

# BIBLICAL PARENTING

## STUDY ONE

### Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself

*Proverbs 22:6*

*Wise is the parent who understands, “I need to spend time with my child. I need to observe. I need to dialogue so that my child grows up knowing his or her unique, God-given design.”*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**Y**OU are embarking on the most fascinating journey of life—the journey of discovering your child. Your child may be yours by birth, adoption, or marriage; he or she may be your grandchild or nephew or niece who lives with you. This amazing, one-of-a-kind boy or girl whom God has placed in your life to nurture and guide is *your* child.

Oh, the wonders of your child! Her heart is so tender and pure. His mind hums like a power plant with imagination and curiosity. Her personality sparkles with laughter and joy like a multifaceted diamond. Your task is to explore the hidden universe that lies within your child. Unlock the secrets. And then release your child to be the mature, confident adult that God intended him or her to be.

Along the way of discovering your child, a surprising second discovery will unfold. You’ll discover yourself! Chuck Swindoll realized this parenting benefit, “It wasn’t until we began to have children that I fully began to understand how *I* am put together.” As you reveal to your child the wonders of who he or she is, God will do the same for you. As you parent, God will parent you, encouraging you to blossom right alongside your child. You can—and will, with God’s help—grow with your child!

Are you ready to follow God’s leading in the journey and joy of parenting? Let’s dig into His Word to find the way.



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## **Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself**

*Proverbs 22:6*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

As you open God's Word, open your heart to receive His wise counsel on rearing children. Reading His words may cause memories of your own childhood to surface—positive recollections as well as negative. Take a moment in prayer to invite the Lord to minister to you as you enter what may be a sensitive part of your soul.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we begin by reading the passage carefully and slowly, absorbing every word. For helpful instruction from Chuck, consult our online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." This page provides you an introduction to four important methods in Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—along with other helpful study tips. You can also follow the link to purchase a copy of Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, on which our studies are based.

Now read [Proverbs 22:6](#) in three Bible versions, noticing the differences and similarities in the translations.



### **Observation: A Closer Look**

The Hebrew word translated "way" in The New American Standard Bible is a key concept to understand. Below, we will ask the question, "What does *way* mean within the context of this verse?" Before we attempt to understand the meaning of the word (which is the task of interpretation in our *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study), let's make some observations of the passage.

*Train up the child in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6 NASB)



## Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself

*Proverbs 22:6*

By observing closely, you can identify five components of thought. In the chart below, fill in the words from the verse that fit the description.

Component	Words from the Verse
The command—the <i>what</i>	
The recipient of the action—the <i>who</i>	
The specifics of the action—the <i>how</i>	
The end of the action—the <i>when</i>	
The outcome of the action—the <i>then what</i>	

The observation phase of Bible study should spark some questions that you'd like to answer in the interpretation phase. Here are some questions to fuel your thinking:

- What is the nature of the training?
- What is the duration of the training?
- What is the implementation of the training?
- What are the results of the training?

Can you think of other questions you'd like to explore? Jot them down in the space below.



## **Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself**

*Proverbs 22:6*



### **Interpretation: A Deeper Understanding**

Asking a good question is like using a sharp knife when you're preparing food in the kitchen. Just as a paring knife in a skilled hand can slice away the peel to reveal the delicious fruit, so too can a finely honed question expose core scriptural truth. As a parent, you need answers to questions like: What does training my child look like? How is training different from instructing or lecturing? How many years should I train my child? These questions cut to the core of the issue. Let's look closer to find God's answers.

#### **“Train Up”**

The word in Hebrew translated “train up” is *hanakh*. To explore the meaning of the Hebrew word, Chuck used a Hebrew-English lexicon. The authors of the lexicon associate the word to an Arabic root, which, in one source, means to “rub [the] palate of a child with chewed dates.” In another source, it refers to a midwife rubbing the “palate of a new-born child with oil . . . before it begins to suck.”<sup>1</sup> Also, the Hebrew word *hanakh* is used three other times in the Old Testament, all with reference to dedicating a building (see Deuteronomy 20:5; 1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chronicles 7:5).<sup>2</sup>

A midwife stimulating a newborn's natural desire to suck by rubbing the baby's palate with something sweet is a vivid image. What can you conclude about the meaning of *train up* from this metaphor?

If training your child involves stimulating a latent talent or gift within your child, what may lay hidden within your child's God-given nature? Perhaps some interests or talents? Needs or longings? A thirst for a close relationship? Or a spiritual desire? What hidden gems have you seen in your child?



## Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself

*Proverbs 22:6*

### “ . . . A Child . . . ”

The Hebrew term for “child” is *na’ar*. This word is used in the Old Testament to describe children of various ages. Let’s examine three of these uses. In each of the following verses, at what stage of childhood is the “child”: *Genesis 34:19; 37:2* (NASB); and *1 Samuel 4:20–21* (NLT)?

What conclusion about the duration of parenting can you draw from these references? In other words, through which stages of your child’s life are you responsible to train him or her?

### “ . . . The Way He Should Go . . . ”

The Hebrew phrase for “the way he should go” can be translated literally, “upon the mouth of his way,” which is an idiom meaning, “in accord with his way.” Most English versions emphasize the word *should*, implying a prescribed and proper direction in which to lead the child. But the Hebrew idiom emphasizes *his way* and *in accord with*, pointing to characteristics that emerge from within the child, namely, his or her personality, abilities, or natural interests. So which interpretation is correct? Should we train a child in the way he or she *should* go? Or according to his or her way?

To help solve the puzzle, let’s return to the question we posed earlier: What does *way* mean in the context of this verse? For a clue to the answer, read Proverbs 22:6 in The Amplified Bible:

*Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent],  
and when he is old he will not depart from it. (emphasis added)*



## Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself

*Proverbs 22:6*

In the amplification, the *way* of the child refers to his or her characteristics, manner, or “bent.” Let’s use the *Searching the Scriptures* correlation method to further clarify the meaning.



### Correlation: Comparing Verses

Compare *way* in Proverbs 22:6 to the same word in [Proverbs 30:18–19](#) (NASB). In the space below, write down the phrases in verse 19, and substitute the word *characteristic* for *way* to highlight the metaphorical meaning.

The ways that eagles soar, snakes slither, ships sail, and even the way that a boy romances his sweetheart are all one-of-a-kind wonders. And so is your child!

God has painted with nuance every child according to his or her own color palette. No two are alike; even identical twins are unique. God did not sketch homebody Jacob in the likeness of his twin, outdoorsman Esau. Your children’s personalities, interests, relational styles, strengths, weaknesses are different (not better or worse, just different). Measuring one child against another is like nitpicking a da Vinci painting because it’s not a Rembrandt. Both are masterpieces—and so are your children. So don’t compare siblings.

Pause to put together the interpretation of Proverbs 22:6, as you have discovered it so far. Review the meaning of each part of the verse, and then write a sentence or two in the box below that summarizes God’s plan for parenting.

“Train up (the *what*) . . . a child (the *who*) . . . in the way he should go (the *how*).”



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*Proverbs 22:6*

Now the final section, “Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The root meaning of the Hebrew word for *old* is “hair on the chin,” which suggests an age of maturity when children become young adults and are able to make it on their own.

The Hebrew word for *depart* means “to turn aside.” When you help your children know their bents, they will follow their “way” and not turn aside from it. Why would they? They are living in harmony with how God made them!

*As long as you have a child under your roof, you are responsible for making the things of God palatable, meaningful, important until this young girl or this young boy is of marriageable age. You never stop parenting. Throughout those years we continue to cultivate a taste, to dedicate, to inaugurate, to initiate, to consecrate. We’re giving time to our child during those growing-up years. —Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: The Starting Place**

How can you discover your child today? Start by tuning in to his or her deeds: “It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself” (Proverbs 20:11 NASB). A child speaks through the megaphone of his or her deeds. If you listen, you can hear him or her saying, “This is me. Please notice. I’m not him. I’m not her. Let me be me.” Reflect on what you’ve observed in your child’s deeds. Be sensitive. Watch closely. Listen intently. What have your child’s deeds been communicating lately?



## Discovering Your Child . . . and Yourself

*Proverbs 22:6*

In what ways can you encourage your child's bent—his or her personality, interests, pursuits, possible vocation, relational style, gifts, and strengths?

Discovering your child is an adventure! Don't forget to discover yourself along the way. God has great things in store for your family as you follow His plan for parenting.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, help me to see Your fingerprints on my child's soul. Your handiwork began at conception, and You continue to shape and mold. Unite me with Your creative work in my child's life—and help me to grow as well, to be the person You made me to be. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. Frances Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 335.
2. Chuck used another source to define the word *hanakh* as “dedicate, inaugurate, initiate.” See R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 301.



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY TWO

### The Bents in Your Baby

#### *Selected Scriptures*

*Fit your training to your child so that it is in keeping with his or her individual gift or bent.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**Y**OUR child is like a beautiful tapestry knit together by God, the master weaver of the soul. David marveled at God's delicate handiwork:

*You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.* (Psalm 139:13 NASB)

Your child's hair texture, eye color, voice timbre, and body shape; personality, interests, moods, and abilities—God entwines all these intricate threads in a unique pattern to create the masterpiece that is your child.

These characteristics, or *bents*, become more visible over time. Each stage of your child's lifespan—infancy, childhood, adolescence, early adulthood—reveals new features of God's design. Your job as a parent, as we learned in the previous study of Proverbs 22:6, is to fit your training to your child so that it is in keeping with his or her individual gift or bent.

Seeing the bent accurately is the first parental task; responding appropriately is the second. In this study and the next, we'll take a closer look at the concept of bents, both toward good and evil. As you search the Scriptures for God's guidance in these important parental tasks of discovering and responding, pause to pray for insight from His Word.



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## **The Bents in Your Baby**

### *Selected Scriptures*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Make the psalmist's prayer your own as you begin your study.

*Open my eyes to see  
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:18)*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

Open the Word and read [Psalm 139](#) focusing on each phrase and letting it sink in. In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck Swindoll encourages careful reading of Scripture:

In order to become astute observers, we need to read as if for the first time. When we train ourselves to see God's Word with fresh eyes, chances are good that we'll notice details we've never seen there before.<sup>1</sup>

What do you see in this Psalm that you may have never noticed before?



### **Observation: The Origin of Your Child's Bents**

Observation is the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.<sup>2</sup> As you look closely at Psalm 139, can you see a progression of thoughts? David composed this ancient hymn in four stanzas that reveal individual themes as the passage unfolds. Having overviewed the Psalm, can you now tune your ear to the Psalm's personal message for your child?

Imagine God saying these words to him or her. Summarize the verses under each heading as your child might understand them.



## **The Bents in Your Baby**

### *Selected Scriptures*

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God Knows Me—Psalm 139:1–6

God Is with Me—Psalm 139:7–12

God Made Me—Psalm 139:13–18

God Search Me—Psalm 139:19–24



## **The Bents in Your Baby**

### *Selected Scriptures*

Just as God was “intimately acquainted” with David’s ways, so also is He with your child’s ways (Psalm 139:3 NASB). The Hebrew word for *ways* is the same word used in Proverbs 22:6 and includes every aspect of your child’s being. Your child’s sitting and rising (behaviors), ups and downs (moods), comings and goings (pursuits), and even his or her thoughts that are so secret to you are pages of an open book to God. How can God read your child so well? Because He is the author of your child!



