

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

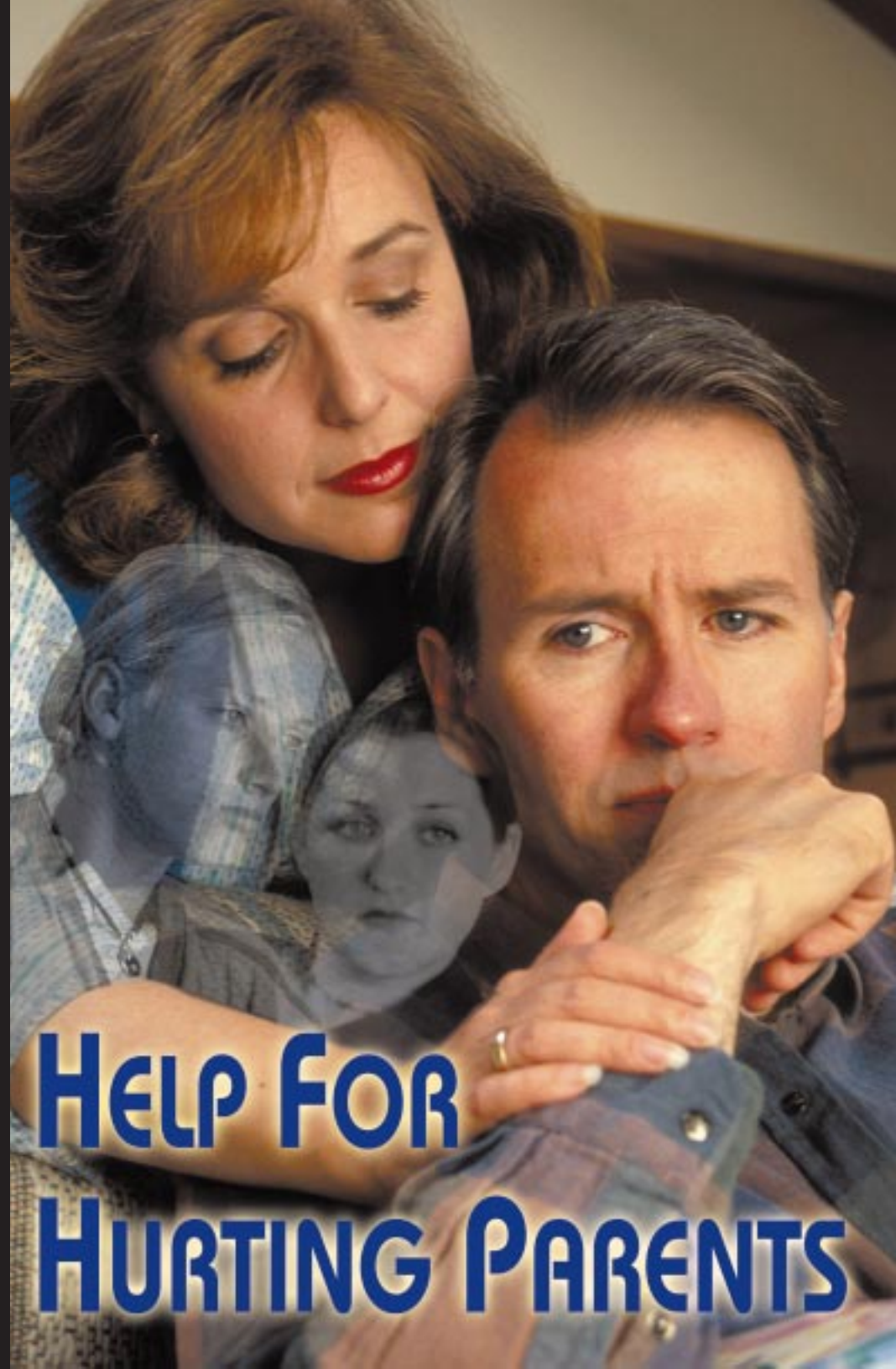
Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,

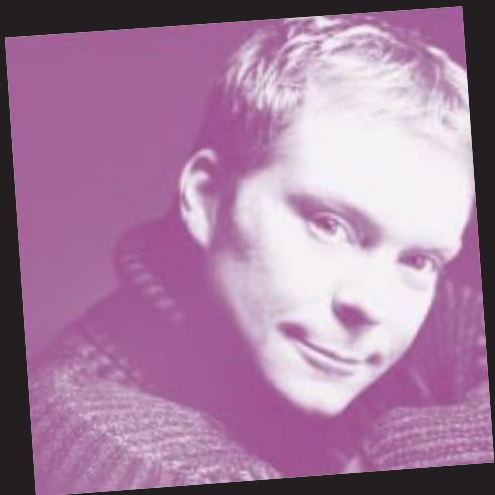


An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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HELP FOR HURTING PARENTS



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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HELP FOR HURTING PARENTS

Is there any thing in this world more beautiful than the sight of new parents holding their precious little baby for the first time?

