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VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.

A Life Well Lived:

*A Fascinating Conversation
Between Dr. Howard Hendricks
and Dr. Charles Swindoll*



DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DISTINGUISHED LEADERS



Howard G. Hendricks

Dr. Howard Hendricks is Chairman of the Center for Christian Leadership and Distinguished Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. For 56 years, he has touched the lives of thousands of students at the Seminary.

Dr. Hendricks has also provided leadership as a board member for several large Christian corporations, including Search Ministries, Walk Thru the Bible, Ronald Blue & Co., and Promise Keepers. He handles a rigorous speaking schedule, having ministered in more than 90 countries personally, and his impact is furthered through books, radio, tapes, and films.

He has written or co-written such books as *Iron Sharpens Iron*, *Living by the Book*, *Color Outside the Lines*, and his newest release *Heaven Help the Home Today*. Dr. Hendricks and his wife, Jeanne, have been married for 60 years. They are the parents of four children and the proud grandparents of six granddaughters.



Charles Swindoll

Dr. Charles Swindoll serves as Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary and is the Bible teacher of the worldwide radio ministry *Insight for Living*. He is also the founding pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas. Dr. Swindoll served as the senior pastor of a church in Fullerton, California, for 23 years prior to moving back to Texas.

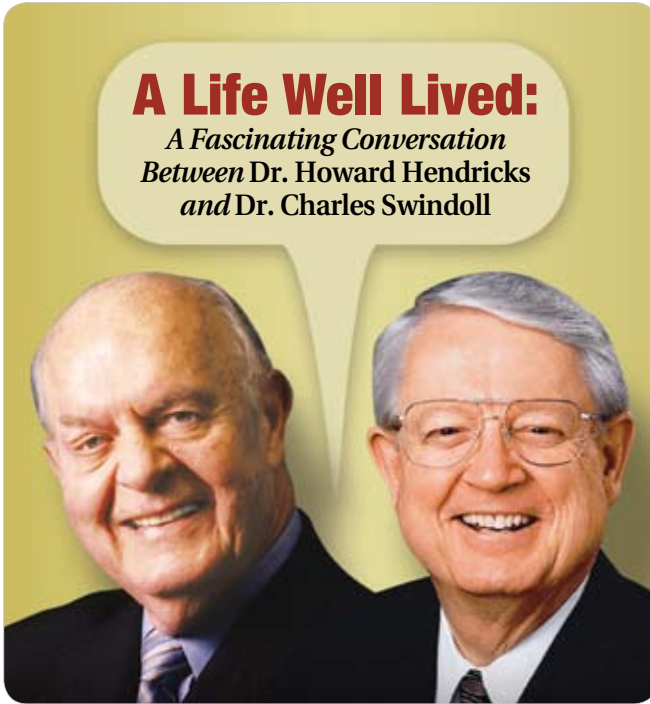
Dr. Swindoll's missionary passion is to train men and women for ministry worldwide while meeting the spiritual needs of the local community. He has published numerous best-selling books dealing with all aspects of the Christian life.

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Veritas is a publication of Dallas Seminary for our valued friends and partners, designed to provide biblical encouragement and instruction in keeping with our strong commitment to minister to those who stand with us in prayer and financial support. We are pleased to present the messages of outstanding leaders and Bible teachers who speak during chapels and at other events, as a way of bringing you "on campus" with us and giving you the benefit of their insights. *Veritas* is also available online at our website, www.dts.edu/veritas.



When people like Dr. Howard Hendricks and Dr. Charles Swindoll talk, it's well worth listening! Especially when these two seasoned leaders are sharing insights on the lifelong privilege and challenge of growing in the grace of Jesus Christ. As one-time mentor and student at Dallas Seminary and now as colleagues in the work of Christ, Drs. Hendricks and Swindoll recently sat down together to share from their years of experience. The conversation reflects an exchange with each other and the audience of leaders who were in attendance at our Leader Board conference. You will thoroughly enjoy what follows!