### **Interpretation: God’s Hand in Your Child’s Life**

Digging into a biblical term can unearth rich nuggets of truth. When you discover a gem, polish it into a *principle*. A principle is a statement based on a truth that transcends time and culture; it applies to all people, from the shepherds of David’s era to the millennials of the postmodern age. Below are some truths from the text, followed by principles. We’ll get you started with one principle, and then you can create your own as you consider God’s hand in your child’s life as expressed in Psalm 139:13–15:

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body  
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!  
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.  
You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,  
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

TRUTH: God Himself—not some impersonal force of nature—forms each person at conception in the womb.

PRINCIPLE: We should value each person as a creation of God.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES:



## **The Bents in Your Baby**

### *Selected Scriptures*

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TRUTH: Because God made my child, He knows all aspects of my child.

PRINCIPLE: I can ask God for understanding and insight into my child.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES:

TRUTH: God made my child unique in body, mind, gifts, abilities, interests, and needs.

PRINCIPLE: I should accept my child and avoid favoritism.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES:



## **The Bents in Your Baby**

### *Selected Scriptures*

TRUTH: My child is fearfully and wonderfully made.

PRINCIPLE: I can take delight in my child as a wonderful treasure from God.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES:

God Himself knit together the fine details of my child, and the workshop for His marvelous creation was the protected and secret place of the womb. The next verse describes the great care that God takes in watching over the creative process at my child's "unformed" embryonic stage when He is coding His instructions into the strands of my child's DNA.

*You saw me before I was born.  
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.  
Every moment was laid out  
before a single day had passed. (Psalm 139:16)*

No wonder God knows the "days" of your child's life—He formed his or her "ways"! Your child is no mere byproduct of biological chance, in the same way that a palace is no mere pile of randomly tossed bricks. A skilled architect supervised the building process from imagination to blueprints to construction. And so did God, the divine Architect, watch over the masterful design of your child.



### **Correlation: The Beauty of God's Handiwork**

Let's correlate the key actions to other biblical texts to enhance the meaning of some of the words from Psalm 139. Look up the verses below in the version noted, and then write down the meaning in the space provided.



## The Bents in Your Baby

### *Selected Scriptures*

“You *formed . . . wove . . . skillfully wrought . . .*” (Psalm 139:13, 15 NASB, emphasis added). Compare with Job’s clothing metaphor in [Job 10:11](#) and the making of the curtain in the tabernacle in [Exodus 26:36](#).

“. . . made in *secret . . .*” (139:15 NASB, emphasis added). Compare with the protective place of God in [Psalm 32:7](#).

What a wonderful work of God is your child!

*Parenting has moments of great ecstasy when you take delight in your children. When you find certain things in their lives delightful, tell them. Let them know that. Let them know they delight you. Express to them how grateful you are for the way God has put them together. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: The Starting Place

As a parent, you can cooperate with your child’s good bents by watching over your child with the same diligence that God took in His design.

- *Avoid re-bending God’s bents.* In other words, don’t try to “bend” children whom God designed to be artists into athletes!
- *Applaud your child’s marvelous qualities when they emerge.* Let your child know the wonderful ways God has made him or her.



## The Bents in Your Baby

### *Selected Scriptures*

- *Celebrate your child's unique bents, rather than compare or show favoritism.* Be careful not to tell one child that he or she is better than another child.
- *Nurture your child's self-image as you tell the story of his or her divine design.* Recite to him or her the wonderful truths of Psalm 139!

Resist the temptation to force your child into your own mold, and don't hesitate to verbalize your praise and encouragement. What are some specific ways that you can nurture or cooperate with the good bents in your child?

Like everyone, your child has godly bents *and* sinful bents. In the following study, we'll take a closer look at David's admission, "In sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 NASB) and Paul's teaching about how "sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12 NASB). We'll learn about your child's inclinations to sin and how the "rod and reproof give wisdom" (Proverbs 29:15 NASB). While we *cooperate* with our child's good bents, we take steps to *counteract* the sinful bents. The next study reveals how.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, help me to see Your fingerprints on my child's soul. Your handiwork began at conception, and You continue to shape and mold. Unite me with Your creative work in my child's life—and help me to grow as well, to be the person You made me to be. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 95.
2. 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](#)."



# BIBLICAL PARENTING

## STUDY THREE

### Straightening Granddad's Bent

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*

*During their child's formative years, parents cooperate with the good bents and counteract the evil, for both are present in every child.*

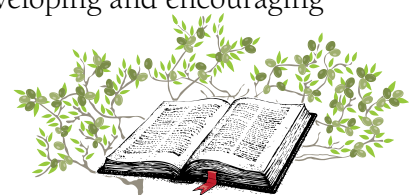
—Charles R. Swindoll

So far in our study, we've learned that biblical parenting involves training our children *according to their bents*, not necessarily according to the way we want them to go (Proverbs 22:6). Your child was born with divinely stitched patterns already in place (Psalm 139:13–16). Your job is to discover the way your child is made, nurture the good bents, and counteract the sinful bents. Encourage the positive; discourage the negative.

What *beneficial* bents have you detected in your child? In the list below, use the select tool to highlight the characteristics that most describe your child.

Artistic	Sensitive	Athletic
Thoughtful	Verbal	Organized
Creative	Competitive	Carefree
Focused	Relational	Task-oriented
Boisterous	Reserved	Musical
Introverted	Extroverted	Industrious
Easygoing	Builder	Inquisitive

This list can go on and on. As the years go by and each stage passes, keep on developing and encouraging these treasures.



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## **Straightening Granddad's Bent**

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*

As you do, also watch for the *detrimental* bents. These are the streaks of clay in the marble, the presence of sin that you must counteract. What are these negative bents? Where do they originate? How can you help your child deal with them? Let's find out from God's Word.



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to lead you through His Word. You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word: "I often pray, 'Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.'"<sup>1</sup>

Write your prayer here if you wish.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

Every child is born with a sin nature, which is a general bent toward wrongdoing. David lamented, "For I was born a sinner— / yes, from the moment my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). How can a child be *born* a sinner?

Let's take a closer look at three passages of Scripture that reveal the dark side of the human soul.



## Straightening Granddad's Bent

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*



### Observation: The Origin of Your Child's Bents

Observation, the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* method, involves perceiving the who, how, what, why, and where of Scripture.<sup>2</sup> From whom did our sin nature originate and how was it passed to us (*Romans 5:12*)?

What results from our sin nature (*3:10–12, 23*)?

What are the consequences of sin (*6:23; 7:5*)?

We would prefer to skip over the facts about our sin nature; however, ignoring bad news doesn't make it go away. Better to understand the truth about ourselves so we can help our children be victorious over sin.



## **Straightening Granddad's Bent**

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*



### **Interpretation: The Sin Nature Understood**

In the interpretation phase, we can consult commentaries, dictionaries, and works of theology written by reliable Bible scholars to help us understand the meaning of the passage. A handy guide to Christian theology is *Basic Theology* by Charles C. Ryrie. In this volume, you'll find three biblical categories regarding our sin nature that can help you understand the human condition.

### **Imputed Sin**

According to the apostle Paul, the bloodline of sin's curse can be traced to the first human: "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned" (Romans 5:12). Your child bears an imprint of sin that was transmitted from Adam. Theologians call this "imputed sin."

No amount of personal merit can pardon guilt or give eternal life; only God can counteract your child's sin nature by giving your child a new nature in Christ. Read the following verses and insert your child's name in the blanks:

"God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for \_\_\_\_\_ sin, so that \_\_\_\_\_ could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

"This means that \_\_\_\_\_ who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought \_\_\_\_\_ back to himself through Christ" (5:17–18).

This is the gospel in a nutshell. God sent His Son, Jesus, to bear your child's guilt on the cross. He freely offers your child forgiveness and a way to heaven by faith. Share this good news with your child at an early age!

*Your primary responsibility is to lead your child to saving faith.*

What about young children and mentally disabled individuals who are not able to understand the gospel? If they die before trusting Christ as their Savior, are they saved? For a reassuring discussion of this topic, read the article "[\*Can Infants and Mentally Disabled Individuals Go to Heaven?\*](#)" on the Insight for Living Ministries website.



## **Straightening Granddad's Bent**

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*

Write out the plan of salvation for you to share with your child. If you need help formulating the words, we recommend the [tracts](#) for children published by EvanTell. Also, on this website, you'll find a clear explanation of God's [plan of salvation](#) based on John 3:16.

### **Sinful Choices**

Two-year-old children may test their parents' authority to know the limits of their emerging autonomy. This is a sign of healthy child development, and parents can help their children feel secure by gently and patiently keeping boundaries firm. As the child grows older, you will detect the difference between child-like experimentation and sinful defiance, which is evident in his or her disobedience, out-of-control temper, sneakiness, and just plain old lying. Be alert, discerning, and determined to nip sinful attitudes and actions in the bud by teaching your child to obey and respect authority.

*Your second responsibility is to teach your child to submit to authority.*

We will examine the subject of discipline in study 5, "Shaping the Will with Wisdom." For now, determine to put a stop to your child's sinful choices the moment you see them sprout.

### **Inherited Patterns**

Another source of detrimental bents in your child is the patterns of sin that run like sap through your family tree from generation to generation. These inherited bents are implanted deep within your child's physical, emotional, and spiritual DNA.

*Your third responsibility is to counteract sinful family patterns.*

When a child acts just like his or her parent, grandparent, or even great grandparent, we sometimes say, "The acorn didn't fall far from the tree." Seeds of drug dependency, a hot temper, power and control, and other sin problems can sprout from the same family root.



## Straightening Granddad's Bent

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*

God warned His people about generational sins. Read the following verses and note the repeating phrases:  
*Exodus 20:5–6; 34:6–7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:8–9.*

The word, *sins*, in the phrase “the sins of the parents” (Exodus 34:7) is from a Hebrew word meaning “to bend, to twist, to distort, to pervert.” Bents of this sort tend to run in families, even to the third and fourth generation. However, the lineage of God’s lovingkindness stretches to thousands!



### Correlation: God’s Mercy

Although children can catch their parents’ disease, God has the cure in the atonement of His Son foreshadowed in the sacrificial system and prophesied by Isaiah. Look up these verses and write down the ways that *sin* is connected to God’s atoning mercy: *Leviticus 16:20–22; Isaiah 53:6.*

By God’s grace and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, family patterns of inherited sin can stop with your child—but it takes insight, awareness, and diligence. Stand with God against these inherited sins for the sake of your child!

*Please do not lose heart as you’re in the process of rearing your children. Please know that there is good news on the horizon. There is a way to correct and straighten these issues, but looking the other way is not one of them. It will take time. It will take determination. It will take prayer, and it will take certain insights that the Scriptures can give us.*  
—Chuck Swindoll



## **Straightening Granddad's Bent**

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*



### **Application: Straightening the Sinful Bents**

In the next study, we'll examine inherited sins passed from generation to generation. In preparation, conclude this study by completing your own family history of inherited physical, psychological, and spiritual bents.

