

BIBLICAL PARENTING

STUDY NINE

Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

Forgiveness is one of the key words in the life of a family living in harmony with one another.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN a conflict flares up in a family, it can light a firestorm of angry words that fly like sparks between parents and children. In time, the heat may dissipate. But the hurt remains like embers that smolder beneath gray ashes. Those who were offended bear longstanding grudges. Those who did the hurting often feel no remorse for the pain they caused; instead, they minimize their fault, make excuses, and cast blame.

Holding grudges and blaming can become a fixed pattern in families, fracturing relationships possibly for years to come. Only forgiveness—both asking it and giving it—can heal the wounds and unite a divided family.

Whether you have been wronged and just can't let it go, or you have hurt another family member but don't know how to move toward reconciliation, the book of Matthew has the answer for resolving those conflicts. Let's open our hearts and seek wisdom from Jesus, the greatest of all teachers on the subject of forgiveness.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Christ's message reaches the most tender parts of our souls, where our deepest wounds reside. We may hesitate to invite our Savior into these areas, yet we can trust Him to be a skilled physician who heals and never harms. Pray the following prayer and invite the Lord to reveal areas of your life that need His tender touch.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23–24)*



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Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read meditatively the following verses, hearing the Lord’s voice as He teaches on seeking forgiveness from those we’ve offended.

Lesson One: Seeking Forgiveness from Those We’ve Offended

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” (Matthew 5:23–24)



Observation: When Someone Has Something against You

Let’s use our *Searching the Scriptures* skills of observation, interpretation, correlation, and application.¹ First, imagine yourself as the person making an offering at the temple. List the action words that you *observe* in Jesus’ teaching.

This teaching comes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). For the immediate context, read [Matthew 5:21–22](#) in which the subject is relationship conflict. What infractions did Jesus say were just as much a violation of God’s law as murder?



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

Friction between individuals may appear as resentment or name-calling or out-of-control rages. Regardless the intensity, Jesus said the fire of conflict must be doused immediately, both in our heart where sin begins and with our feet as we rush to make amends.



Interpretation: Go and Be Reconciled

What is the meaning of Jesus' teaching? What does He say about the issue of priority? In other words, what is the most important action to take?

The issue of urgency?

The issue of taking responsibility?



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

Go a little deeper into interpretation by using the online Bible study tool at NETBible.org to discover the meaning of the Greek root word for “reconcile,” *diallasso*. Locate [Matthew 5](#), and then select the “Greek” tab on the right panel to display the Greek New Testament. Slowly move your cursor over each Greek word in Matthew 5:24 in the Greek Bible on the right panel. The definition of each word will appear in a box. When you get to the Greek word for “reconcile,” you’ll see this definition: “1) to change 2) to change the mind of anyone, to reconcile 3) to be reconciled, to renew friendship with one.”²

Fascinating! Reconciliation includes *change*. As family members forgive and reconcile, a transformation in the relationship occurs. Hostility softens to friendliness; enmity changes to amity. Based on your study, how would you explain *diallasso*? How does this meaning enhance your understanding of Jesus’ command?



Correlation: The Father’s Love Displayed through Christ

Paul applied the concept of reconciliation to our relationship with God in [2 Corinthians 5:18–20](#) (NASB). Compare these verses with Jesus’ teaching on reconciliation. Both are in the passive voice, “be reconciled.” We seek forgiveness, but reconciliation requires a response from the other party. Reconciliation must be *received* to be complete. Although we seek reconciliation, a person may rebuff our attempt at *diallasso*. God, however, will always welcome us with open arms.

Through Christ, we can be certain of our reconciliation with God. How does this security stabilize you as you seek reconciliation with others who may not be as willing or able to forgive?



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35



Application: Do You Need to Seek Reconciliation?

Are you in conflict with someone because you've offended him or her? Is God leading you to seek reconciliation? What steps do you need to take with God's help?

Ideally you reconcile face-to-face, in the right time, having thought through your words, and without casting any blame or trying to justify your sinful actions or attitude. You say, "I am here to tell you I was wrong. I deeply regret my inappropriate and sinful words and actions. Will you please, please forgive me?" —Chuck Swindoll

Lesson Two: Forgiving Those Who've Offended Us

Jesus gave a second lesson on forgiveness to those who have been offended. Peter had asked Jesus about the frequency of forgiving: "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Jesus' answer must have shocked Peter, "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" (18:22). Then Jesus gave an illustration of forgiving that Peter never forgot. Read His words in [Matthew 18:23–35](#).