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Dr. Hendricks: I’ve had too many wonderful experiences in my 56 years of teaching at Dallas Seminary to recall them all. But one of my greatest delights was the privilege of being a teacher, mentor, and friend to Chuck Swindoll. When he came to the campus in 1959, I believe, all of us on the faculty recognized his extraordinary gifts.

Seeing God at Work in Others

Dr. Swindoll: And I can gladly say that my life and ministry bear the deep imprint of Howie Hendricks’s godly wisdom and counsel. Prof, I’m sure I gave you some occasions to wonder if I was going to pull it all together, but you saw something in me that was worth developing. And like many Dallas Seminary students, I wanted to hang out with Prof. Hendricks every chance I got.

In fact, you are one of the men who stands out in my mind as someone in my corner who believed in me. To me, a tremendous mark of spiritual maturity is to be able to discern God’s hand at work in someone else’s life and then have the commitment and patience to be part of the process of teaching and helping that person grow to maturity.

I am who I am today because I have had men like Howard Hendricks in my life who saw things in me I never saw in myself. I never knew I was a leader until I was in the Marine Corps. I had an unsaved drill instructor look me in the eye and say, “Swindoll, you’re a leader, and you don’t even know it.” Until that moment, I had never considered that. I became the leader of my platoon, and after I left the Marine Corps, it was just one step after another.

I got in touch with The Navigators, an

organization that builds into the lives of others. It was there that a man said to me, “Do you realize you have gifts for ministry? Have you ever thought about that?” And again the answer was no; I had not thought of that before. This man saw in me things that I didn’t see.

That’s what I mean by saying this ability is a mark of spiritual maturity. It’s tremendous to realize that there are people out there who want and expect more of you than you would have wanted or expected on your own. People reach higher when they know you believe in them. There’s also the aspect of affirmation, which you gave me, Howie, and which I’ve had the privilege of passing on to other people in the course of my ministry.

People thrive in an affirming context. I try to say something encouraging to at least two people every day. Maybe it is saying to a fellow minister at my church, “I want to thank you for planning the service as well as you did” or saying to a staff member at Insight for Living, “Thank you for taking care of that detail yesterday.” It’s really not hard to find affirming things to say to people; you just have to make a conscious effort.

Prof, I believe you’ll agree that those kinds of things coming from people like you and me make huge statements to others of their value, and it makes them want to step up and serve.

Growing in Obedience to Christ

Dr. Hendricks: Affirmation is certainly part of the process of helping others to grow in grace, even as others have affirmed us along the way in our own growth.

“I try to say something encouraging to at least two people every day.”

—CHARLES SWINDOLL

You know, Chuck, there ought to be some advantages to growing older! One advantage I have seen is that as a person grows in the Lord and their maturity develops, they find it easier to obey. A new Christian who comes to faith in the Savior and makes a sincere, conscious decision to obey Him has made the most crucial decision in his life. But he still has to grow in learning what God expects of him and how to obey the Lord.

I believe that as you spend time in the Father’s Word and as you are maturing and the Holy Spirit is working in your life, you become more sensitive to sin. In fact, I often tell my students that a believer who is insensitive to sin in terms of the things he allows himself to watch or read, for example, has a bigger problem than he is aware of.

In other words, you have got to come to grips with whether you are basically committed to grow in holiness as you grow in the faith or whether you are just going to keep hanging on to the same kind of evaluation you had before. This matter of growing and maturing in grace becomes very practical when we start talking about how we spend our time and the things we give ourselves to. And I’m not just talking about filtering out the bad stuff.

One of the wonderful things about the grace of God is the freedom it gives us to say no to some things that may be okay on their own but are not leading us toward God. Chuck, there are many things you and I could legitimately do; the problem is they don’t help us cultivate our spiritual life.

For instance, I had a student say to me recently, “Man, how in the world do you do all that you do? You just blow my mind at what you are capable of doing at your age. How do you do it?”