You will need separate pieces of paper. On the first page, list the physical bents of your child's great grandparents, grandparents, and parents that may be passed down, such as inherited diseases like cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. On the second page, list the psychological/emotional bents, such as depression, anxiety issues, chemical dependencies, relationship problems. And on the third page, list the spiritual bents, such as immorality, abuse, rebellion against God, even satanic strongholds.

Share your findings with a trusted family member and compare notes to discover more insights into the bents in your family tree. In the space below, write down the inherited patterns that you want to stop. Make an action plan regarding the resources you need and the steps you will take. Use the space below to write down a few notes, beginning with a plan to share the gospel with your children.

With God's grace, the inherited sins in your family can stop with your generation. God can help you straighten the bents in your family lineage, and His mercy will transform your family for generations to come!



## **Straightening Granddad's Bent**

*Exodus 20:4–6; 34:5–9*



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, I need help. Family change is a complicated process, and I need discernment. I need courage to face the facts. I need understanding to be able to call inherited sin what it is rather than rationalize it. Help me in this challenging task and cover my children and their children with Your healing mercy for many generations to come. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### **ENDNOTES**

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. 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](#)."



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY FOUR

### Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

*God, the ultimate Artist, builds into each child an original pattern. The parents’ task is to make a serious study of how this child is put together and cultivate the good things.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**I**n a typical airport, travelers crisscross wide corridors en route to far-off places. Almost all of them carry luggage—backpacks slung over shoulders, bags draped at one side, wheeled suitcases pulled behind. It’s a luggage parade!

When these travelers arrive at their destinations, unpacking is the first order of business. Every item must find its place. Socks and shirts and coats and dresses are neatly tucked away in drawers and closets, and when the bag itself is empty, it goes into the closet as well.

Imagine how strange it would be if no one unpacked their bags and everyone hauled their luggage with them wherever they went! Yet we do this all the time. All of us—even our children—carry baggage. Not literal suitcases, of course. We carry emotional and spiritual baggage, which consists of the negative traits that were passed down the family line from our parents to us and from us to our children.

In this study we’ll examine how a bagful of sin tumbled down the generational conveyor belt in Abraham’s family. And we’ll be encouraged by the example of one progeny who determined not to fall in line with his forefathers. He unpacked his ancestral baggage and lived free of his family’s sin. Who is this courageous man, and how did he break the pattern? Let’s find out!



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## **Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”**

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

If you did the assignment in the previous study on the inherited “bents” in your family, you are aware of the ancestral baggage that may be present. And yet, God has been faithful through the generations. He has been working to bring you and your children to this place of growth. Pause now to thank the Lord for His sustaining grace and invite Him to continue working in your life and the lives of your family members.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

For this study, the best tool from the *Searching the Scriptures* toolbox is the contrast-and-comparison method.<sup>1</sup> We'll read six passages, observing the characters, situation, sin, and consequences in each passage. Then, we'll review our observations, noting similarities and differences and interpreting our findings. Finally, we will draw correlations and craft principles for application. Golden nuggets of truth for your family await to be discovered!



### **Observation: A Case Study of Ancestral Baggage**

God chose Abraham and his family as the keepers of the covenant—God's plan of redemption for the whole world. And yet, the baggage of sin in Abraham's life almost sunk him and his sons!

#### **Abraham**

Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, was also a father of lies. His habit of lying is not the legacy we would expect from the great patriarch; however, it's recorded in Scripture, and it certainly triggered terrible troubles for his offspring. Read the passages below and write down what you observe in the text under each heading.

*Abraham plants the seed of generational sin. Read [Genesis 12:10–20](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, Abraham's sin, and the consequences.



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

*Abraham cultivates generational sin by repeating it. Read [Genesis 20](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, Abraham’s sin, and the consequences.

In this passage, take special note of the way Abraham rationalized his lie ([Genesis 20:11–12](#)) and manipulated his wife ([20:13](#)). What did he say and do?

Compare and contrast the two accounts. What is similar? What is different?



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

Abraham’s fear conjured a half-truth; a half-truth created a misunderstanding; a misunderstanding led to a serious problem, which prompted embarrassment, injury . . . and near disaster. If God hadn’t intervened, the covenant that depended on Sarah and Abraham having a baby would have crumbled. God’s redemptive plan nearly ended before it began—all because of little white lies!

And it got worse. Instead of confessing when he got caught, Abraham gave excuses, minimized his sin, and manipulated his own wife. Unless pulled out by the roots, sin generates sin and always hurts the ones we love. In this case, Abraham’s wife and his future son and grandson.

### Isaac and Jacob

Read the passages below and write down what you observe under each heading.

*Isaac repeats his father’s deception. Read [Genesis 26:1, 7–11](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, Isaac’s sin, and the consequences.

*Jacob deceives his father, Isaac, with Rebekah’s help. Read [Genesis 27:1–29](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, Jacob’s sin, and the consequences.



## **Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”**

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

Compare and contrast the two accounts. What is similar? What is different?

Abraham's lies produced a crop of flaws in his family. In a performance eerily like his father's lie, Isaac lied to Abimelech, who was most likely a descendent of the king whom Abraham had deceived years before. Years later, Rebekah borrowed lines from the family script to deceive her own husband for the sake of her favorite son, Jacob.

With each new branch of Abraham's spreading family tree, the sinful bents of deception grew more twisted and gnarled. The stories read like a Shakespearian tragedy: wife plots against husband, son dupes dying father, brother double-crosses brother. What was Sir Walter Scott's famous line? “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!”

Abraham's habit of lying spun through the family in tangles of cunning, guile, treachery, jealousy . . . and near bloodshed.

### **Jacob's Sons and Joseph**

Read the passages below and write down what you observe under each heading.

*Jacob's sons plot against their brother Joseph and deceive their father. Read [Genesis 37:3–35](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, the sin of Jacob's sons, and the consequences.



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

*Joseph breaks the family pattern by revealing his identity to his brothers. Read [Genesis 45:1–15](#).*

List the characters. Describe the situation, Joseph’s *right* response, and the consequences.

Compare and contrast the accounts from Genesis 37 and 45. What is similar? What is different?

Instead of perpetuating the ancestral pattern and returning lie for lie, treachery for treachery, evil for evil, Joseph, by God’s grace, reversed the cycle of sin with honesty and forgiveness. Joseph’s response to his backstabbing brothers shone a ray of hope for a new day for this dysfunctional family.



### **Interpretation: Principles as Pathways to Follow**

A principle is a statement based on a truth that transcends time and culture; it applies to all people in all times in history. Below are some truths from the text, followed by principles based on the case study of Abraham’s family. We’ll get you started with one principle, and then you can create your own.



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

*Unpack the baggage of half-truths, deception, and secrets. Sample principle: “I want to be an example to my children of telling the truth.”*

*Unpack the baggage of rationalization, minimizing, and manipulation. Sample principle: “I want to help my children admit sin and encourage an environment of forgiveness.”*

*Unpack the baggage of favoritism, jealousy, and sibling rivalry. Sample principle: “I want to resist at all costs the tendency to compare my children with each other.”*

*As your children grow up, you will notice tendencies in them. You can see these things occurring on the playground. Or you can see them around the table as the conversation is held. Or you can see them in a sibling rivalry. “A child is known by his doings.” Wake up and see what your children are doing. —Chuck Swindoll*



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*



### Correlation: Wisdom from the Proverbs

In the correlation phase, we find supporting truths from similar Scriptures. Proverbs offers wise words of counsel to pack in your ancestral bags for the next generation. The following Proverbs offer what wisdom to help your family replace the foolishness from the past?

*Proverbs 12:19*

*Proverbs 20:7*



### Application: Dealing with Your Family’s Ancestral Baggage

Think how much heartache could have been spared Abraham’s family if someone in his life had confronted his lying. The family baggage might have been unpacked early on and replaced with a new legacy of honesty, confession, and forgiveness.

Don’t be like some members of your family who shrug off the issues, saying, “Well, you know our family—we always keep secrets from each other.” Or “Well, you know dad—anger is just his way.” Or “Well, you know mom—she has to be in control.” Instead, be an agent of change like Joseph!



## Unpacking Our “Ancestral Baggage”

*Genesis 25:19–21, 24–28*

Perhaps no one trained you to behave any different than your parents, but now you can train in your children a new way to behave. What new ways can you teach your children to counteract the negative bents in your family tree?

The good work you do now in the lives of your children will reap benefits for years, perhaps, generations to come. Don't delay. Find strength from God and His Word and start unpacking your ancestral baggage today.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, help me in this delicate issue related to child rearing. Open my eyes to the baggage in my family. Point it out. Make it clear. And help me to stay faithful to the hard work of parenting, as I unpack the ancestral baggage and change the course of my family history. In the name of Jesus, 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](#)."



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY FIVE

### Shaping the Will with Wisdom

*Selected Proverbs*

*Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and consequences. Uphold the dignity of your child. Do so in public and in private. Show the world you delight in your children.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**N**OW we come to a core teaching of biblical parenting: *loving discipline*. Discipline is a vital expression of parental love, as the Proverb says, “Those who love their children care enough to discipline them” (Proverbs 13:24).

Discipline and love must go hand in hand. To neglect discipline is to withhold love and disciplining a child without love can harm the child. What exactly is loving discipline? To clarify this crucial parental function, we need to make some distinctions. But first, let’s prepare our hearts as we venture into this subject in which we desperately need God’s wisdom.



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

According to James 1:5, God offers His wisdom with an open hand and a willing heart.

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.*

Ask the Lord for wisdom—to know when and how to discipline your child, to discern your own motives, and to grow in grace as you walk closer with your heavenly Father.



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## **Shaping the Will with Wisdom**

### *Selected Proverbs*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

The same arms that wrap a child in protective hugs also guide a child with persuasive correction. Wise parents know to discipline with love and avoid extremes. The following three distinctions provide helpful guidelines from Scripture.



### **Observation: Three Distinctions to Keep in Mind**

Observation, the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, involves understanding what a verse is saying without adding our own ideas to it.<sup>1</sup>

Read the following verses and write down what you observe regarding God's heart toward those who are weak and His determination to stand for what's right.

*He will not shout*

*or raise his voice in public.*

*He will not crush the weakest reed*

*or put out a flickering candle.*

*He will bring justice to all who have been wronged. (Isaiah 42:2–3)*

The “weakest reed” and the “flickering candle” represent those who have been abused. Abuse is never justified when disciplining a child, which brings us to the first distinction.

#### *The Distinction between Discipline and Abuse*

Abuse is unfair and shocking, degrading and demoralizing, extreme and even brutal. It erupts like a volcano spewing red-hot anger, and its aim is to punish. Abuse can be physical, such as slapping, pushing, shaking, and jerking; or emotional, such as shaming with sarcasm, withholding affection, name-calling, and yelling. Abuse creates terror in a child's heart and leaves deep scars on the soul.



## **Shaping the Will with Wisdom**

### *Selected Proverbs*

The aim of discipline is correction. Discipline is fair and expected, upholds the child's dignity and value, and is restrained and controlled. It is motivated by a desire to correct wrongdoing for the good of the child and to enhance self-control and a sense of security—which leads to the second distinction.

