

LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

What to Do When You've Blown It
Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26



LET'S BEGIN HERE

We've come to the end of our study of biblical parenting. It's been a journey of discovery! We've probed Scripture from start to finish to find out what God thinks about this all-important subject. We've learned skills to enhance the vital relationships within our homes and families. We've covered a broad spectrum—from embryos in their mothers' wombs to grown, adult kids. And we have relied on God's Word to guide our thinking.

While we're grateful for biblical instruction, there are times it can be very disquieting, especially when we realize how we have failed to do things God's way. Too often, we end up saying, "If only I had known *then* what I know *now*." How deep the feelings of regret and anxiety in the hearts of parents who "blew it"! Since there's no way to go back and relive our lives, we need to focus on the best way to respond to these painful memories. Otherwise, we will live under clouds of blame and shame and be paralyzed by fear.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

The guilt of a parent who has made mistakes can linger for years on end. Moms and dads struggling with guilt often feel stuck in a downward spiral with little sense of how to break free. Long-lasting shame creates decay in us, and as parents, that decay spreads into our relationships with our children. How can we overcome such guilt? Is there even any hope of overcoming it?

1. Painful Realities of Being Human (Joel 2:23–26)

Parents must recognize three painful realities that can help address feelings of guilt and shame.

- First, *we are all imperfect—including our kids*. The apostle Paul made this point abundantly clear when he declared that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). However, we forget this reality about ourselves and others—including our children. And when we forget, we end up burdened by undue guilt and shame. Thankfully, repentance and God's forgiveness covers that guilt.



Quotable

*You cannot change
the past. Don't
waste your time
trying to change it.*

It's done.

—Charles R. Swindoll



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- Second, *we cannot change the past*. What has already happened is set in stone. We must press on beyond our failures, mistakes, and sins, embracing reality for what it is while trying to mature ourselves and improve our relationships as they are now.
- Third, *we are personally responsible for our own wrongs*. We all face the temptation to minimize our faults or push the blame on someone else. This tendency comes naturally and extends back to our ancestors in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:11–12). As parents, we have to recognize our own responsibility in the raising of our kids.

2. Moving from Guilt and Shame to Recovery and Renewal (Isaiah 58:6–12)

How do the parents among God's people move from guilt and shame to recovery and renewal? Let's begin by answering this question negatively.

- First, *it won't help to misunderstand biblical instruction*. The Lord made clear through His apostle what it looks like to bear the fruit of the Spirit; therefore, parents are responsible for making sure their children understand what it means to love, be joyful, to be peaceful, and so on (Galatians 5:22–23). However, if we misunderstand God's Word, we will misapply biblical instruction and lead our children astray.
- Second, *it won't help to ignore common sense*. With so many activities and concerns pulling at our attention, many parents seem to have forgotten plain old common sense. Parents do a thankless job that sometimes requires some hard common sense tasks, including strong talk, reproof, honest confrontation, standing ground, and setting boundaries.



LET'S LIVE IT

We must recognize that change is a process. Moving from guilt and shame toward recovery and renewal is no exception. It takes time. As we seek to make positive changes in the relationships we have with our children, we need to keep in mind the following three tips.

- First, *don't hide anything*. We need to be straight with our children, especially when we have failed them. Our children need us to be open about our failures so they have the opportunity to grapple with reality and grow.



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- Second, *don't hurry the process*. Pushing for an immediate end to any negative situation shows our children that the exchange we're having with them is more about us than them. We need to give them the space to deal with bad news and forgive us from the fullness of their hearts, whenever they decide to do that.
- Third, *don't hold on to the past*. We have the habit of treading back over the same mistakes, time and again. Rather than being helpful, this is merely a way for us to wallow in our own guilt. Once we speak our minds and offer our apologies, we need to leave that issue in the past where it belongs.

If you have made a mistake with your children and have not yet addressed the issue with them, give some thought and prayer to apologizing and putting the issue behind you. Summarize your prayer in the space below.



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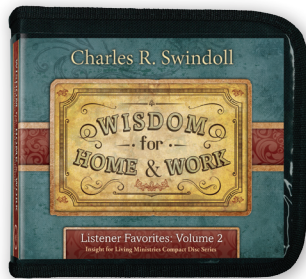
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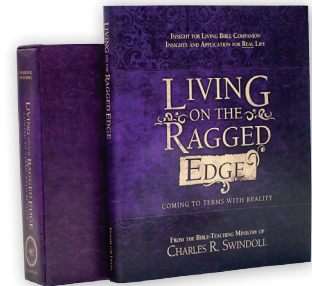
Tools for Digging Deeper



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Volume 2: Wisdom for
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