I said to him, “You really want to know?” He said he did, so I thought I would jar him a bit and answered, “By not doing what you do!” Now I knew this guy, and I knew he liked to go to a lot of ballgames and other recreational activities, so I could say that.

There’s nothing wrong with recreation, which I enjoy too. But I have other things that are higher on my priority list, and there isn’t time for everything. I wasn’t trying to be legalistic with this student and give him my personal list of dos and don’ts. It’s a matter of making choices, which I think changes as you mature.

The Dangers of Legalism

Dr. Swindoll: I’m glad you mentioned legalism in relation to obedience and spiritual maturity. What a topic to think about in relation to growing in grace and doing it *gracefully!* I was recently asked an age-old question that the Church will probably be dealing with until Christ returns. It goes something like this: Where do you draw the line between legalism, which is restrictive and counter to grace, and the fact that God’s Word does give us clear standards and calls us to live sanctified, set-apart lives?

Well, the place to begin is to affirm that anything that is set forth in the Scriptures as a directive is a directive, period. It’s not legalism. There *are* in the Word lists of things God wants us to do and not to do, and they are very clearly set forth. We’re to obey every one of them. To fudge on that is to fudge in an area of obedience to God.

“I don’t think we who are in this stage of life are fully aware of how much people watch us, especially if we are in leadership.”

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Dr. Hendricks: Agreed. Chuck, I stand by an excellent statement you made before that the way we distinguish between legalism and grace living is on the basis of what the Word of God teaches. If the Word says no, then it's no, and you can't change it no matter what you do with it.

Dr. Swindoll: The problem comes when we get into areas that are not set forth in Scripture, either in precept or even in principle. These may be such things as length of hair, tattoos and other body piercings, skirts or pants for women, makeup or no makeup. Those are not scriptural issues. Sometimes these issues are cultural, and you do have to address them when you are in that particular culture. But I think legalism begins when you do or refrain from doing what I want you to do or not do because it's on my list and it's something that I am uncomfortable with.

The problem with legalists is that not enough people have confronted them and told them to get lost. Those are strong words, but I don't mess with legalism anymore. I'm 72 years old; what have I got to lose? Seriously, I used to kowtow to legalists, but they're dangerous. They are grace-killers. They'll drive off every new Christian you bring to church. They are enemies of the faith. Other than that, I don't have any opinion!

So if I am trying to force my personal list of no-no's on you and make you feel guilty if you don't join me, then I'm out of line and I need to be told that.

Dr. Hendricks: One of the things I notice is that whenever Christians feel something is the will of

God for them, they tend to want to make it universal. A biggie for many Christian families is where to send their children to school. Should they send them to the public school, to a Christian school, or to a private school that may or may not be explicitly Christian? I know believers who send their children to all three types of schools. But the moment you begin to say that because I send my children to a Christian school, therefore, that's what you have to do, I'm stepping into legalism. I think we have a lot of that in our Christian community, trying to put our convictions on someone else.

Dr. Swindoll: Legalism is a desire to control others. Some people are not happy until they are in control—and even then when they are, they're still not happy because there are always more people to control. Howie used the example of choosing where your children attend school. I think of my own sons, for instance. If one of them chooses to put his children in the public school, I vote for that. If he chooses Christian school for his kids, he's got my vote. It's his right to make that decision as a godly parent. We may give someone advice and counsel if they ask for it. But we need to let people be free to make their own decisions.

You live a long time before you finally learn, as the late Corrie ten Boom taught me, to hold everything loosely. What great advice.

I love what Philip Melancthon said about this area a long time ago. Melancthon was a friend and colleague of the great reformer Martin Luther, and he was as gracious as Luther was rough and rugged and coarse. Philip Melancthon said this in terms of how we are to treat each other in the body of Christ: "In essentials, unity. In

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nonessentials, liberty. In all things, charity.” I tell you, that’s a great way to live! And it is even more important as we get older and a little more brittle.

The Importance of Encouraging Young Believers

Dr. Hendricks: Chuck, we’ve been talking about this issue of maturing in grace from the perspective of a couple of older hands in the divine corral. I’d like to wrap up my part of this discussion with a reminder to all of us who have been riding this trail of grace for some time of how important it is to encourage young Christians.

