

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

HOW TO BE GROUNDED IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

STUDY THIRTEEN

Strengthening Your Grip on Attitudes

Philippians 2:1–5, 14; 4:4–8

Friends, the longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude is more important than facts. It is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company. It will cause a church to soar or sink. It will be the difference in a happy home! It's attitude.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE fasten our seatbelts and the aircraft begins to ascend into the air. As we gain altitude, our perspectives get elevated. We can spot the cause of the traffic jam, the spread of a wildfire, or even the cumulonimbus clouds that bring thunderstorms. From our window seat, we can admire the different shades of the blue ocean, the majestic mountains, and the breathtaking sunsets. The higher the altitude, the more expansive the view!

Similarly, when we rise above life's circumstances, we see things differently, and it shows up in our attitude. We may not be able to escape the bad weather, the long lines, the unexpected delays, or slow Wi-Fi . . . but we can control how we react to them. *We can choose our attitude.*

In our prior *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we discovered some practical lessons from the spiritual erosion of Israel and strengthened our grip on godliness. In this Bible study, we'll learn how to buckle up and rise to God's altitude by *choosing Christlike attitudes* over attitudes of uselessness, self-pity, and fear.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, pray that God enables you to apprehend His thoughts and ways from this Bible study.

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.
“And my ways are far beyond anything you can imagine.
For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8–9)*

In your own words, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see from God’s perspective and live accordingly.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul saw God use difficult circumstances to bring people to Christ during his first visit to Philippi. Imagine. For casting an evil spirit out of a slave girl, Paul and Silas were beaten with rods and thrown in prison. To make certain they didn’t escape, the jailer dragged them “into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in stocks” (Acts 16:24).

Instead of sinking into despair, they sang hymns to God in their darkest hour. Joyous praise lifted them above their circumstances. Suddenly, an earthquake flung open the prison doors, but Paul and Silas chose not to escape. Instead, they helped the jailer find spiritual freedom. “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household” (Acts 16:31). They put their faith in Jesus and were baptized that night!

With a few members, including the jailer’s family, the Philippian church started and grew. Although they were not wealthy, they gave sacrificially to support Paul’s ministry. So, while imprisoned, most likely in Rome around AD 61 or 62, Paul sent them a letter of appreciation and affection (*Philippians 4:15–18*) while urging them to *choose Christlike attitudes*.

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Observation: Christlike Attitudes

Attitudes are formed in the mind. When we wake up each morning, we choose what to think about, and out of these thoughts emerges our attitude. In *Philippians 2:1–5*, Paul teaches the benefits of belonging to Christ and choosing His attitude as our own.

Note in *2:1–2* in the New American Standard Bible the four “ifs” that Paul mentioned as certainties for believers in Christ. As a result, what kinds of attitudes should a Christian cultivate, according to *2:3–4*?

Now, there are some who don't like direct counseling. But the Bible's full of it! It's telling us, "You are in charge of your attitudes!" You determine each day whether you will be filled with selfishness and empty conceit or humility of mind.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to *2:5–8*, how did Jesus display His *attitude of humility*?

For that plan to be put into motion, Christ had to have an attitude that said, "I'm willing to do that. I do not think it a thing to be grasped, this holding on to my position in heaven. I'll come to this earth. I'll go. I'll be the sacrificial lamb. I'll be your scapegoat on sin. Pour it out on Me." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Look at *2:14* carefully. Notice that Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to adopt an *attitude of positive cooperation*. What should they always avoid?

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Paul commanded us to have *attitudes of genuine joy and gentleness* in *Philippians 4:4–5*. Where should our joy be? How often should we be joyful?

Paul teaches us in *4:6–7* how to replace anxiety with an *attitude of prayer*. What will be the result?

So, on what do we focus our mind? Paul emphasized six thoughts to dwell on that will help us develop a *godly attitude*. What are they in *4:8*?