#### *The Distinction between Crushing and Shaping*

You can see this distinction in your child's face in the moment of confrontation. Read [Proverbs 15:13](#) and [17:22](#). How do these verses describe the self-confident joy of a child who is shaped versus the self-doubting sadness of a child who is crushed?

The next distinction focuses on the child's heart, which is the spring from which his or her actions flow.

#### *The Distinction between Childishness and Defiance*

Childishness comes in a variety of coloring-box hues: unrestrained energy, fidgety curiosity, clumsy spilling, distracted forgetfulness, failure-prone fumbling, roller-coaster mood swings, and mud-pie messiness.

Defiance, on the other hand, paints in darker shades: deliberate and stubborn resistance, hateful and selfish bullying, repeated disobedience, sassing, sneakiness, temper tantrums, and a belligerent and demanding attitude.

Loving discipline deals with defiance head on. It changes your child's course from a destructive path of defiant rebellion against all authority, including God, to a path of love for self and others and respect for authority.

Describing loving discipline is simple; being loving is not so easy! Shaping a child's will without being too permissive or too harsh requires the wisdom of Solomon. Thankfully, the book of Proverbs offers us the wisdom of Solomon! Let's open its pages to find helpful guidance.



## Shaping the Will with Wisdom

### *Selected Proverbs*



#### Interpretation: Four Principles for Wise Parenting

The following verses in Proverbs cast light on four principles to lead you safely across the tightrope without tipping to one extreme or the other.

**Start early.** The first principle is in Proverbs 13:24 NASB.

*He who withholds his rod hates his son,  
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.*

What are the two styles of parenting contrasted in this verse? And why do you think a child might perceive one style as lacking love and the other as expressing love?

Notice the word *diligently*. Chuck Swindoll says that the noun form of the Hebrew word means “dawn,” and the verbal form means “seek early.” Tucked into this word is our first principle, namely, to start disciplining your child in the early years when the sun is dawning on his or her life journey. As the years pass, the window of opportunity closes for discipline to be effective for your child. Read [Proverbs 19:18](#) and note the somber consequences of not starting early.



## Shaping the Will with Wisdom

### *Selected Proverbs*

**Stay balanced.** The second principle emerges from Proverbs 29:15 NASB.

*The rod and reproof give wisdom,  
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*

Two words in the first line of this proverb describe two elements of proper discipline: instruction and consequences. *Reproof* refers to verbal instruction and warning. *Rod* refers to consequences. To reprove is to speak plainly about rules or boundaries. The rod is the corrective response when rules are broken or boundaries are crossed. A reproof uses *words*; the rod, *action*. Keeping these two elements of discipline *in balance* is essential. There is a time to stop talking and act; other times, it's wise to explain further before jumping to a quick consequence.

Look closely at other proverbs that describe reproof-and-rod discipline: [Proverbs 3:12](#); [15:5](#); [22:15](#); [23:13–14](#). Write down what these verses teach.

A crucial step in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method is application, which involves taking God's Word personally. Application invites God's truth to grip us in areas that need attention and call us to action. Let's pause right now to think of ways to apply the reproof-and-rod principle.



## Shaping the Will with Wisdom

### *Selected Proverbs*

In the space below, write out three rules or boundaries that you need to explain to your children or grandchildren (if you are assisting in their rearing)—the *reproof*. Then list the consequences of disobedience—the *rod*. Here's an example for a young child, "Put away your toys when Mommy tells you. If you disobey, you will lose the toys you didn't put away until you obey next time." Remember, no discipline should take children by surprise. Clear instructions set the table for effective corrections.

Now let's continue with two more principles for wise parenting.

**Be consistent.** Take a moment to read [Hebrews 12:5–10](#). Write down the similarities between our heavenly Father's discipline and discipline from an earthly father.

By the way, now is a good time to grab a Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia. Look for entries such as *parenting* and *children*. Read over the material that describes how children and parents related in biblical times, especially in the Old Testament, since that's the period in which Proverbs was composed. Make some notes about things that struck you as significant to your interpretation of these principles.

**Be reasonable.** A final principle flows from the compassion of Christ. When you see childish behavior, give correction from a soft heart. Remember your own childhood and apply the oil of good humor and understanding. Being stern and unreasonable is like dumping grit in the gears, but reasonableness helps a relationship run smooth.



## Shaping the Will with Wisdom

### *Selected Proverbs*



#### **Correlation: God's Love and Discipline**

God's love and reproofs flow together in a steady stream. What is true today is true tomorrow; what was wrong before is wrong now, whether done in public or private. The entire stream flows within the secure banks of a consistent, loving relationship.

Say words of *support* as consistently as words of *correction*. Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and consequences. Assure your child how much you delight in him or her. How does [Psalm 18:19–20](#) illustrate God's delight in us that we can transfer to our children?

Further principles that emerge from our study are these: *explain rules beforehand; discipline with dignity (privately); administer consequences firmly; assure tenderly*. Now it's your turn to write any other principles you've discovered and how you plan to put loving discipline into practice.

*Be consistent. Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and punishment. Otherwise, you exasperate your child. It's easy to exasperate and frustrate a child by overly engaging in discipline. How unwise. It builds fear, resentment, and anger. Continue to uphold the dignity of your child. Do so in public and private. Let the child have the assurance how much you delight in her or him. How valuable that is, and you will realize its value more as time passes. —Chuck Swindoll*



## **Shaping the Will with Wisdom**

### *Selected Proverbs*



### **Application: Straightening the Sinful Bents**

If you're a grandparent, your role is to undergird and support your adult children who are parents. Affirm them and let them know what a good job they are doing. Talk about issues, and ask for clarification, but don't take over their job. How wrong it is for a grandparent to undermine the authority of parents by giving the child anything he or she wants despite the parents' values . . . or by usurping the parenting role and disciplining the child as if you were the parent.

Clarifying the roles between parents and grandparents requires open discussion. As we close this study, write down a plan for the adults in your family to talk about discipline issues. What topics would you like to discuss? What principles are important to emphasize? Is spanking an appropriate correction for defiance? When and how should it be done? What clarifications can you make to the roles of parents and grandparents in rearing children? Setting the course for discipline as a family will make your children even more secure.

Discipline your children because you care about them and want to protect them. Through discipline, you will align with God in the process of shaping your children into the people God intends them to become.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, help us in the journey of parenting to grow under Your loving hand of discipline in our lives. Help us to model a submissive spirit to Your authority. Shape our will. Mold our thinking. Create in our homes a secure place where our children can become mature individuals who love You with their whole hearts. In the name of Jesus, 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](#)."



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY SIX

### Delighting in Your Children

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*

*May we become reacquainted with what it means to delight in our children, to find pleasure in them and them in us.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HEN you pray, how do you address the Lord? When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He didn't use impersonal, clinical, or stuffy terminology to talk to God. Instead, Jesus simply said, "Our *Father*" (Matthew 6:9, emphasis added).

We've been adopted into God's family, and we, too, can call Him "Father" (Romans 8:15)—how extraordinary! And, according to the psalmist, God delights in His children:

*The LORD directs the steps of the godly.  
He delights in every detail of their lives. (Psalm 37:23)*

One of the most profound ways parents can teach their children a sound theology of God is to *delight* in their children as God delights in them. This doesn't mean unbridled and undisciplined indulgence; neither does it mean intractable and inflexible discipline.

What does it mean to delight in one's children as a reflection of God's delight? Let's take a look.



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## **Delighting in Your Children**

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

As you open God's Word to find guidance on delighting in your children, pause to reflect on His delight in you. Let David's words guide your reflection:

*I love you, LORD;  
you are my strength.  
The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;  
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.  
He is my shield, the power that saves me,  
and my place of safety.  
I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,  
and he saved me from my enemies. . . .  
He led me to a place of safety;  
he rescued me because he delights in me. (Psalm 18:1–3; 19)*

Do you truly believe that God delights in you? Linger on the final four words of verse 19: "he delights in me." Open your heart to receive God's delight in you as you say the words aloud, *God delights in me*. He does indeed! In prayer, receive His fatherly love toward you and thank God for His care and encouragement.



## Delighting in Your Children

1 Thessalonians 2:5–12



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Through His Word, God reveals how to pass along what we've received. Like five beacons guiding a ship to harbor to deliver its lifesaving goods, five passages in Scripture help us deliver God's delight to our children.



### Observation: Biblical Words That Portray a Happy Home

A topical Bible study in the *Searching the Scriptures* method involves examining a single concept in various passages. One verse or passage offers one shade of meaning, and as we examine other passages on the same theme, we can add colors and hues to our understanding to form a complete picture.<sup>1</sup>

In Chuck Swindoll's message, he examined five passages on parenting that help explain how to delight in your child. Use the chart on the next page as a guide to read these passages at NetBible.org and to discover for yourself the meanings of the words on which Chuck focused.

When you click on the Bible verse link, you'll see two panels on the NetBible.org website. On the left panel, you'll see the English version of the text. Select the Hebrew or Greek tab on the right panel, which reveals the Scripture in that language. Now you can view the English Bible and Hebrew or Greek Bible side-by-side.

To find the definition of a Hebrew or Greek word, select a word in the English Bible, such as *delight* in Proverbs 3:12. The Hebrew word will be highlighted in the same verse on the right panel, and a text box containing the definition of the word will appear. If you double-click on the Hebrew or Greek word, you can choose between a "Strong's Search" (which shows other passages in which the Hebrew or Greek word appears) or a "Word Study" (which gives more lexical information).

In the following chart, look up the verse at NetBible.org, and write down your summary of the definition of each word as it appears in the New English Translation (NET Bible). (Remember: select the Hebrew or Greek tab on the right panel to open the Hebrew or Greek Bible. Then select the English word in the verse on the left panel to reveal the Hebrew or Greek word and the definition.) We'll list the verses in the order that Chuck explains them in his message.



## Delighting in Your Children

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*

Verse	Word	Definition
<i>Proverbs 3:12</i>	“delights” ( <i>ratsah</i> )	
<i>Hebrews 12:6</i>	“accepts” ( <i>paradechomai</i> )	
<i>Ephesians 6:4</i>	“raise . . . up” ( <i>ektrepho</i> ), “discipline” ( <i>paideia</i> ), and “instruction” ( <i>nouthesia</i> )	
<i>1 Thessalonians 2:7</i>	“caring” ( <i>thalpo</i> )	
<i>1 Thessalonians 2:11–12</i>	“exhorting” ( <i>parakaleo</i> ), “encouraging” ( <i>paramuteomai</i> ), and “insisting” ( <i>marturomai</i> )	



## Delighting in Your Children

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*



### Interpretation: Delighting Enhances Self-Worth

Review this list of terms: *delights, accepts, raise up, discipline, instruction, caring, exhorting, encouraging, and insisting*. What a wonderful description of parenting at its best! These actions boost your children's self-esteem and communicate that they are worth your attention and affection. Parents have a unique role to nourish and cherish their children, to draw out their true personality in a warm, accepting environment. Tie a mental string around this list of words by summing up the concepts in a few sentences.