I don’t think we who are in this stage of life are fully aware of how much people watch us, especially if we are in leadership. I have had occasions when I’ve asked a class to pray for me during a ministry event I had upcoming. Then I may come back and say, “Thank you for praying. People came to Christ as a result of the ministry you prayed for.”

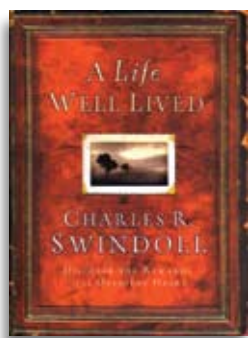
I have found that younger Christians pick up on that like crazy! It’s a positive thing for them. And I don’t just mean in a seminary context. When younger Christians see us reaching out, they think, “Man, if this guy who’s the president of this company is willing to do this, that encourages me to get involved in the process.”

Dr. Swindoll: Along with encouragement, I think it’s also healthy for us to be around those who are very different than we are. Someone told me once to go make friends with nonbelievers. It was some of the best advice I ever got. Let’s make sure that as we grow older, the circle of our world doesn’t grow more narrow, but grows broader! ■



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Do you ever wonder if your decisions and behavior are pleasing to God? To help answer that question, Dallas Seminary chancellor Chuck Swindoll offers you encouragement from the Old Testament prophet Micah in a brand-new book titled *A Life Well Lived*.

Micah asked and answered this famous question: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). According to Dr. Swindoll, understanding what God expects from you will set you free from unscriptural notions of doubt and failure. And in the process, you'll learn the important truth that what God envisions for your life, He empowers you to accomplish.

But make no mistake, says Dr. Swindoll. *A Life Well Lived* is not a book about trying to win God's favor. The author points out that those who are in Christ are already in God's favor—forever! God doesn't expect you to barter for His love. But if you desire to honor the Lord because you love Him, Micah offers an uncomplicated approach.

"Do as Micah instructs, and you will not only honor the Lord you love, you will live life well," says Dr. Swindoll. "This is my message in *A Life Well Lived*. The principles are scriptural, and I believe you'll find in it strength for your walk with Christ. There are also insights to help you stretch your faith in practical areas of godly living. I hope God will use it to bless you."

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Dr. Mark L. Bailey

*When men like
this speak on almost
any subject,
people listen!*

The Incredible Power of a Well-Lived Life

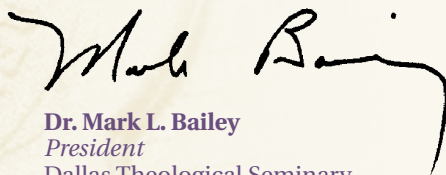
I had a rare privilege recently. I was part of a group forum that featured a question-and-answer session with two of Dallas Seminary's most distinguished alumni—Drs. Howard Hendricks and Charles Swindoll. When men like this speak on almost any subject, people listen!

I was right there with my ears open and pen ready because both of these men have been my mentors, encouragers, and choice friends for many years.

I don't think there is too much more I could say by way of reflection on what I trust you have already read in this issue of *Veritas*. I appreciate so much the call these two leaders have issued to us to make sure we are becoming more mature in Christ and not just older in years! Like both Prof. Hendricks and my predecessor Chuck Swindoll, I am passionate to see Dallas Seminary turn out biblically and spiritually competent grads who are also strong and growing in their faith.

I trust the truths and wisdom contained in these pages have stirred within you a renewed desire to make sure your life is well-lived in Christ's service. This is the purpose of *Veritas*—to be a tool in your hand to help you put God's Word to work in your daily life.

This commitment is only right because it is your prayers and financial support of Dallas Seminary that enable us to prepare leaders who can carry forward the legacy of people like Howard Hendricks and Chuck Swindoll. Thank you for partnering with us in this work.



Dr. Mark L. Bailey
President
Dallas Theological Seminary