

STRAIGHT TALK FOR SEMINARY STUDENTS

STUDY FIVE

Ministry Is a Four-Letter Word

John 13

Teach the truth and love the people. Frankly, it's a lot easier to just teach the truth, but to love means you give something of yourself away. Give it away. Give it away, for goodness sake. Chances are really good they will have never seen anything like it.

—Charles R. Swindoll

It is not biting our lip when we feel like cursing. Nor is it ordering tea when our friends are drinking cocktails. Our avoidance of sin or even of the appearance of sin often displays our piety. But Jesus never intended clean living to be the only mark of Christians nor the most significant.

Rather, Jesus said the world will better recognize His disciples by what they do rather than what they avoid (John 13:35). That is why the core quality of those who follow Jesus is the four-letter word that described Jesus Himself: *love*. Love displays our holiness. Love marks the Christian. Love attracts people to Jesus.

For this reason, Chuck Swindoll takes us to John 13 in which Jesus did not merely command His disciples to love but gave them an example of love to follow. As we will see, God conceals no secrets for a successful ministry or a thriving church.

The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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John 13



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before entering that remarkable scene in John 13, take a moment to quiet your heart and focus your mind upon God. Let the prayer below guide you as you draw near to Him through His Word.

Father, Your Word is such a treasure worth infinitely more than the purest gold and the highest acclaim. Root it in my heart as I set aside this time to learn more about You through the teaching of Your Son Jesus Christ, the Son of Man who came to serve us and give Himself as a ransom for many. For His glory, amen.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In these studies, we use Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method so we can rightly understand and apply God's Word. This method incorporates four steps to help us create our own spiritual meals.

1. *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
2. *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
3. *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics whether they be historical, theological, or applicational.
4. *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus' commands, believing Jesus' promises, and walking with Jesus always.

Jesus' disciples never knew a time when He didn't love them. He loved them to the extent of His ability to love—which is infinite. Incredible thought. —Chuck Swindoll



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Observation: He Loved Them to the Very End

During observation, we will focus on *John 13*. As you read through the chapter, notice the people it mentions—Jesus, the disciples, Judas, and Peter—and what it says about them. Take notes as you do.

This chapter also mentions another person: God the Father. According to 13:1–3, 13:17–20, and 13:31–33, what did Jesus say about the Father?

How did Jesus demonstrate His love for the disciples in this chapter?

Jesus loved the disciples with everything that was in Him. It was an unconditional, concentrated, consistent love that He had for each one of them. —Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: An Example I Leave with You

Interpretation helps us understand the significance of the passage for those who first read it as well as for those of us living thousands of years later. We ask, “What did the author intend to communicate when he first wrote it?” Theological truth transcends the bounds of time because our God is an eternal God whose character never changes.

Remember to use your Bible study resources during interpretation. For helpful online commentaries, consult [Constable’s Notes](#) and [Barclay’s Daily Study Bible](#). If you do not have Chuck’s study Bible, we recommend you purchase a [copy](#) for your library.

Thinking about John 13, research and record below the cultural significance of washing someone’s feet in the ancient Near East. Contrast this action with the titles Jesus ascribed to Himself in this chapter: Teacher, Master, and Messiah.

In what sense is Jesus’ command to “love each other,” (John 13:34) a new command to first-century hearers, and why would it serve as the primary vehicle for demonstrating the identity of Jesus’ followers?



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One of the greatest of all defenses of the faith is love of the brothers and sisters in the family of faith. Now, I want to challenge you in this area because I think if you attempt to minister without love, then you're going to hit bottom really quickly, and you'll learn to fake it. You can even get good at that. But if you really want to serve flocks that God sends you to, and people God has you touch, and individuals who come across your path; love is the ticket. —Chuck Swindoll

In what way does Jesus' washing the disciples' feet anticipate the action and significance of His death on a cross?



Correlation: Without Love, I Am Nothing

Just as John 13 functions as the “love” chapter of the four gospels, the apostle Paul is known for having a “love” chapter in his thirteen letters: 1 Corinthians 13. This chapter complements our study of John 13 by highlighting the qualities that emanate from this noblest of all virtues.