### Correlation: Word Pictures for Delighting in Our Children

Word pictures also convey the concept of delighting in our children, and none are more instructive than those in Psalm 127:3–5. Read these verses and in the space below explain the meaning of the metaphors: *gift, reward, arrows, and quiver*.

*Children are a gift from the LORD;  
they are a reward from him.*

*Children born to a young man  
are like arrows in a warrior's hands.*

*How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!*

*He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.*



## Delighting in Your Children

1 Thessalonians 2:5–12

We'll look more closely at Psalm 127 and 128 in the next study, "Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget," which further explores the "delighting" concept in parenting. For now, think of your children as God's special gifts for you to guide while they live in your home. What's the result of delighting in your children? Joy! We can provide our children something that all children need and deserve: a happy home.

*It's essential if you delight in your child that you spend time with that child regardless of the age. It's essential that the words you say to your children are words of courtesy and kindness and respect. It's essential that the confidence you have in your children is communicated to them. You give discernment, and you give counsel, but you are there to encourage them on their way. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: How to Follow Through

How can we follow through with these biblical principles for parenting? Chuck summed up his message with four "Ls" of delighting in children.

- Delight in **lingering** around them. Enjoy spending time with your children and having meals with them with the television off and no distracting handheld devices.
- Delight in **listening** to them. Pay attention when they have something to say. Ask questions and discover their dreams.
- Delight in **learning** alongside them. Do projects together, read to your children, and grow together.
- Delight in **laughing** with them. Funny stuff happens in the family all the time. Lighten up! Laugh about life and tell humorous stories from your past. Having fun together is an essential ingredient in delighting in your child.

Which of these lessons can you apply this week in your home?



## **Delighting in Your Children**

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*

Need more practical suggestions on how to delight in your children? Here are a few. The possibilities are endless!

- Make a surprise visit to your elementary-school-aged child at school.
- Ask your adult child how you can pray for him or her each week.
- Write and frame a prayer for your child, praising God for him or her, and naming unique things that you love about him or her.
- For each of your children, write words of encouragement in dry-erase marker on his or her bathroom mirror.
- Take your children out for interview dates: take lots of selfies, eat yummy food, and ask them interview questions.
- Make a list of all the gifts you see in each child. Pray through them, dedicating each gift to God.
- Make sure that when you connect with your children (no matter their age), you look directly at *them*. Put ALL your devices away and communicate nonverbally that you are listening.

Picture one of the children in your life. Jot down some ways that you intend to delight in him or her this week.

Love cherishes and nourishes, it discovers, gets involved, and listens with caring. Love draws out the other person, boosts his or her self-esteem, and is essential for you and your child to enjoy life together. In a word, to love is to *delight* in your child.



## **Delighting in Your Children**

*1 Thessalonians 2:5–12*



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, what a joy it is to call You Father. Please help me to reflect Your delight and love for Your children in how I delight and love mine. Thank You for blessing me with these children. Help me to dedicate them to You and guide them in the paths that You have laid for them. 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](#)."



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY SEVEN

### Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget

*Psalms 127:3–128:6*

*Think of yourself as a curator for your family's museum of memories. You're the one who watches over the treasures, who realizes their value and passes them on to the next generation.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**S**UPPOSE you curated a museum that housed items from your family's past. What treasures would you see on exhibit? A flowing wedding gown might hang elegantly in a glass case. On a pedestal might rest the keys to the old family car—a used clunker but big enough to fit three kids, the dog, and enough camping equipment for a week at Yosemite! To the right might be the birthday memories section, with the school memories wing around the corner. They would all be here in your family museum—your most prized treasures and the memories they inspire.

Your children have their own mental museum of family artifacts. Their memories aren't on display in a building, but they are just as vivid and even more permanent. They will last a lifetime.

Among their treasures are memories of their relationship with you during their years in your home. What would you wish for them to remember about their parents? Psalms 127 and 128 offer an inventory list that we can study together.



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## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalm 127:3–128:6*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. Try to block out thoughts that might distract you from hearing His voice. The psalmist's prayer can guide you as you pause now to pray.

*Turn my eyes from worthless things,  
and give me life through your word. (Psalm 119:37)*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

In Psalms 127 and 128, we find *three messages* that say to our children, “You are important!” In addition, the psalmist teaches parents *four investments* they can make to their children's memory bank.



### **Observation: Laying the Groundwork**

In the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, the first step in the observation phase is to examine the genre (type of literature) and background of these two Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Genre and Background**

To help you understand the genre and background of the text, consult a good study Bible, for example, *The Swindoll Study Bible*. Take a moment to review the introductory article on the book of Psalms in *The Swindoll Study Bible* and at the insight.org website, *Insights on the Bible*. Do any interesting points stand out that you'd like to write down?



## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalms 127:3–128:6*

Psalms 127 and 128 are Pilgrim Psalms, also known as Songs of Ascent. As pilgrims traveling in family groups to Jerusalem for annual festivals, the Israelites ascended the dusty hillsides and the steps leading to the temple singing their beliefs in songs. *The Swindoll Study Bible* explains the role of these psalms in the people's spiritual life and family life:

The Psalms of Ascent were to the Israelite people like what our Christmas carols and patriotic songs are today—familiar to everyone and able to stir up shared values and memories. . . . The Psalms of Ascent, sung from memory several times a year, served as reminders of faith, forgiveness, family, children, peace, hope, brotherhood, sacrifice, and right attitudes toward God and people.<sup>2</sup>

### **Overview and Observations**

Read these two family-values Psalms straight through and make observations of each section as listed below. What was the psalmist teaching about God and family life? Write down what you observe under the following headings which divide Psalms 127–128 into four sections.

The Foundation of the Home (*Psalms 127:1–2*)

The Expansion of the Home (*127:3–5*)



## Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget

*Psalms 127:3–128:6*

The Child-Rearing Years (*Psalms 128:1–3*)

The Later Years (*128:4–6*)

The Lord's values are the true framework of the home. Without His family values, the time and money that we spend building our house is in vain. What good are energy-efficient windows and a watertight roof when greed, envy, shame, and criticism are seeping into the hearts of the people living inside the house? Thankfully, we're not left to our own skills to build a lasting home. God is at work in our families!



### Interpretation: Three Messages That Say, “You’re Important”

As Architect and Master Builder, the Lord builds what's most important into your home. At the top of his materials list for your home life is the center beam of *communicating to your children with your attitudes and actions that they are important*.



## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalm 127:3–128:6*

Using the select tool, highlight the words in the following Psalm that describe a positive perspective of children?

*Children are a gift from the LORD;  
they are a reward from him.  
Children born to a young man  
are like arrows in a warrior's hands.  
How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!  
He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.  
How joyful are those who fear the LORD—  
all who follow his ways!  
You will enjoy the fruit of your labor.  
How joyful and prosperous you will be! (Psalm 127:3–128:2)*

Without realizing, we may be tossing our children or grandchildren a look or a tone that says, “You’re a hassle. You’re in the way. Don’t bother me.” These barbed messages cut deep. Instead, determine to give your children life-enriching messages—such as the following three that emerge from the words you highlighted above.

### **“You Are a Gift and Reward”**

The first message to our children is *you are a gift and reward*. Brainstorm some words and ways that you can communicate to your child or grandchild that he or she is a gift and reward? For example, one word to use is *treasure*, and a way to communicate that is to treasure the time you have with him or her.



## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalms 127:3–128:6*

### **“You Are Worth Guiding”**

The second message that builds a sense of importance in our children is *you are worth guiding*. The archer and arrow images portray the idea of guidance. Like an archer aims and shoots an arrow toward a target, parents take the time to guide their child toward a good goal. It takes patience and practice to help a child build the habits necessary to reach his or her potential. Use the space below to think of your child's potential goals and how you can guide him or her toward those targets?

### **“You Bring Joy”**

And the third message is *you bring joy*. The NLT Bible version captures the meaning of the Hebrew word that is translated “blessing” in the NIV and NASB. It means “happy” or “joyful.” Children learn the powerful role of happiness and joy when they grow up in an atmosphere of happiness and joy.

Children thrive on fun! Fun communicates that you're glad to be with them, that joy accompanies their presence. Oh, the blessings of laughter and play! Can you list some of them?

Years from now, when your child strolls through his or her museum of memories, the evenings spent having fun with mom and dad will be their most prized treasures. The Master Builder can help you create a positive, fun-filled atmosphere that fills your home with encouragement, praise, security, approval, acceptance, friendship, belonging, and love.



## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalm 127:3–128:6*

### **Fruitful Results**

What is the outcome of communicating these messages through our attitudes and actions? Psalm 128:3–6 paints a portrait of family life that we'd love to hang in our hall of memories:

*Your wife will bear children as a vine bears grapes,  
your household lush as a vineyard,  
The children around your table  
as fresh and promising as young olive shoots.  
Stand in awe of God's Yes.  
Oh, how he blesses the one who fears God!  
Enjoy the good life in Jerusalem  
every day of your life.  
And enjoy your grandchildren.  
Peace to Israel! (MSG)*

Take some time to imagine what it would be like to walk through your own vineyard or olive tree grove—a vast field of row after row of grapevines or olive trees, hanging low with deep-colored fruit. How do the images of a lush vineyard or rich olive grove strengthen the psalmist's message about the value of children in your home?

*When parents acknowledge that each child is a gift and a reward, believe me, the children learn they're important. When parents recognize that they must give time for guidance like an arrow shot from a bow, the children learn they're important. They've taken time for you because they see you as valuable. —Chuck Swindoll*



## **Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget**

*Psalm 127:3–128:6*



### **Correlation: Reflecting on Our Own Museum of Memories**

Adults whose museum is full of painful memories sometimes drag those old hurts home with them. If you're having trouble filling your home with messages of value, worth, and joy, ask the Lord to search your heart. Are there some wounds that need God's healing touch? Read [Psalm 34:17–18](#) and [147:3](#) and write down the areas in your life that need God's special ministry to your soul.

If the shame and heartache from your past echo in your words to your children, then take a courageous step and get help to resolve the hurts from your past. Speak to your pastor or Christian counselor who can guide you on the path of healing so that you can enjoy God's fruit of joy in your home.



### **Application: Four Investments to Your Child's Memory Bank**

Reflecting on the lush images of Psalms 127–128, as well as the principles we highlighted, let's wrap up our study with some final applications. Here are four ways you can invest in your children's museum of memories.

- *Make time for your child or grandchild.* Never underestimate the value of simply spending time together.
- *Value your child or grandchild.* Celebrate your children's accomplishments, birthdays, and special occasions. Be present at their events. Let them know you care.
- *Mom and dad, love one another.* Children long to know that you're still in love with your spouse and that you'll never outgrow your love for each other.
- *Demonstrate an authentic walk of faith in your home.* Don't just talk about your walk with God, live it out every day.



## Delightful Memories Your Children Won't Forget

*Psalm 127:3–128:6*

Now, it's time to usher these applications through the door into your home life. Write down four ways that you plan to put these principles into action. It may be as simple as bending down to your child's eye level and saying, "I love you," followed by a big hug.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Now, put these plans into action today and fill your museum with wonderful memories to last a lifetime!



