

RESTORING YOUR FAMILY'S FOUNDATION

STUDY SEVEN

Getting Past Yesterday's Failures

Isaiah 58:6–12

God honors a broken and contrite heart. He will have nothing to do with pride.
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As children grow up and leave home, parents often look back on their child-rearing years with fondness, warmly recalling that season of life. Sometimes, however, feelings of guilt cloud the memories. 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 cawing crows, reminding us of our mistakes and giving us no peace. The inescapable reality is that we are all imperfect, even our children. We all fall short of God's standard (*Romans 3:23*), and we can't change the past, no matter how much we wish we could.

How do parents in pain get past yesterday's failures? It doesn't help to rationalize mistakes, make excuses, or blame someone else. We must admit the truth about the years we can't change and take responsibility for our wrongs. That's the starting point, the foundation on which hope is built.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Three words in the following verse set the tone for our *Searching the Scriptures* 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 the words into a prayer. 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 His plan for your family's future well-being.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The central passage for our study is *Isaiah 58:6–12*. In this context, the Lord was admonishing His people who were putting on a show of piety hoping to impress Him. They dressed in burlap rags and fasted while in ashes, but they were just "going through the motions of penance" (58:5). Their cruel treatment of people exposed the sin under their religious surface. The Lord said,

*"Even while you fast,
you keep oppressing your workers.
What good is fasting
when you keep on fighting and quarreling?
This kind of fasting
will never get you anywhere with me." (Isaiah 58:3–4)*



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Isaiah 58:6–12

An authentic walk with God reveals itself in how we show compassion and genuine concern toward people. In the following verses, the Lord lists specific ways His people can demonstrate true spirituality in their relationships, including those within our families.



Observation: What True Spirituality Looks Like

In observation, we look closely at Isaiah's prophecy to find key themes. What specific ways did the Lord expect to see godliness in His people, according to *Isaiah 58:6–7*?

What blessings would follow, according to *58:8–9*?

The Lord lists other godly actions followed by blessings in *58:9–12*. What do you observe in these verses?

Let's see how these themes work out in restoring relationships in our families.



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Interpretation: From Guilt and Shame to Recovery and Renewal

Five main principles emerge from Isaiah 58:6–12 that we discover in interpretation.

Humble Yourself—Isaiah 58:7–8

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

Restoration begins with humility—removing the chains, sharing, giving, not hiding from family members. Do this and the wounds will begin to heal. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Pray—Isaiah 58:9

What principle about prayer can you find in the opening lines of Isaiah 58:9?

*“Then when you call, the LORD will answer.
‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.”*



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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, “Yes, I am here” (58:9).

In prayer, ask for guidance to remember the names and identify the offense. Don't be easy on yourself. Talk straight, think, don't hide. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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?

Cease all blaming. Stop all finger-pointing. Refuse to gossip about how bad your kids have turned out. That's doesn't help them or you. This is a private matter between you and the one you've offended. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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

Read *Isaiah 58:10–11* and write down the benefits that Isaiah listed for making ourselves available and vulnerable with our adult children.

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.

I suggest that you sit down with your adult children whom you have wounded and confess your offenses. In doing so, you will be released from the grip of guilt and lifted out of the shadow of shame. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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

How does Isaiah describe those who seek restoration in *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.



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Correlation: Hope for Restoration

Tragically, Isaiah's prophecies fell on deaf ears, and the Lord had to judge His people through the destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon. God, however, always held out hope. What beacon of hope did God reveal through Jeremiah, according to *Jeremiah 29:11–13*?

God sent the Jews into captivity for their sins with a promise of restoration. Tomorrow shines bright with hope for us too, despite yesterday's mistakes, failures, and sins. The process of repentance and restoration takes work, but the results are worth it.



Application: Taking the Necessary Steps

Let's review Isaiah's steps to restoration and find ways to apply them.

1. *Humble yourself.* Admitting the ways you may have offended your children, even if you had the best of intentions, is the first step toward healing.
2. *Pray.* Ask the Lord to reveal the specific offenses for which you need to ask forgiveness.
3. *Remove the yoke.* Determine to stop excusing, blaming, and finger-pointing.
4. *Make yourself available and vulnerable.* Schedule time to talk with your adult children about how you may have wronged them. Speak candidly, without expecting them to forgive you right away. Healing may take some time.
5. *Trust the Lord to heal and bring major changes.* When you take these steps, you become the “rebuilder of walls” and, as the Lord heals, the “restorer of homes” (Isaiah 58:12).



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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?

Do you, or does your family, need help from a pastor or Christian counselor? If so, whom can you contact?

As you seek to rebuild family relationships after you've blown it, don't hide anything. Go with your arms and heart open wide. Be transparent and honest. Don't hurry the response. The wounds may be deep, so give the other person time. Finally, let go of your guilt and regret. 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.



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 to find freedom in Your everlasting, healing grace. In Jesus' name, amen.