequately expressed in words. The agony defies description. In this message, we will witness how our Lord handled a situation shrouded in shame. What a model He left for us to follow as we get through the tough stuff of shame!



Discovering the Way

1. Shame: An Agony All Its Own

Shame can weigh down a soldier, a minister, a husband . . . even a president. This brings us to one of the most poignant scenes in the life of Jesus—His encounter with a shamed adulteress.

2. An Adulteress and Her Accusers (John 8:1-6)

Several self-righteous, religious leaders—intent on entrapping Jesus into breaking either the Roman or Hebrew law—dragged before Him a woman caught in shameful adultery.

3. Her Advocate and His Approach (John 8:7-11)

The only One on earth qualified to condemn the adulteress in her shame did not do so. Instead of condemning, Jesus had honest compassion, which involved confrontation and a stern exhortation. He lifted her from her place of shame and set her firmly in a new direction of repentance.

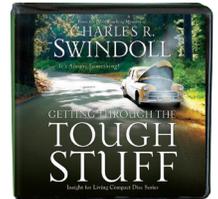


Starting Your Journey

Are you weighed down by shame? Those who condemn you are not qualified to do so. And the One who is qualified to condemn does not. As Paul said, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).



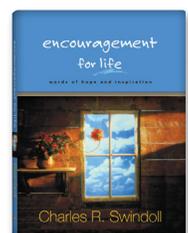
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF DOUBT

JOHN 20:24-29



The Heart of the Matter

Secret doubts linger in virtually every person's life. They emerge in times of stress, when pain pushes uncertainty to the surface and when despair crowds our confidence and faith. On such occasions, we may blurt out skeptical comments or even act out faithless and irresponsible behavior. These very human lapses should not be viewed as journeys into the back roads of carnality, but as sometimes necessary steps in the faith walk. The good news is that our Lord gives us room to question, wrestle, and struggle as we grow toward maturity.



Discovering the Way

1. When Doubts Emerge: "I Do Not Understand"

Perhaps you find yourself numbered among those to whom faith comes with difficulty. Or perhaps doubts rarely cause you trouble. Either way, the fact is, when life's challenges come, doubts often arise.

2. Why Thomas Struggled: "I Will Not Believe" (John 20:24-29)

Thomas—one of Christ's original twelve disciples—voiced his struggle with belief throughout Christ's ministry. So when he learned that Christ had been raised, Thomas responded with a challenge.

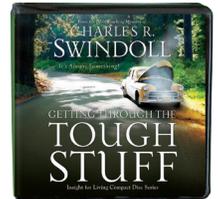


Starting Your Journey

When we come to places in our lives where doubts sprout up, we can encourage spiritual growth by taking risks rather than playing it safe; by releasing our valuables rather than finding security in them; by probing uncertainty rather than blindly accepting the "orthodoxy"; and by admitting our humanity rather than denying its weakness.



Tools for Digging Deeper



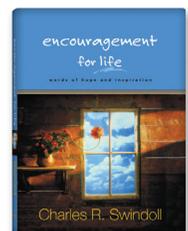
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF DIVORCE

MATTHEW 19:3-19; MARK 10:1-12



The Heart of the Matter

Chances are your life has been touched by divorce, either directly or indirectly. Hardly a home has escaped the heartache of a broken marriage, including Christian homes. The toleration and acceptance of divorce as a way of life has caused its rates to soar to national epidemic proportions. Yet those who maintain a stricter view of marriage are often seen as judgmental. Does “till death do us part” have no significant meaning any longer? Are there no standards that would help us maintain a high view of marriage and provide loving support for those who have suffered divorce?



Discovering the Way

1. An Unguarded Declaration of the Issue (Selected Scriptures from Genesis 1-3)
God’s design for marriage, between one man and one woman who live together for His glory, has lost its permanence today . . . and with tragic consequences.

2. In Jesus’s Day: His Instruction on Divorce (Matthew 19:3-12)

Divorce was never God’s ideal for His people, but He permitted it under certain circumstances. Understanding these circumstances, Jesus dealt with various questions (Matthew 19:3) by providing careful analysis (19:4-9) and by challenging His disciples to a necessary acceptance (19:10-12).