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, You are the Master Builder of my heart and my home life. You are a safe place to bring my admissions of failure. By Your grace, the sun will rise tomorrow on a new day to hold a loved one's hand, to choose joy instead of gloom, to encourage, praise, and celebrate the treasures in my home. Help me, Lord, to love from Your heart . . . and laugh! In the name of Jesus, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

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. Charles R. Swindoll, "The Southern Steps of the Temple Mount: Reminders of the Pilgrim Psalms, Psalms 120–134," *The Swindoll Study Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 728.



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY EIGHT

### When the Fun Stops for Parents

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*

*The rebel curls his lip toward his parents and says, “I’m going my own way!”  
You can’t reason with him or counsel him; you’ve got to cut him loose. God will  
be faithful.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

As we learned in the last study, parents are to guide their children like archers aim an arrow. While archers aim an arrow toward the center of a target, parents aim their children toward the center of God’s design for them. And just as an archer releases an arrow so also parents must let their children go as they become more capable and responsible.

Independence is a healthy process. The first steps of the toddler naturally lead to the first driving lesson of the teenager and, eventually, the first apartment of the young adult. We celebrate our children’s growing self-sufficiency and independence as we launch them into the world.

But what if the arrow veers off God’s good course? What if the child’s natural urge toward independence becomes a fist-clenched demand for control and godless freedom? How should parents respond when the sounds of laughter in the home fade into the sobs of grief when a wayward child falls into self-destructive sin? Thankfully, God gives parents wise counsel for relating to prodigals, which we’ll examine in this study.



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## **When the Fun Stops for Parents**

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

For parents, few heartaches are as deep as the sorrow over a prodigal son or daughter. Read the following lines from Psalm 55 as an invitation to draw near to our sympathetic God whose heart also breaks over His rebellious children.

*Morning, noon, and night  
I cry out in my distress,  
and the LORD hears my voice. . . .  
Give your burdens to the LORD,  
and he will take care of you.  
He will not permit the godly to slip and fall. (Psalm 55:17, 22)*

What parental burdens can you give to the Lord today? Express these to Him now as you open your heart to receive encouragement from His Word.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

In this study, we'll examine God's response to rebels as a model for parents. No one else has more experience in parenting rebellious children than God, whose list of rebels spans history's timeline. One prominent name on God's list is Saul.



## When the Fun Stops for Parents

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*



### Observation: A Study of Rebellion

Read the story of his disobedience in *1 Samuel 15:1–21*. In the space below, write down what God clearly told him to do (*1 Samuel 15:1–3*). Then summarize what Saul did (*15:7–9*), along with God’s and Samuel’s responses (*15:10–11*) and Saul’s rationalization when Samuel confronted him (*15:12–21*).

Samuel’s next words penetrated Saul’s excuses like darts aimed directly at Saul’s rebellious spirit.

*“What is more pleasing to the LORD:  
your burnt offerings and sacrifices  
or your obedience to his voice?  
Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice,  
and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.  
Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft,  
and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols.  
So because you have rejected the command of the LORD,  
he has rejected you as king.” (15:22–23)*

Linger over these verses for a few moments and use the fivefold observation plan in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study. Look for words that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, and unlike.<sup>1</sup>

Which words are *emphasized*? Saul has been so dull of hearing that God must shout in his ear, “Listen!” What follows this attention-getter is likely the central point of the passage. What point is God driving home?



## When the Fun Stops for Parents

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*

Which words are *repeated*? Several words are repeated here. What are they?

Which words are *related*? Some words form a connection to each other. Look, for example, at the question, “What is more pleasing to the Lord?” The question is related to its answer, which is what?

Which words are *alike* and *unlike*? Comparisons and contrasts clarify meaning. Note the synonyms in the passage, as well as the words that are opposite. What do these synonyms and antonyms tell you about the meaning of these words?

Dig deep enough into the craggy soil of Saul’s disobedience, witchcraft, and idolatry, and your excavation will reveal the common source of all rebellion: *opposition to God’s authority*. And why do rebels oppose God? The answer is as old as the first rebellious act: to make self the final authority and to worship self as god (*Genesis 3:1–6*).



## When the Fun Stops for Parents

1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24



### Interpretation: A Story of Rebellion

Is there hope for the rebel? Yes! And healing for the rebel's family. Jesus told the story of a family wounded by a son's rebellion and restored by a father's love. Let's read Jesus' story, "The Prodigal Son," with an eye toward finding help for families with wayward children.

As with all His stories, Jesus placed this gem of a story in a cultural setting to enhance its meaning. A helpful resource to gain insight into the customs of Jesus' day is [\*Insight's Handbook of New Testament Backgrounds: Key Customs from Each Book\*](#).

### The Ethnic and Domestic Scene

Read [Luke 15:11–12](#). Let's discover the meaning of the son's request as he brazenly demands from his father, "I want my share of your estate now *before you die*" (Luke 15:12, emphasis added). Can you feel the jab to the father's gut? This same boy who once sat on his father's knee and so lovingly hugged his father's neck now is a wild stallion chomping at the bit and bucking off his relationship. He says in so many words, "I wish you were *dead* so I can have my inheritance."

Put yourself in the father's shoes and describe his heartache as well as the cultural stigma he must endure because of the disrespect of his son.



## **When the Fun Stops for Parents**

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*

Notice how the father's love absorbs the son's hurtful words. He doesn't lash back, cling, or lecture; instead, he calmly gives the boy what he asks and lets him go. What principle can you draw from the father's example about how to relate to your wayward child?

### **The Lifestyle and Consequences**

Read [Luke 15:13–16](#). By bolting to Gentile country, this Jewish boy shows contempt toward his father, family, and his own heritage. When his money runs out and famine strips the countryside as bare as his bank account, the once unbridled youth enslaves himself to a Gentile farmer and takes company with pigs to survive. He is alone and ashamed, rejected and unclean by Jewish standards, and starving.

Put yourself in the shoes of Jesus' listeners, and describe how they might have responded to this part of the story. Would they have felt compassion toward the young man? Or judged him? Perhaps [Proverbs 13:15, 18](#) would have come to mind—and rightly so. How might a person use these verses to condemn the son?



## **When the Fun Stops for Parents**

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*

### **The Realization and Decision**

Read [Luke 15:17–19](#). The opening line in verse 17 is the turning point of the story, “But when he came to his senses.” Like a thick wall, a stubborn will does not crumble easily. For the son, it took an onslaught of hardship to break through his defenses before he finally surrendered his pride. If you have a wayward child, what might it take to get through to him or her, and how can you sustain yourself as you wait for the turning point?

### **The Return and Restoration**

Read [Luke 15:20–24](#). What meaning did Jesus intend for His Jewish audience as He put on full display the loving heart of the prodigal’s father?

Here is the point of His story and the purpose of Jesus’ mission: to display *His* Father’s love—a love that doesn’t condemn us but runs to embrace us as lost sinners still in the filth and stench of our condition. God’s love is equally as shocking in its extravagance as the love of the prodigal’s father. Just as the father covers his son’s shame with a robe of honor and restores his identity with the family signet ring so also does our Father cover and restore us. In this moment of grace, prodigals drink their fill of true love and, once satisfied, never wander again. Oh, for this to be true of our wayward one!



## When the Fun Stops for Parents

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*



### Correlation: The Father's Love Displayed through Christ

As you read the following verses, write down how the Father loves you through Christ and restores you as His own: [Matthew 9:35–36](#) (the same Greek word for *compassion* in Luke 15:20 is used here to describe Jesus); [Galatians 3:26–27](#); [4:3–7](#); [Colossians 1:21–22](#).

Our heavenly Father has provided a way home for us when we and our wayward children wander. We praise Him for His great love and grace! Make this prayer your own:

*How we can easily identify with this boy, and how great it is to witness the grace of a father to welcome him back. And not only to forgive him but to restore him to a place of significance and dignity in the home and family. I pray for all those today who at this very moment find themselves distant from You. And I ask that You would draw them to Yourself as only You can do. —Chuck Swindoll*



## **When the Fun Stops for Parents**

*1 Samuel 15:22–23; Luke 15:11–24*



### **Application: Responding to the Rebel in Our Family**

To wrap up this study, Chuck offers four principles for parents, based on the father's response to his wayward son's rebellion. Reflect on the principles, and then use the provided space to write down your plan for dealing with the rebel under your roof.

- *No rebel can be allowed to ruin a home.* How is the stress from the rebel's presence in the home robbing peace and harming other family members?
- *If the rebellion necessitates a separation, go there.* Draw a line and stick to it. Follow through. Don't support a foolish child's folly.
- *Let go!* Resist the urge to rescue again and again.
- *When true repentance occurs, let grace abound.* Forgive without reservation or hesitation!

As worries for your children crowd your mind, release them to the Lord: "Give your burdens to the LORD, / and he will take care of you" (Psalm 55:22). We read that promise at the beginning of our study. It's a promise we can count on today and every day as we pray for our wayward children and wait for them to return to their loving Father.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, bring hope to every broken heart in homes fractured by rebellion. Give peace to replace anxiety, patience to support weakness, and love to cover shame. Help us wait. And please, Lord, by Your grace and mercy, bring the wayward ones home. In the name of Jesus, 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](#)."



## 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

**W**HEN 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

*Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35*



### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup>

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](http://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+5).



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY TEN

### Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

*Confrontation comes after thought and prayer and at just the right time. Speak the truth in love so that your child can grow.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**C**HILDREN don't grow well in a household with a one-size-fits-all parenting style. If parents try to force fit them into a style that isn't tailor-made for each child, they'll bust out the seams. Children yearn to be known intimately and personally, which requires that parents care enough to spend time with them; care enough to listen to their thoughts and share their feelings; and, when needed, care enough to confront.

Confrontation done well isn't condemnation, criticism, or humiliation. It doesn't erupt in angry outbursts or leak out as sarcastic fault-finding. It is speaking truth in love—which is perhaps the highest expression of care (Ephesians 4:15).

In this study, we'll take a biblical tour of God's thoughts on caring confrontation, and our first stop is the hall of wisdom: the book of Proverbs.



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman who “shouts in the streets” (Proverbs 1:20). She is like a mother pleading with her child to listen to her.

*“Come and listen to my counsel.  
I'll share my heart with you  
and make you wise.” (1:23)*



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## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

When children stray into danger, it can be difficult to know *what* to say and *how* to say it. We need God's wisdom in this area of confronting our children, so take time to ask the Lord for help.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the *Searching the Scriptures* process, a helpful exercise is determining what type of book you're studying.<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament book of Proverbs falls into the category of *books of poetry*. Read through the introductory material in your study Bible at the beginning of Proverbs or the [introduction](#) on our website to become familiar with this unique biblical genre.



### Observation: Defining “Reproof”

Where can parents turn to find a model for reproofing their children? To our heavenly Father, who demonstrates reproofing with a firm hand *and* a loving touch. Let's consult Proverbs for a deeper perspective based on the way God deals with His children who need correction.

### Wisdom's Perspective on Reproof

Read [Proverbs 3:11–12](#) and write down how the wise receive God's reproofs and the heart behind God's corrections.

When God confronts, wise people see beyond the sting of reproof to God's deep concern for them. They understand God's motive is to protect them by correcting behavior that only leads to greater pain. Consequently, they don't resist His reproofs but welcome them.

