



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

About conflict, Chuck says, “it is doubtful that one person listening to me right now has spent these years on earth without hurting someone else or being hurt by someone else. It’s part of life.” Nowhere is this potential for hurt and conflict more true than in the context of family. When those conflicts flare up, they have the potential to create a toxic foothold for resentment, vengeance, and emotional cold wars. When tensions are not addressed, the entire family is tortured by the malice.

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 make a move toward reconciliation, the book of Matthew has the answer for your conflict. It boils down to three simple words: *It’s your move.*



### DIGGING DEEPER

Matthew 18:35 is a shrill alarm ringing in the hearts of those who read its words:

“That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”

What is “that”? Look at the preceding verse: “Then the angry king **sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt**” (18:34, emphasis added). Jesus, who voluntarily sacrificed His life to offer a sin-stained world the ultimate forgiveness, gave this warning: The Father doesn’t mess around when it comes to those who enjoy the freedom of His forgiveness and yet refuse to extend forgiveness to others. When we don’t forgive, we are left tortured by our thirst for payback.

How do we even begin to unpack this hard truth for ourselves and for others?

On our knees.

We must ask the Lord to examine our hearts before we go any further into study. We must allow the Lord to illuminate the dark places where harbored resentment, lust for revenge, and grudges can thrive.

## Quotable

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

— Charles R. Swindoll





### Prayer

Take a few moments to pray. Ask the Father to show you areas of unforgiveness staining your heart. Write down your prayer here.



### Teaching the Tough Stuff

Matthew 18:21–35 is God’s truth. As Christians, we must live it. As a part of the body, we must model and teach it. Where to begin?

Here are some thought-points on how to teach with humility, compassion, and accuracy.

#### **You Are the First Audience**

You are the first person impacted and changed by what you teach—at least, you ought to be. Set the same—or higher—expectations for yourself that you will for your audience. Wrestle with the text; seek God through prayer; and do what the Word says: forgive. It probably won’t be long before you have an opportunity to practice what you teach.

#### **Be Gentle**

If this lesson on forgiveness were meant to be wielded as a weapon, Jesus would have led with the fiery wrath of the Father. Instead, He led with forgiveness and compassion—*this* is the heart of the King. We ought to do the same.

Have you ever been told a difficult truth with gentleness? What made the experience impactful?



### Check Your Theology

Be careful about contorting a parable to fit a purpose apart from what the original speaker intended. For example, it's possible to teach Matthew 18:35 in a way that implies that believers can lose their salvation because they don't forgive. This is why correlation is such an important step in studying a passage—comparing Scripture with Scripture helps us to accurately interpret what we read. Because salvation is based on grace through faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8–9), it's not something that can be earned—or lost—by our effort.

How do you check your theology?

- *Correlation.* You can use technology or a concordance to investigate what the Bible says about a specific topic.
- *Commentary.* Scholars have written volumes on the book of Matthew. (Sometimes, even *they* aren't settled on how to interpret a passage!) Good commentaries will reverence the inerrancy of the Bible, draw on scholarship from the church fathers to present day, engage in word studies, and give a range of scholarly theories when they examine difficult passages.
- *Context.* The context of the parable, narrative, or epistle is the foil for the story. In Matthew 18, Jesus illustrated the traits of a humble disciple—one with childlike faith and dependence; who intensely values his brothers and sisters in Christ; and who seeks resolution and doles out forgiveness, rather than rage and revenge.
- *Conversation.* We weren't meant to learn the Bible in an individualistic vacuum. Talk about the Bible with other Christians who are walking with the Lord, in environments where you are *not* the teacher.

### Glean the Principle

What is the universal (true for all time) principle of the passage—the kernel of truth that must be shared? One universal principle is this: be guided by Christlike compassion. Christlike compassion reconciles and forgives.

Take a moment to think of some additional principles that would help you compassionately and accurately teach the principle of forgiveness, based on Matthew 18:21–35. Write them down here:



# BIBLICAL PARENTING

## Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

*Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35*

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THE  
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STUDY

### Know Your Audience

Whether you are teaching a classroom of 8th graders, a small group of inmates, a women's retreat, or giving a Sunday-morning sermon, know to whom you are speaking. Different audiences may face age or gender-specific challenges and may be in varied stages of spiritual maturity. Ideally, you want to tailor your teaching to that audience in such a way that they have tangible takeaways to go and *live* what they have learned.

Who is a potential audience for you to teach? (This includes your children, relatives, coworkers, as well as more traditional ministry contexts.) How would you tailor your teaching to reach your chosen audience?



### Where You Fit in the Story: It's *Always* Your Move

Voracious reading, endless research, and prayerful study are *meaningless* if your life isn't changed by what you learn. Practicing forgiveness and reconciliation from your heart are two of the most valuable life practices you can do to reflect the compassion of God in palpable ways to the people in your life. Whether you have done wrong or been wronged, it's always your move. Will you move toward forgiveness and reconciliation or fall backward into the torture of bitterness and revenge? The choice is yours.

Can you think of a person you need to reconcile with? Create an action plan to reconcile. Write it down below.

Can you think of a person you need to forgive? Write a prayer below to express to God your desire to let go.



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## A FINAL PRAYER

Let's pray from the words of Francis of Assisi:

*Lord make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is hatred,  
Let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled  
As to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

### Endnotes

1. St. Francis of Assisi, "The Peace Prayer," The Franciscan Archive, <https://franciscan-archive.org/patriarcha/peace.html>, accessed Mar. 10, 2017.



# BIBLICAL PARENTING

## Resolving Those Parent-Child Conflicts

Matthew 5:23–24; 18:21–35

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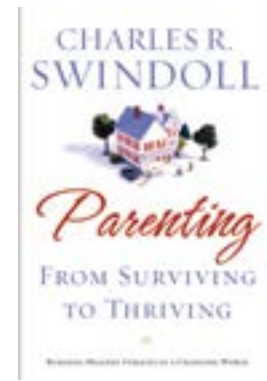
### Tools for Digging Deeper



**Biblical Parenting**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
CD series



**Top Temptations  
Fathers Face**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
booklet



**Parenting: From Surviving  
to Thriving**  
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For these and related resources, visit [www.insightworld.org/store](http://www.insightworld.org/store)  
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