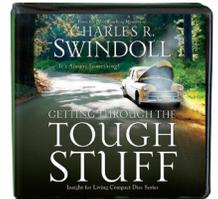


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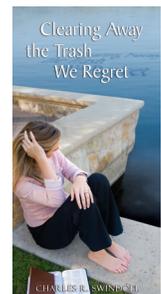
Jesus relates some hard-to-hear conclusions that call for a response. First, the sanctity of marriage necessitates commitment. Second, the necessity of commitment is weakened by depravity. Third, the depravity of humanity is counteracted only by Christ.



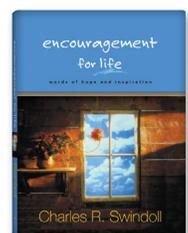
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF REMARRIAGE

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

The idyllic marital bliss of Adam and Eve was split in two when sin wedged itself between them. Everything changed, between this couple and every other couple in history. Divorces are epidemic, and though the causes are myriad, at their root is sin. One partner's sin may be overt, but the failure that results in a broken marriage is invariably a two-way journey traveled by two guilty sinners. But once the divorce is finalized, the question often arises: "Is remarriage always permissible . . . never permissible . . . sometimes permissible?" What does the Scripture say?



Discovering the Way

1. Natural Allegory of the Marriage-Divorce Dilemma

Did you know that ducks mate for life? If one is shot from the sky or falls from illness, the other one will land and stay with their mate. This is the way marriage is supposed to be.

2. Scriptural Survey of the Possibility of Remarriage (Selected Scriptures)

Marriage is a mystery, and so is remarriage. This issue is debatable, but there are at least three situations where God grants permission to remarry: the case of the unrepentant, immoral partner (Matthew 19:7–9); the case of desertion by an unbelieving mate (1 Corinthians 7); and the case of marital failure prior to salvation (2 Corinthians 5:16–17).



Starting Your Journey

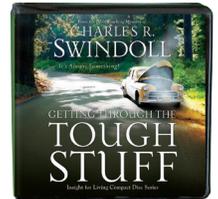
If you're struggling with the issue of marriage and remarriage, keep this counsel in mind. To the unmarried—*be patient*. To the married—*be content*. To the miserable, who have the right to divorce and remarry—*be careful . . . be wise*. To the remarried—*be grateful and understanding*.



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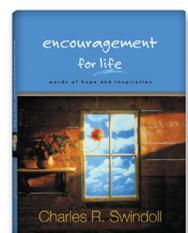
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF CONFRONTATION

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Nothing has the power to free us like the truth. It aids in our maturity as we speak the truth “in love,” and once we know truth and really embrace it, we will be “free indeed.” Perhaps one of the reasons we are too hesitant to express our true feelings to another person is because it may bring a measure of pain. Sometimes the truth hurts, though we share it tactfully and graciously. And because this is true, we should learn from Jesus who was never reluctant to speak candidly and honestly.



Discovering the Way

1. Gaining an Understanding of Confrontation

The word *confrontation* doesn't appear in Scripture, but the concept does, helping us understand what confrontation is and how it works.

2. Observing Confrontation in Action: Christ and Peter (Selected Scriptures)

Watching Jesus deal with Peter gives us clues as to when to confront (Matthew 16:21–23), why to confront (Luke 22:31–34), and how to confront (22:47–62).

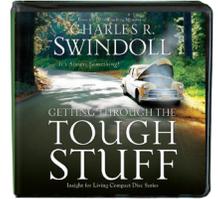


Starting Your Journey

The next time you need to confront someone, keep these three things in mind. First, be sure there is a good reason. Second, be specific about the purpose. Third, be sensitive with the way you do it.



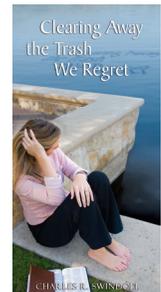
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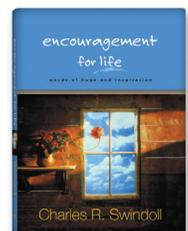
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF PAIN

MATTHEW 26:36-46



The Heart of the Matter

Do you remember going to bed as a child and feeling pain in your legs? You may have thought some terrible disease had invaded and that the pain was the initial symptom of some form of paralysis. Of course, it was nothing as dramatic as that. The pains you felt were “growing pains.” Instead of some dreaded disease, the unpleasant, unwelcome, and unappreciated pain was normal and healthy—a reminder that you were growing. And what was true then, during your childhood, is also true today: pain, though never sought out, is an essential and beneficial part of our emotional and spiritual growth.



Discovering the Way

1. Coming to an Understanding of Pain

Before getting a handle on pain, we need to understand pain as it related to Jesus’s life and then as it relates to our lives.