Read through this short *chapter* on love. What other Christian acts and virtues did Paul compare with love, and why did he say love is the superior virtue?



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Name one characteristic about love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 that caught your attention in a fresh way. Why did it do so?

You, with verbal eloquence and with prophetic utterance and with remarkable faith and with compassionate benevolence—all the great things that are so impressive—I simply plead with you to remember that the commandment is to love one another.
—Chuck Swindoll



Application: Giving Thought to How You Love

Without applying what God has taught us, we make our Bible study fruitless and unproductive so that it is merely a mental exercise to stimulate our curiosity instead of transform our lives. Paul said, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB).

To facilitate our application, Chuck provides an acronym, *LOVE*, which has served him well during his ministry.

1. **Listen:** When you love others, you care about what they have to say and listen intently to them.
2. **Overlook:** Everyone you love will hurt, offend, or irritate you. God extends to you forgiveness that you, too, might be forgiving . . . such a powerful way to share the divine love you have tasted.
3. **Value:** Those you love will know you love them when you value them, treat them with respect, consider their words, and tend to their needs. Let your loved ones be the experts. Give up always doing what you want to do. Go to their favorite restaurant. Pursue their joy as you would your own.
4. **Express:** Love cannot be known, or at least not shown, without giving it away. *Agape* love is the selfless, servant-hearted love demonstrated by Jesus washing His disciples’ feet and, ultimately, by His sacrificial death on a Roman cross. He is our life, so we don’t have to consume ourselves with our needs and wants.



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As you reflected on the acronym above, did a person come to mind whom you can love better? If so, who is that person and how can you better love him or her?

We are called to love one another—especially those in the body of Christ, the church. How can you better love the church in which you worship and serve? Is there a simple way you can encourage the elders and staff to persevere in their vital labor of gospel ministry? Jot down your ideas and put one into practice this week.

I asked Dr. Toussaint, “What’s the secret? You’ve ministered all over the world and you’ve touched lives, and everybody loves you, and you just have a way with people.” He smiled and said, “Well, I can boil it down to two simple statements.” He said, “Chuck, teach the truth and love the people.” Teach the truth and love the people. —Chuck Swindoll

Success in ministry does not require a PhD in theology nor a bank full of cash. A thriving church does not require the mayor’s favor nor acres upon acres of space. God made it simple. Teach the truth. Love the people. That is our calling. That is our privilege.



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A FINAL PRAYER

End this study by recording your prayer below, thanking our Father for the many ways He serves us and for the gift of His Son.

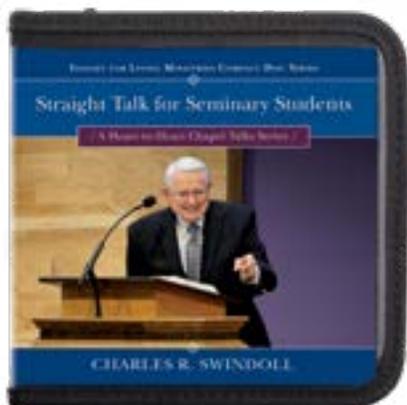


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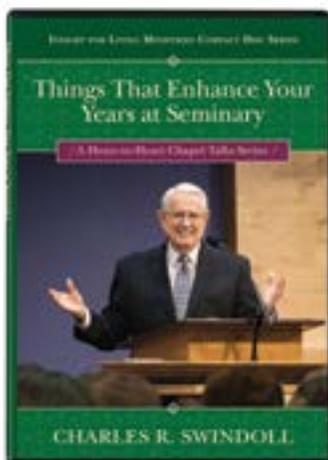
John 13



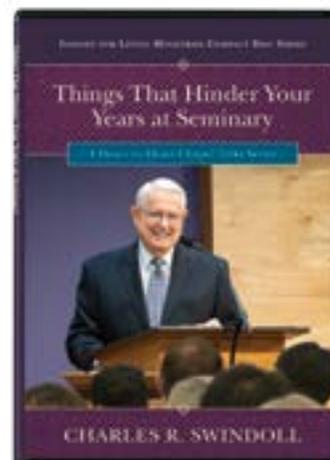
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