Did you observe the word *delights* in Proverbs 3:12: “A father corrects a child in whom he delights”? When a father pulls back his child from stepping in front of a speeding car, the father is expressing his love. The child is the father's delight, and he wishes no harm comes to his child. Children, however, may not see the danger they narrowly avoided and may lash out in anger, “You're mean, Daddy!” They don't understand that the correction was for their good.



## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

What warnings do *Proverbs 15:5, 10, and 32* issue to those who resist correction?

Children must learn by experience that, “If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself” (Proverbs 15:32). Likewise, parents must learn that not disciplining actually harms a child—as well as the unfortunate people in their unruly children’s path. A parent who avoids confrontation and adopts a peace-at-any-price approach with his or her child will pay a steeper price later.

### Wisdom’s Guidelines for Reproof

Proverbs also teaches us wisdom’s guidelines for reproof. After reading the following verses, answer the questions below.

*Like apples of gold in settings of silver  
Is a word spoken in right circumstances.* (Proverbs 25:11 NASB)

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend,  
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.* (27:6 NASB)

*In the end, people appreciate honest criticism  
far more than flattery.* (28:23 NLT)

Who has the right to reprove?	
What is the lasting value of the wound?	
Friendship includes the freedom to do what?	
What harm could listening to flattery cause?	
How should criticism be done?	
At what time should reproof come?	



## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

Reproof done *in private* with words that *build up*, not condemn, and given *at the right time* will give life to your children. If they accept your words, they will dwell among the wise (healthy peers), and they will acquire understanding (of how life works). Parents couldn't wish for more!

*When we reprove another person, we confront attitudes or actions that need to be corrected. We refuse to look the other way because we know that what we are sharing is good for the one we love and those whose lives he or she touches. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: A Balanced Approach to Reproving

How can parents help their children avoid the inevitable life storms that defiance and disrespect stir up? The apostle Paul advises parents to take a balanced approach.

Read [Ephesians 6:4](#). What does Paul warn against? What does he command?

Two Greek words in this verse are worth excavating. First, *parorgizete* means “provoke to anger.” Compare its usage in a parallel passage, [Colossians 3:21](#). How might a father provoke his children to anger or, as the word appears in the New Living Translation, “aggravate,” or, in the New International Version, “embitter”? According to Paul, what happens to the child as a result?



## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

The second Greek word is *ektrephe*, translated “raise up” or “nourish.” Compare its usage in Ephesians 5:29: “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (NASB, emphasis added). In this verse, Paul challenges men to nourish their wife just as they nourish themselves—and to view Christ’s love for the church as a model. As a father, a man must also create a nourishing environment for his children by providing for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Compare the two words in the following chart. We'll list a few descriptors, and you can fill in some of your own.

<b>Provoke to Anger</b> <i>Parorgizete</i>		<b>Nourish</b> <i>Ektrephete</i>	
Exasperate	Lecture	Affirm	Support
Nag	Harass	Encourage	Clear Boundaries
Aggravate	Ridicule	Praise	Patient Instruction

To sum up, when we reprove our children, we confront an attitude or an action that needs correction. We choose not to “look the other way” but to say the hard thing for the good of our child. Reproving need not be frequent; in fact, reproofs are best heard when they are rare and carefully considered. Reproving isn’t done in public; rather, it is a private, sensitive conversation. Reproving doesn’t come across as nagging, nitpicking, or faultfinding; rather, it is speaking “the truth in love” so that our children can grow “in every way more and more like Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).



## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*



### Correlation: Wise Counsel for Children

Parenting also includes training our children how to receive reproof. What are the two commands for children in the following verse?

*Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1–3)*

Obedience is the appropriate *action*; it involves a child’s behavior. Honor, which conveys the ideas of respect and devotion, is *attitude*; it involves a child’s thoughts and emotions. Both right action and right attitude are essential. To obey without respect is defiant compliance; to respect without obedience is empty lip-service.

What is missing in these scenarios of compliance and lip-service? *A trusting relationship.* At the heart of children’s obedience is a trusting relationship in which they are secure in their parents’ love. They know that their parents truly desire what’s best for them, and so they are willing to accept reproof and submit their will to their parents’ will. Submission is the theme of this entire section in Ephesians which addresses husbands, wives, children, parents, workers, and bosses: “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (5:21 NIV).

Why does God instruct children to obey and respect their parents? Can you spot the two reasons in the verses above?



## Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

On the flipside, how might things *not* go well for disobedient and disrespectful children when they grow up and get married, try to hold a job, and live as citizens in a community?

*A significant part of cultivating both obedience and honor in children is related to the parents' faithful, consistent, and appropriate reproofs. It takes a lot of wisdom. It includes talking straight, not talking down. Standing your ground. Establishing boundaries. Saying the truth. Confronting what is wrong—a wrong attitude as well as wrong actions. And then rewarding good behavior with affirmation. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Taking the Necessary Steps

Confrontation is a dance between two partners who must learn to step in sync with one another. The confronter moves first with a gentle hand on his partner's back and an assertive step forward. The partner responds, trusting the gesture and submitting in turn. Back and forth the partners move, giving and taking, saying what's needed and responding with respect—all in time to the music of love.

Here are a few guidelines for the dance.

- *Think and pray before you say anything.* If you react rashly and rush your reproof, you'll surely step on someone's toes. It will be difficult for others to trust your next move.
- *Don't share the reproof with anyone else.* The dance is for two people. Be wary of talking about your child to all your friends—and never when your child is in earshot.
- *As the change occurs, affirm!* Notice the subtle movements of your partner's response, and celebrate his or her success!



## **Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us**

*Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4*

Do you need to confront one of your children? Take time now to pray and use the space below to write down the words you need to say. You'll know that you've done well when your child realizes how much you care, respects you for talking straight, and experiences the benefits of listening, learning, and changing.

So far, we've learned what the Bible says to parents when their children are still in the home. But what about parenting young adult children who no longer live in your home—or who have “boomeranged” back home after moving out? In the next study, we'll look to God's Word to find help for parenting grown-up kids.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, thank You for Your reproofs which come at just the right time, always for the right reason, and in ways that we never forget. Give me Your words, timing, and lasting results as I reprove those I love for the sake of peace and harmony in my home. In the name of Jesus, 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](#).”



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY ELEVEN

### Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

*Your grown-up sons or daughters deserve to hear the truth from you, not necessarily what they may want to hear but, at the right time, what they need to hear.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**G**REAT anticipation and excitement mark the beginning of marriage. Then challenges arrive with the birth of children, which require the couple to learn parenting skills without a handbook. With each stage of their child's growth—from preschool through elementary school, middle school, and high school—parents must fine-tune their skills if they hope to sustain harmony in the home.

Then, after all that adapting, a new set of challenges arises when the children reach adulthood. Can there still be mutual respect and meaningful relationships in the family? Can harmony continue between parents and their grown-up kids? Absolutely! Let's look to Ephesians 4 for God's direction.



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The goal of all our relationships is harmony. “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony,” exclaimed the psalmist (Psalm 133:1). The same can be said of parents and their adult children! Take a moment and pray for harmony between you and your children as we open our study.



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## Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids

*Ephesians 4:25–32*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The theme of harmony winds through Ephesians 4 and flows into six practical principles about relationships in the church that we can apply to families with adult children. To uncover these principles, we'll use the steps in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, beginning by observing the divine source from which all family harmony flows.<sup>1</sup>



### Observation: The Goal Is Harmony

Read *Ephesians 4:3* to find the divine source. What does this verse say?

Paul's command to church members, "Keep yourselves *united in the Spirit*," is particularly fitting for family members. The Holy Spirit joins us to our adult children with a power that is stronger than any family tie. No rift is too cavernous to cross. No issue is too complex for God through His Spirit to solve, because "nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37 NASB).

Not only is the Spirit with us, He equips us. According to Ephesians 4:7, the Spirit "has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ." What is the purpose and result of using these gifts? Read verses *12–13* to find the answer.



## Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

There's our word again, *unity*. We achieve more and more unity as we *build up* one another, *grow up* in Christ, and *measure up* to His standard.

Finally, we experience the benefits of unity. List these benefits as you find them in [Ephesians 4:16](#).

As each family member matures into who God made him or her to be and contributes his or her unique gift, the whole family becomes “healthy and growing and full of love” (Ephesians 4:16). Now that's harmony at its best!



### Interpretation: Six Principles for Relating to Adult Children

An ear pressed against the door of your family home may not hear harmonious voices. Paul's melody of unity within church and family is possible with God's help, but it takes effort on our part—specifically, by putting into practice the following six principles.

#### Speak Truth

Think of the “neighbor” in the following verse as your adult child.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another. (Ephesians 4:25 NASB)



## **Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids**

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

Versions of the Bible follow different formatting rules to indicate special cases in translation. For example, the NASB version uses small caps to indicate that a New Testament author quoted from the Old Testament and italics to show which words don't appear in the original text but have been added to clarify the ancient syntax for modern-day readers. In this verse, you can see the added words in italics, as well as the phrases that the translators believe Paul borrowed from *Zechariah 8:16*. Why do you think Paul quoted this verse to support his point?

Your grown-up son or daughter needs to hear the truth from you. Talk straight. Don't fudge the truth by saying something is okay when it isn't. Don't hold back your honest feelings (about the person he or she is dating, for example). Don't shade your better judgment when asked for advice on a moral dilemma.

Have you been sidestepping an issue with your adult child? If so, raise your right hand, and swear to tell the whole truth from now on! Here's some space to write down what you may need to say.



## **Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids**

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

### **Get Passionate**

The next verse may surprise you with Paul’s opener: “Be angry . . .” (Ephesians 4:26 NASB)! The form of anger Paul describes here isn’t an out-of-control temper caused when a person doesn’t get his or her way. Instead, what do you think Paul means?

Let your adult children see your tears over evil and the resolve in your heart for what’s right and good. Find a cause that lights your fire. If you can’t find one, borrow a spark from your adult child’s enthusiasm and join his or her cause!

### **Stop Stealing**

Paul adds, “He who steals must steal no longer” (Ephesians 4:28 NASB). Parents may not be pocketing their adult children’s cash, but they can swipe other valuables. Their adult children’s *freedom* is one example of a treasure parents sometimes steal:

- Freedom to make their own decisions
- Freedom to think independently
- Freedom to do for oneself

What other freedoms do parents of adult children sometimes take away or not allow?



## **Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids**

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

Stealing adulthood's *freedom* leads to a second theft: stealing *consequences*. When we rescue adult children to spare them the pain that naturally follows poor choices, we steal an opportunity for growth. In addition, we contribute to a mind-set of entitlement in which the adult child expects and then demands unearned privileges—which is a form of stealing!

Pause here and use the space below to reflect on the rest of verse 28: “use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.” Adult children must learn hard work and generosity. Have you unintentionally discouraged hard work by doing too much for your adult child? If so, how can you restore what should belong to them by granting freedoms and allowing consequences?

### **Quit Yelling**

Read [Ephesians 4:29](#). Unwholesome words can take many forms: cursing, threats, sarcastic putdowns, caustic comments. Parents resort to outbursts when they feel disrespected, but a volcano reaction just enflames an adult child's rebellion and sparks eruptions of disrespect.