2. Focusing on the Ordeal at Gethsemane and Golgotha (Matthew 26–27)

Knowing that great suffering was one day His to endure, Jesus often referred to this time as “the hour” and once as “the cup.” He would suffer relational pain, internal pain, physical pain, and ultimate pain.

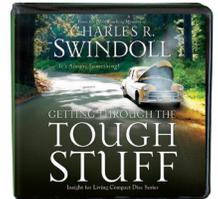


Starting Your Journey

Christ offers four encouragements in our pain. First, relationally, no one stays closer than Christ. Second, internally, no one can bring healing deeper than Christ. Third, physically, no one comforts better than Christ. Fourth, ultimately, no one sees the benefits of our pain clearer than Christ.

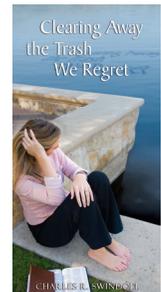


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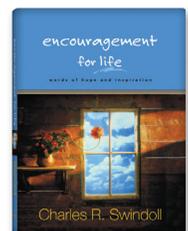
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF PREJUDICE

MATTHEW 27:27-44



The Heart of the Matter

In the twenty-first century many wouldn't think that prejudice is all that common or at least not that prominent an issue. But those who think like that haven't been the brunt of prejudicial treatment or comments. To the surprise of many, prejudice is also woven into the fabric of the Gospel accounts. On several occasions, Jesus and His followers were the target of ill treatment that grew out of preconceived judgments from others. No matter where we travel or live, regardless of which group or stratum of society we may represent, this ugly reaction will periodically emerge.



Discovering the Way

1. Prejudice Defined and Observed

Having a technical definition of prejudice is helpful, but some general observation about its reality is enlightening.

2. Its Presence in Jesus's Day

The term *prejudice* doesn't appear in the Bible, but the reality is seen geographically, politically, and religiously.

3. Prejudice at the Trials and Crucifixion of the Savior (Matthew 27)

Looking at an extreme example of prejudice we can see where it emerged, what it caused, and how Jesus dealt with it.

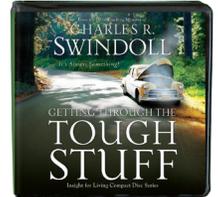


Starting Your Journey

Because the human heart is sinful we cannot escape some prejudice, but instead of focusing on our sin we should focus on Christ—the Savior who can take away our sin of prejudice.



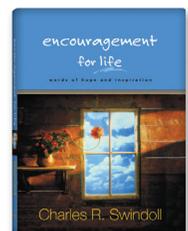
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF HYPOCRISY

MATTHEW 6:1-18; 15:1-9



The Heart of the Matter

Some of the strongest words Christ uttered were directed at the religious hypocrites of His day. These were neither ignorant men nor insignificant nobodies, but the most influential and authoritative people in Judaism—the scribes and the Pharisees. Unfortunately, the presence of hypocrisy did not fade away with the passing of those ancient sects; it is still alive and well in the church today. What is the antidote to hypocrisy? An authentic life.



Discovering the Way

1. Explanation: Hypocrisy Exposed (Romans 12:9; Galatians 2:11-14)

Every hypocrite is a phony, pretending to be something he or she is not. Scripture condemns hypocrisy at every turn, pointing instead to a life where words and deeds match.

2. Amplification: Hypocrisy Illustrated (Matthew 6:1-18; 15:1-9)

If we're not careful, hypocrisy can creep up on us in our giving, our praying, our fasting, and even in the traditions we hold dear. Jesus warned against using such things to draw attention to ourselves or to avoid obeying God's commands.

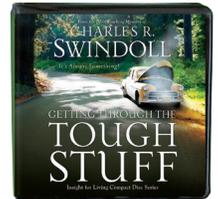


Starting Your Journey

Nothing is more Christlike than authenticity. So when you find hypocrisy tripping you up, remember that exposing hypocrisy is helpful, practicing hypocrisy is natural, and most difficult of all, breaking with hypocrisy is painful.



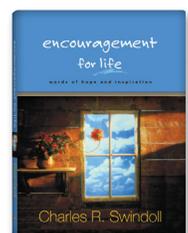
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF INADEQUACY

MATTHEW 28:16–20; ACTS 1:1–8



The Heart of the Matter

How often we overlook the human impossibility of the Great Commission! Stop and consider. At His ascension, Jesus passed the torch to a handful of frightened and incompetent men. Just over a month earlier, they had all forsaken the Master. He addressed His parting words to this same group of men: “Go therefore and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). They were to continue the work He had begun. With that great challenge in mind, we will discover how the church got started with such power, efficiency, and success.



