

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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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.'"¹

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.



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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.² 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.



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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.



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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.



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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



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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!



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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](#)."



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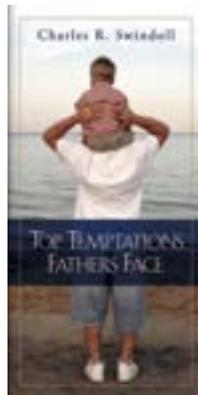
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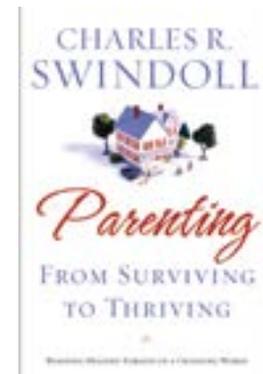
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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