

## THE BEST OF 2010

### LOOKING BACK: CLEARING AWAY THE TRASH WE REGRET

JOEL 2:18–27



#### The Heart of the Matter

Looking back over your shoulder is sometimes a painful experience, especially when you see saddened, shamed, or angry faces. If we were honest with ourselves, we'd admit that the road behind us has too often been a garbage dump when it comes to our relationships. We see the rotten fruit of regrets for things said and not said—a trash bag full of guilt, broken promises, tangled emotions, and nonrecyclable pride. When you look back over your relationships, do you see regrets? If you do, then it's time to clear away the trash.



#### Discovering the Way

##### 1. Looking Back: God's Terrible Judgment (Selected Scriptures from Joel 1)

Judah had fallen into sin and the Lord brought three plagues to judge His people: fire, drought, and—worst of all—locusts.

##### 2. Looking Back: Restoring What the Locusts Have Eaten (Joel 2:12–15, 25)

God's judgment would not last forever. He would restore what the locusts had eaten. Regrets over strained and broken relationships do not have to last forever; relationships can be restored.



#### Starting Your Journey

If you want to clear away the trash of regret and guilt regarding past relationships, then you must seek forgiveness. And when you do, obey these three commands: start immediately without rationalization, return completely without reservation, and repent openly without hesitation.



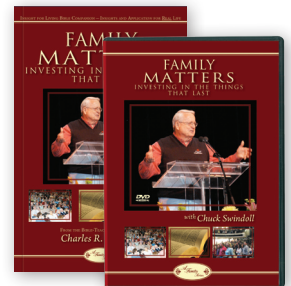
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THE BEST OF 2010  
GETTING PAST THE GUILT OF YOUR PAST  
ISAIAH 58:1-12



## The Heart of the Matter

It's one of those little quirks in life: you can pick your friends, you can pick your spouse, but you *can't pick your family!* No one asked you if you wanted your particular parents or grandparents or siblings or aunts or uncles or cousins, but they're all yours. Being thrown into such a mix inevitably leads to friction because none of them is just like you, and all of you are imperfect. Family relationships are bound to strain at times and in many cases fracture, leading to feelings of failure and guilt, but there is a way to repair and rebuild damaged relationships—whether or not you've chosen them.



## Discovering the Way

### 1. Inescapable and Painful Realities of Humanity

None of us can escape these four truths: we are all imperfect, we cannot change the past, we are personally responsible for our own wrongs, and we are not responsible for another's wrongdoing.

### 2. Guidelines for Recovery and Renewal (Isaiah 58:1-12)

Coming to grips with the guilt and shame of your past requires you to humble yourself, to pray, to “remove the yoke,” to make yourself available and vulnerable, and to trust God to bring changes.

### 3. Cynthia Swindoll's Testimony

God challenges us through Cynthia's story to take responsibility for our own wrongs and to ask for forgiveness.



## Starting Your Journey

Blame and bitterness are black spots on the soul. Like a cancer, an unforgiving spirit will eat away at any relationship until that relationship dies. The only course of treatment is the radical radiation of forgiveness—forgiving those who've wronged you and seeking forgiveness for the wrongs you've caused in another's life.



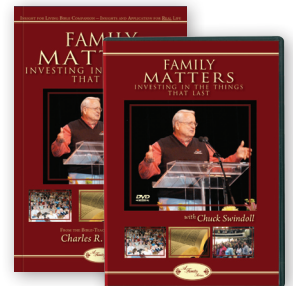
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THE BEST OF 2010  
GETTING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF OF ANXIETY  
LUKE 10:38-42



### 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, worry is still 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 a good 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.



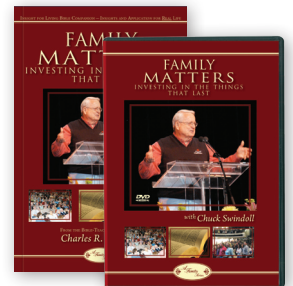
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## THE BEST OF 2010

### DOING RIGHT WHEN YOU'VE BEEN DONE WRONG

ROMANS 12:14, 17–21



#### The Heart of the Matter

Paul unpacked the all-important virtue of love in the closing 13 verses of Romans 12. As he reached the end of this section, he addressed one of life's most practical problems: how to respond correctly when others do you wrong. His pen pricks like a needle as we read his words that touch an extremely sensitive nerve and expose our conditioned reflex to retaliate. Common sense whispers, *You need to defend yourself*. Public opinion goes even further, shouting, *Don't be a fool—get even!* Like a rattlesnake, the flesh stays coiled within us, ready to strike. Even in our ranks as Christians, retaliation remains one of our favorite carnal sports. But, as we shall learn in this message, there's a supernatural alternative to our natural reaction.



#### Discovering the Way

##### 1. Listen to a Story (1 Samuel 16–24)

David's attitude and actions are a model of godly restraint and trust—even while he was being actively pursued by Saul, whose evil scheme was to kill David.

##### 2. Observe the Principles (Romans 12:14, 17–20)

When we've been wronged, we must deliberately resist our “natural” instinct for revenge (Romans 12:14), consciously fight our tendency to “get even” (12:17–18), and quietly trust God to handle all revenge (12:19–20).

##### 3. Consider the Alternative (Romans 12:21)

When we've been wronged, we must not give in to the evil of vengeance but overcome that evil with the goodness of doing things God's way.



#### Starting Your Journey

Modeling the message will not be easy because it requires you to be broken.



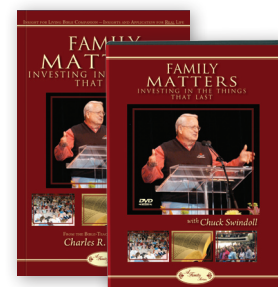
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