Observation: When You Have Been Offended

Let's *observe* this passage. Peter viewed forgiveness through the narrow lens of human limitations. Figuring that our capacity to forgive runs out, he sought permission to limit forgiving to no more than seven times. Jesus, however, broke down all limitations! Rather than restrict forgiving to a certain number, He set us free to forgive anytime in any relationship.

For Jesus, the issue wasn't *frequency* but *freedom*, and the measure wasn't a human standard but the limitless grace of God. He illustrated God's grace in His parable, which contained three parts: the king's forgiveness of the servant's tremendous debt (Matthew 18:23–27); the servant's unforgiveness toward his companion and his small debt (18:28–30); the king's response when he found out (18:31–34).



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

Forgiving is truly a matter of the heart. What does the magnitude of the debt forgiven say about the heart of the king who forgave it? Likewise, what does the small debt that the servant refused to forgive say about his heart?

Summarize Jesus' point about how receiving God's forgiveness can free our hearts to forgive others.

You know what grace is? God's favor shown to those of us who don't deserve it, who cannot earn it, and who will never be able to repay. That's vertical forgiveness. Now we must deal with horizontal forgiveness. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: “The Torturers”

What does it mean, “handed him over to the torturers” (Matthew 18:34 NASB)? Chuck explains the torturing as the torment of unforgiveness. It is the gnawing resentment and bitterness, the awful gall of hate or envy from which we can't escape because we won't let go of a grudge toward someone who hurt us.



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

If the pain of an offense has taken root as bitterness in your heart, take a moment to express your feelings to the Lord. What was the offense? Acknowledge the heartache as well as the difficulty of forgiving and moving on.



Correlation: Christ’s Forgiveness Enables Us to Forgive

Who can help us forgive? Our Teacher not only instructs us but through His transforming power enables us to forgive. Paul’s instructions based on Jesus’ teaching reveal the source of our forgiving power.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31–32)

We can’t offer the restorative cup of forgiveness if our inner well is dry. God’s forgiveness must first flood our soul, and then we have the resources to “get rid of bitterness” and forgive “one another.” How does this truth encourage you to take the next steps of forgiving your offender?

I’ve been there. It’s horrible. Holding onto an offence about ruined my life until a good friend of mine said to me, “Chuck, I think it’s probably gone on long enough. You need to let it go.” He was right. I did let it go, and the torturers left. —Chuck Swindoll



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35



Application: Do You Need to Forgive?

Let's wrap up Jesus' teaching on forgiveness focusing on your relationships with your parents and children. Are you feeling distant? Resentful? Wounded because of a past offense that may be very serious, even abusive? What was the source of heartache in your parent-child relationship?

Close this study by drawing near to our teacher, Jesus, in prayer. If you need to reconcile a relationship with your parent or child, ask Jesus for the *courage* to seek forgiveness. Or if someone has injured you, ask the Lord for the *grace* to extend forgiveness.

Jesus gave two lessons on forgiveness, one to those who've wounded and the other to those who've been wounded. Whether you're the one who is seeking forgiveness or the one who needs to forgive, be assured our Lord is walking with you on your journey of forgiveness. He will help you make the next move.



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, sleepless nights and restless days are the plight of the tortured soul who will not forgive. I submit myself to the authority of Your Word that marks the path to healing. Help me to seek forgiveness from those I've offended. Help me to forgive, even as I have been forgiven by Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*."
2. Greek note on Matthew 5:24, *NET Bible*, Bible.org, netbible.org/bible/Matthew+5.



Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

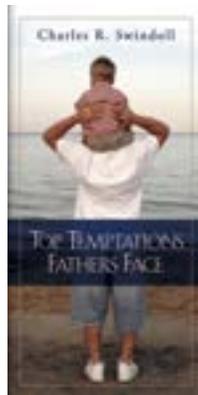
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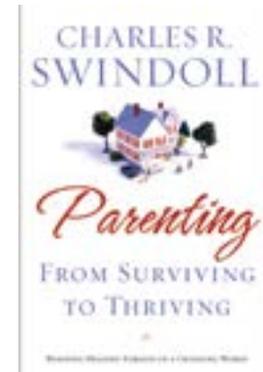
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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