

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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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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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.



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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.¹

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*).



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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.



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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.



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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



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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



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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.



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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](#)."



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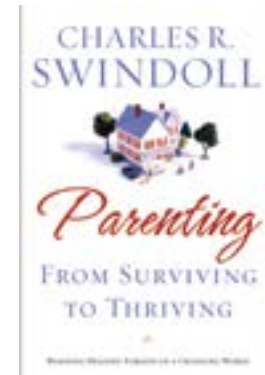
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