That's the way to live! That'll make all the difference in the world in the people you run with, your approach to work, and your home. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding Christlike Attitudes

Through the step of *interpretation*, we'll gain an in-depth understanding of Christlike attitudes.¹ Explore the term *humility* in a Bible dictionary. You have free access to the *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary* at biblestudytools.com. Read it carefully. How would you define in your own words an attitude of humility?

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In *Philippians 2:14*, we noted that we should have an *attitude of positive cooperation*—staying away from complaining. The Greek word, *goggusmos*, is translated, “complaining.” Read its definition at billmounce.com and write its significance. What harm does a complaining attitude bring to a group of people? What’s the opposite, Christlike attitude?

You’ll find a lot of company in this world of people that want to goggusmos—their way all the way through life. . . . But the problem is, you’ll always be discouraged, depressed, and disappointed in life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Our observation of *4:4–5* revealed that *attitudes of genuine joy and gentleness* are choices we make. This joy or deep-seated gladness is found in the person of Jesus, not in our circumstances. How would you explain this to a friend?

If you say, “Ah, that was written in a time when things were easy,” then check your history. Nero was on the march. And the apostle Paul says rejoice? He says rejoice not in your circumstances but in the Lord. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In *Philippians 4:6–7*, we saw that those who adopt an *attitude of prayer* experience peace. Explore the meaning of *peace* in the same Bible dictionary and summarize it below.

Philippians 4:8 gives us prescriptions for our thought life. Think about the meaning of each word in this verse. Explain how these attitudes are not just shallow, flippant, or positive thinking.

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Humility. Cooperation. Joy. Prayer. Godly thoughts. When we choose these Christlike attitudes, we demonstrate our faith in God, who is in control of and above all our circumstances.



Correlation: Flying at God's Altitude

Correlation helps us see that those who display these attitudes fly at God's altitude. Abundant life can only be experienced by those who are seated in the heavenly places in Christ (*Ephesians 2:1–10*). God has given to those who believe in Him the Holy Spirit (*1:12–14*). When we yield our lives to Him by choosing Christlike attitudes, we rise above our circumstances.

We all feel our circumstances pulling us down. After Elijah's great showdown between God and Baal's prophets in *1 Kings 18:20–40*, he fled in fear when Jezebel threatened to kill him (*1 Kings 19:1–18*). Interestingly, the prophet didn't die but ascended to heaven in a whirlwind (*2 Kings 2:1–11*). Why should we not allow fear and self-pity to rule over our hearts?

See the importance of our thought life in *Romans 12:1–2* and *Proverbs 4:20–23*. Note why we all need to renew our minds regularly to avoid attitudes of fear, self-pity, and uselessness.

I am convinced now that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Choose Your Attitudes!

We can choose to control our attitudes by elevating our altitude—letting God's Word instead of our circumstances shape our reactions. Think of ways you could use Scripture to adjust a few attitudes or negative dispositions that you struggle with. For instance, why not memorize Philippians 4:8?

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Don't let the Scriptures leave your heart. Let them reside there. Let them stay in your sight and in the midst of your heart. See, that's where the attitudes are conceived. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The gifted violinist, Nicolo Paganini, kept an attitude of fortitude during a performance when three strings of his violin snapped, and he finished the piece on one string! He didn't focus on the three broken strings but on the one remaining string. Neither did Paul and Silas focus on their misfortune in prison. Instead, they sang praises to God! How can you make melody in your heart to God *with all four strings attached, or with one . . . or with none?*

You have a choice to make every day regarding the attitude you will embrace. You can focus on the three strings that dangle or you can play your melody on one. Oh, the difference attitude makes! We cannot change our past. We cannot change the tick of the clock. We cannot change that march toward death. We cannot change the fact that people will act a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. Those are the strings that dangle! The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Gracious Father, I thank You for this abundant life I have found in Your Son, Jesus Christ. I want Christ to control every part of my life regardless of how broken my past, the mistakes I made, or how bleak is the future. Let the things that are true, honest, right or just, pure, and of good repute fill my mind. I bring my heart and my attitude before You in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1981, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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