

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY SIX

While Laughing, Keep Your Balance!

Philippians 2:12–18

*There's no getting around this truth: not only was Christ our perfect example . . .
He is our example of perfection!*

—Charles R. Swindoll

PAUL exhorted Christ's followers to follow Christ's example (Philippians 2:5), which can be a daunting goal. Some attempt to be like Christ by trying hard to do exactly what Christ did. When they fall short, they fake it by putting on a show of spirituality. They simply lip-sync the great virtues and doctrines of the Christian faith, focusing on image rather than substance.

It takes more, though, than perspiration and performance to follow Christ's example. It takes power—from the inside. And that is what separates Christ's example from all others. He *can* enable us to be like Him. How? Through the Holy Spirit who lives inside His followers. By His strength we can learn to keep our balance as we walk in Jesus' footsteps.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before beginning the study, pause for prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see truth in God's Word. Consider this prayer of David to help prime your heart:

*I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.
I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.
Be good to your servant,
that I may live and obey your word.
Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:15–18 NLT)*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Write your own prayer below.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few minutes to read Philippians 2:5–11 as a review. Paul emphasized Jesus as our example by demonstrating how He lived unselfishly and in a state of humble willingness to obey.

What examples did Paul give of Christ's selflessness and willingness to obey the Father?

What were the results of God choosing to exalt Jesus (Philippians 2:9–11)?

Based on the example of Jesus, Paul developed for his readers a vision for living a balanced life: balance between *purpose* and *power*, *attitude* and *action*, and *seriousness* and *joy*.

As a man among men, Jesus lived a life of obedience, submission, and purity. When faced with the ultimate death—death on a cross—He willingly endured its anguish. What a model! But who can possibly follow such a lofty example? Those who try often gravitate toward legalistic and unrealistic extremes, resulting in a life of hidden hypocrisy or demoralizing frustration. Yet God's desire for us is balance; being all we're meant to be through His strength—a vision made possible when we follow Him and rely fully and wholly on His supernatural enablement. —Chuck Swindoll



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Observation: Balancing Purpose and Power—Philippians 2:12–13

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul appealed to the believers at Philippi to embrace the attitude of Christ, and he did so through a series of questions followed by corresponding exhortations.

Read Philippians 2:12–13. As you read, make observations about Paul's instruction to these Christians he loved so passionately.

How did he refer to the Philippian Christians (Philippians 2:12)?

Paul's instruction at first glance appears to be a contradiction:

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (2:12–13)



Interpretation: Our Great Balancing Act—Philippians 2:14–18

Interpretation in Bible study answers the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey. In each section below, take a few minutes to think through the reflection questions aimed at discovering the meaning of Paul's words.

Balancing Attitude and Action

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. (Philippians 2:14–16)



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What negative attitudes and actions did Paul warn the Philippians to avoid?

What is the significance of Paul's metaphor of Christians "shining like bright lights" in a world of darkness and perversion (Philippians 2:15)?

How does a Christian's attitude about sin impact his or her ability to shine the light of Christ?

Balancing Seriousness and Joy

But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy. (Philippians 2:17–18)

Paul emphasized the shared experience of joy among believers.

In what way did the Philippian Christians share in the joy of serving with Paul?



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Correlation: Light in a Dark World

Correlation compares different passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. Similar to Paul's message to the Philippians, Matthew recorded how Jesus spoke about the shining light of a believer's life as a powerful antidote to sin's hold on the world.

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5:14–16)

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 5 compare to Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2?

What is the balance Jesus envisioned between living in the light of salvation and shining the light to a dark world?



Application: Self, Our Battle

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Obviously, what's in view is the attitude of our hearts balanced with our faith being put into action—shining the light of Christ to the world.

In his message, Chuck offered this helpful analysis:

Regarding striking this balance, our number one battle will be with SELF. As soon as we begin to make headway, SELF will be there to remind us how “special” we are—deserving of the praise and recognition—and we'll watch as all hopes of true humility fly away in the wind.



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Chuck listed two principles to help stem the tide of self-praise and self-glorification—both of which can quickly prevent the light of Christ from shining through us.

1. When battling self, ask the Lord to help you control its urges to take the credit.
2. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you can control self's tendency to take charge. That requires daily surrender to the Lord and His Word.

How can you put these principles into action today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You alone understand how strong my tendency remains to exalt myself and maintain control of all aspects of my life. I want the light of Christ to shine unhindered through me and to bring glory to You and You alone. Help me to bring myself in full surrender to You and in obedience to Your Word . . . so that Christ, and Christ only, may be seen in me. In His matchless name, amen.



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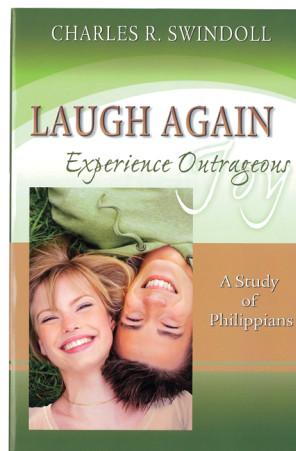
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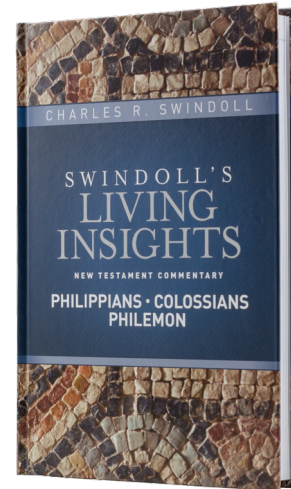
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey 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.