Discovering the Way

1. The Inescapable Fact of Human Inadequacy

If there is one thing we all have to admit as human beings, it's that we're *only* human. Capable in some ways though inadequate in most, our resources are simply not sufficient for the responsibilities and requirements of life. If we hope to be God's voice and hands to the world, we must depend on His assistance.

2. The Unparalleled Challenge of Jesus's Commission (Matthew 28:16–20)

A band of confused and doubting disciples received a command and a promise from an all-powerful Lord.

3. The Unique Transition of Divine Authority (Acts 1:1–8)

Jesus promised power from the Holy Spirit as He left, providing the disciples with hope as they remained.

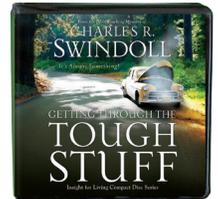


Starting Your Journey

Are we willing to meet Christ at the crossroad of inadequacy? Only after we admit our inadequacies can we claim Christ's power to live above the hindrances of humanity.



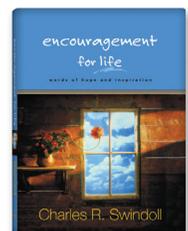
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF DISQUALIFICATION

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-10:13



The Heart of the Matter

Disqualified. The mere mention of the word stirs up strong emotions. No matter the situation, the word smacks of shame, humiliation, and the worst kind of failure. The Scriptures call us to be like Christ, but they also offer warnings regarding disqualification. Some of us wrongly claim immunity from such attitudes; others of us believe we are beyond help. Paul reminds us that God's faithfulness provides a way through the temptations that lead to disqualification.



Discovering the Way

1. Scriptural Word Pictures Regarding Distinctiveness

God wants us to be different, because to be "like them" is to lose our effectiveness. When our lives are marked by compromise and we're disqualified, we lose the purpose of our being on earth. This kind of distinctiveness requires discipline, determination, and self-restraint.

2. Personal Warnings Regarding Disqualification (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)

Many of us think the only dangers we must watch out for come from being too involved with the world. Not so! We are constantly tempted to become self-satisfied in spiritual things—overexposed, oversaturated. Disqualification occurs in the midst of such complacency.

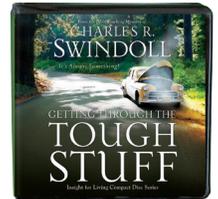


Starting Your Journey

How do we respond to disqualification? For those of us who believe it won't happen to us, we must take heed of Paul's warnings. On the other hand, for those of us who feel trapped by the shame of disqualification, we must remember that God's faithfulness provides a way through such temptation.



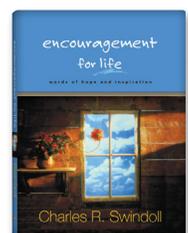
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GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF: IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING!

GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF DEATH

JOHN 11



The Heart of the Matter

Most people do everything in their power to ignore or deny the finality of death. Due to modern advances in science, some people can spend years without being exposed to death's harsh reality. But no one can live a full lifetime of escape and denial. Eventually, we are forced to face the inevitable. When struck with the loneliness brought on by death, we need help. Fortunately, there is One who both understands our grief and gives us the power to endure.



Discovering the Way

1. Familiar Reactions to the Subject of Death

We deal with death in various ways. Some of us make light of it or ignore it. Others make it beautiful or leave it cloaked in mystery. But there will come a time when death will no longer be funny or distant, beautiful or mysterious. Death comes to us all.

2. Death at Bethany: A Story of Grief and Faith (John 11:1–46)

Even Jesus encountered the reality of death when His friend Lazarus became sick and died. And as we so often see in our lives, some assigned blame because they felt Lazarus's death was preventable. However, Jesus prayed for His friend to live and grief changed to belief.

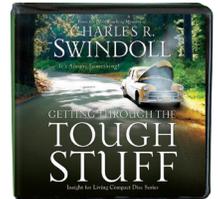


Starting Your Journey

What about you? Are you ready for death? The question is not: Do you have eternal life? We all do. The real question is: Where will you spend the life to come?



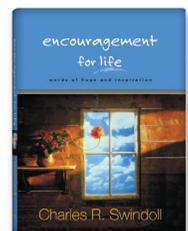
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