Without resorting to angry words, what are better ways to work out your feelings when relating to your adult children? What does the latter part of verse 29 advise? Write a principle based on your interpretation.



## **Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids**

*Ephesians 4:25–32*

### **Give Grace**

Can you sense the spirit of grace in [Ephesians 4:29–30](#)? Parents steeped in grace hold their tongues when an adult child suffers for making a mistake. “I told you so” is not a good or helpful response. Just as God identifies us as His own and redeems us by His grace, so also we pour soothing oil on a tender wound for our adult children when we show grace to them.

What do good and helpful words of grace sound like in conversation with your adult child? List in the space below some redemptive, life-giving phrases.

### **Be Kind**

Read [Ephesians 4:31–32](#). With this list of imperatives, Paul wraps a reminder string around our finger with a summary statement: *be kind*. Simple as that! You can express kindness through a warm embrace, thoughtful listening, and asking and offering forgiveness.

Make “be kind” a habit by practicing kindness daily. Is there an act of kindness you can show your adult child today?



## Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids

*Ephesians 4:25–32*



### **Correlation: The Father's Love Displayed through Christ**

Remember the source of our relational harmony? The Holy Spirit. Read [2 Corinthians 6:6](#) and write down the qualities that Paul mentioned to the Corinthian believers as fruit of the Spirit working in him.

*No challenge in any family is impossible. “With God nothing will be impossible.” That’s not meant to sound like a platitude or some kind of pious phrase; it’s a statement said no less than four times in different ways in the Scriptures. So take heart. Whatever may be your circumstance, no matter how difficult, you’re not facing an impossible situation. It’s challenging but not impossible. —Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: Responding to the Rebel in Our Family**

The application for this study is simple. Put into practice some of the points you’ve written in your answers. As you take the first step, the Holy Spirit’s power in you and your family will come alongside to slowly tear down what may seem like impassable relational barriers. As the Spirit works, unity and harmony can return if it has been absent.

Start by memorizing the list of principles: speak truth, get passionate, stop stealing, quit yelling, give grace, and be kind. Share the list with a friend and ask for prayer as you make these principles routines in your relationship with your adult children. Then enjoy the benefits of a harmonious family that is “healthy and growing and full of love” (Ephesians 4:16).



## **Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids**

*Ephesians 4:25–32*



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, in the fast-paced race of life, it is easy for us to run beyond the essentials. Truth, kindness, forgiveness, love. Remind us that we're a family. Fill our family with the unity that is possible only through Your Spirit who is our common bond. In Jesus' name, 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](#)."



## BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY TWELVE

### What to Do When You've Blown It

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*

*The goodness of our God is greater than the badness of our failures. He will graciously give you a future and a hope, even with the children with whom you may still feel a sense of distance.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

As children grow up and leave home, parents often look back on their child-rearing years with fondness, recalling that season of life with warm feelings of nostalgia. Sometimes, however, the memories carry a measure of guilt. Parents may regretfully think: *If only I knew then what I know now. If only I could have foreseen my child's problems and intervened sooner. If only I had been less busy, less critical, less irritable, more aware, more discerning, more loving.*

The “if onlys” circle our minds like crows cawing, reminding us of our mistakes and giving us no peace. The inescapable reality is that we are all imperfect, even our children. When we compare ourselves to the ideal, “perfect” family, we all come up short.

We've all blown it as parents and grandparents. We've said or done things that have eroded the confidence of those we care about. In extreme cases in which conflicts have gone unresolved for years, the space between our wrongs and our loved ones feels like an impassible chasm. Reconciliation seems impossible, perhaps because too much time has passed or because fear keeps us silent and paralyzed.

Thankfully, the same Spirit who resurrected Jesus from the dead lives in us. We are imperfect, but we serve a perfect God who can do the impossible. Not only is God able, He is willing to restore the “years the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25 NIV). Let's learn more about what to do when we've blown it.



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## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Three words in the following verse set the tone for our study: *I press on*.

*I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*  
(Philippians 3:13–14)

Now shape these verses into a prayer. For example, you may begin by saying, “Lord, help me to ‘focus on this one thing.’” Then take each phrase and turn it into a prayerful request. Write your prayer below.

With Christ leading us, we can move into the future with hope. Decide now to set your eyes on Him and “press on” as you explore His plan for your family’s future.



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

God’s promise through Jeremiah encourages us to move forward:

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”* (Jeremiah 29:11–13)

God had sent the Jews into captivity for their sins, but that didn’t mean they were finished. They still had hope for restoration. Tomorrow shines bright with hope for us too, despite our past mistakes, failures, and sins.

Recovery starts with honest repentance, which includes three vital steps: *confessing* our sin, *taking responsibility* for the consequences of our sin, and *drawing near* to God for mercy. This process deepens our devotion to Him and bonds us with others like nothing else can. Shame separates us, but repentance connects us to God who forgives, restores, and unveils His good plans.



## What to Do When You've Blown It

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*



### Observation: A Case of Repentance and Restoration

Before Jeremiah prophesied, the prophet Joel encouraged the people of Judah to seek restoration through repentance. We'll study God's dealings with His people using the *Searching the Scriptures* method of observation.<sup>1</sup>

#### A Divinely Designed Disaster

Calamity struck the farming culture of Judah in three waves of natural disasters. Can you identify them? The first wave is recorded in [Joel 1:5–7](#), the second in [1:12](#), and the third in [1:19–20](#).

These disasters were devastating, but the most destructive was the locust plague that stripped the spirit of the people as bare as the landscape, leaving them in complete ruin ([Joel 1:10, 16–18](#)).



## What to Do When You've Blown It

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*

For an explanation of the shocking effects of a locust swarm, read the description under the heading “Locust” in the “Animal Kingdom” article in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. For an online article, you can read “*Locust*” in *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. What strikes you about the devastation of a locust plague?

In chapter 2, Joel compares the locust swarm to an army of soldiers who “leap along the mountaintops” (Joel 2:5) and “break through defenses without missing a step” (2:8). As they charge, “the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine” (2:10). Only a heavy battering ram could break through the defenses of the people's stubborn will. God's purpose, however, was not to destroy but to call His people to repentance and set them on a new path with a promise of restoration.

*Once again you will have all the food you want,  
and you will praise the LORD your God,  
who does these miracles for you.  
Never again will my people be disgraced. (2:26)*



### Interpretation: From Guilt and Shame to Recovery and Renewal

We come next to the prophet Isaiah, who offers specific steps out of our cavern of guilt to the light of recovery and renewal.



## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*

### **Humble Yourself—Isaiah 58:7–8**

God wanted the Israelites, who were in ruin because of their sin, to have humility of heart. What actions evidenced their humility in *Isaiah 58:7–8*?

Pride locks us in a holding cell as we wait for the other person to make the first move. What are we trying to prove by waiting? That we're right and they're wrong? Don't "hide" in silence. Take the first giant step toward reconciliation by reaching out in humility and admitting your shortcomings.

*In virtually every offense, pride has played a major role. If you want to deal with your children, I suggest you start with a spirit of humility. You have nothing to prove. You have nothing to lose. You have no image to keep up. I know what I'm talking about. I've been through these steps. They work! Start with humility. —Chuck Swindoll*

### **Pray—Isaiah 58:9**

What principle about prayer can you find in these lines from Isaiah 58:9?

*"Then when you call, the LORD will answer.  
'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply."*

Isaiah urged his fellow Israelites to pray for their nation. As we try to rebuild the broken relationships in our families, it is just as vital to fervently call upon the Lord, who reassures us that He is here with us.



## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*

### **Remove the Yoke—Isaiah 58:9**

The second part of Isaiah 58:9 lists the next step. What principle can you discover from these lines?

*“Remove the heavy yoke of oppression.  
Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!”*

What heavy yokes weigh down your relationship with your adult children and bind your attempts at reconciliation? Resist the urge in tense moments to point a finger of blame or talk maliciously.

### **Make Yourself Available and Vulnerable—Isaiah 58:10–11**

Read *Isaiah 58:10–11* and write down the benefits of making yourself available and vulnerable as you extend a helping hand to those with whom you're reconciling.

There is great encouragement here to all of us who've blown it. God can dispel those haunting memories in the light of His grace as we list our offenses and come clean.

*As you meet privately with your offspring, speak calmly, openly, and humbly, and may I add, it's okay to cry. Weeping as you tell your story to your children says, “I could not feel more deeply about this.” —Chuck Swindoll*



## What to Do When You've Blown It

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*

### Trust God to Bring Healing and Change—Isaiah 58:12

How does Isaiah describe those who seek restoration (*Isaiah 58:12*)?

When our children see us investing our time in rebuilding the relational ruins in our families, they will see us as “repairers.” And, as God heals hearts, relationships can be whole again.



### Correlation: A Firm Foundation

The process of repentance and restoration takes work, but the results are worth it. What encouragement does Peter offer those who suffer for the sake of righteousness (*1 Peter 5:10*)?

*Bring into the open your desire for God to heal the relationship and bring change. God does this kind of thing every day. How great it would be if He brought restoration to your home!*  
—Chuck Swindoll



## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*



### **Application: Taking the Necessary Steps**

As you seek to rebuild your relationship after you've blown it, here are three essential principles to keep in mind.

- *Don't hide anything.* Go with your arms and heart open wide. Be transparent and honest, even if you think what you say will shock your adult child.
- *Don't hurry the response.* Don't expect or pressure your adult child to forgive you or even respond right away. The wounds may be too deep, so give the person time to heal.
- *Don't hold onto anything in the past.* Let go your list of offenses after you've had your say. Your adult children may bring them up again, but that's their choice. After you've done all you can to repair the past, press on! God truly does have a future and a hope for us and our children.

Before concluding this study, review the steps for having a restorative conversation with your adult child: put away your pride and humble yourself, pray about it, remove the yoke of blame, be available and vulnerable, and trust God to bring healing and change.

Do you need to repair the relational walls of your home? What do you need to confess to your children? How will you put these steps into practice in the days ahead?

No parent is perfect, and neither are children. However, when we seek to honor God with our efforts, we can be confident and grateful that God is at work in our family. We offer our imperfections to our perfect God and trust Him to multiply our investments of love and care to nourish our children for a lifetime.



## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, hear the beat of my heart today as I come before You acknowledging my imperfections and finding refuge in You as my strong tower. Thank You for Your tender mercy and compassion on my family. Rescue me from regret and release me to love my children as You love them, to rest in Your forgiveness, and find freedom in Your everlasting, healing grace. 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](#)."



## **What to Do When You've Blown It**

*Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26*



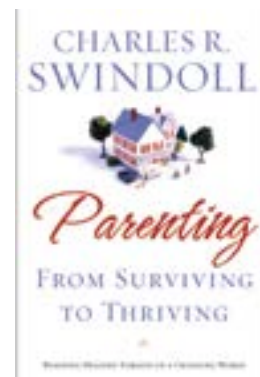
### **Tools for Digging Deeper**



**Biblical Parenting**  
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**Top Temptations Fathers Face**  
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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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