Expectations and anticipation for the future overflow in the delivery room whenever there is a birth. The excitement parents feel is almost euphoric as they wrap all their hopes and dreams around that little bundle of joy. There is only one problem—the expectations they have are, for the most part, unrealistic. Those new parents can’t imagine that their sweet, innocent baby could one day grow up and break their hearts.

Dr. David Moore reports that when surveyed recently, seven out of ten “empty-nesters” in America admitted if they had it to do all over again they would not have children. It simply was not worth the pain, they said. Parental pain is nothing new. Thousands of years ago King David received the news that his rebellious son, Absalom, was dead. The Bible records these words in II Samuel 18:33, “The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’”

The pain a prodigal brings to a family is a pain that can last a lifetime. To have the child you brought into this world reject you, your values, or your faith, causes an unspeakable pain you must experience to understand.

Parents easily come to the end of their emotional and relational ropes when they are too afraid to let go and are too frustrated to hang on any longer. The greatest comfort a hurting parent can receive will always come from someone who understands because to be understood is one of the greatest needs any of us has.

If you are a parent in pain, you first need to know that you have a Heavenly Father who does understand. He understands because He has been there and is still where you are. Listen to what God says in Isaiah 1:2-3: “Hear O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manager, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” God understands what it is like to be frustrated with rebellious kids. No one gets more sympathy from God than hurting parents.

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Secondly, there are four common misconceptions about parenting that add to the pain hurting parents experience. Dr. Moore counteracts those misconceptions with his wonderful, Biblical insight:

1. Misconception: They are Your Kids.

Children are not your property—they are only guests in your life. Children come through you but not from you. If you think they are your kids then you will take on a whole new level of accountability that is not yours to take.

2. Misconception: There is a Formula for Success.

There are many books, courses, tapes, and schools of thought today which would lead you to believe there is a formula to follow that will guarantee you good kids. This is wrong and completely unscriptural. These may all give you good Biblical principles to follow, (and you should) but they are not a guarantee.



Too many times, well-meaning preachers and teachers have misinterpreted Proverbs 22:6 which says, “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” They have taught others that this verse is a divine promise. It would be great if this were indeed a formula with a guarantee, but just like every other area of the Christian life, there are no formulas and no guarantees.

Many Christians mistakenly believe that the word Proverb means “promise” but it doesn’t—it means “probability.” They also don’t understand that when the Scripture verse tells parents to “train up a child in the way he should go,” this is referring to a child’s “bent,” or a child’s individual personality and temperament. This verse simply means that unless you understand the unique way God has shaped your child, just as an archer bends a bow, you will not hit the target with the training of your child.

3. Misconception: Good Parents Always Produce Good Kids.

If you believe this statement, then you will have to throw the story of Samson out of the Bible. Samson was a very special person. He was one in six people ever mentioned in the Bible who was born to a barren woman. He was one of three people in the Bible who had a divinely announced birth. Samson was one of only two people in the Bible whose purpose in life was announced before he was

born. There are 20 verses in Judges 13 that describe the home and family into which he was born. This was clearly one of the finest, most devoted families ever mentioned in Scripture. God blessed Samson from before the time he was born, and the Bible says the Spirit of the Lord was on Him.

If anyone should have been a spiritual super-saint, it should have been Samson. But instead, he was, as Dr. Moore puts it, a “super-screw-up.” Samson’s life was a series of selfish, sinful choices and he came to the end of his life a painful source of embarrassment to his family, his nation, and his God. It is a misconception that good parents always produce good kids.

4. Misconception: I Am Responsible for the Choices My Kids Make.

Again, as Dr. Moore points out, this is a belief that cannot be backed up with Scripture. Ezekiel 1:1-4 says, “The word of the Lord came to me: What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to Me, the father and the son—both alike belong to Me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.”

Children are not your property—they are only guests in your life.

God was trying to do so in Ezekiel's day, and He is still trying today, to keep people from playing the "blame game." These verses assure you that your child's problems in life are not the direct result of your failure as a parent. Those problems are the direct result of your child's RESPONSE to imperfect parenting in an imperfect world. The Word of God teaches that kids are responsible for their own choices in life. The responsibility of a parent is to lead, direct, guide, teach, train, love, and discipline, but kids choose how to respond. The belief that every parental mistake produces a problem for children, makes parents responsible for their kids' choices and God says that is not true. Parents can influence their children's choices but they cannot control their children's choices.

God will never hold anyone responsible for that which is not in their control. This means that parents can't take credit for great kids and they can't take the blame for less than perfect kids, either. We will give an account to God for the things we did "to" our kids, but we will not give an account to God "for" our kids. Romans 14:12 says, "So then, each one of us will give an account of himself to God." If you are hurting because of the

wrong choices your child has made in life, you will only be helped when you are willing to let go of the guilt and the responsibility you have tried to assume for the wrong choices of your child.

In the book of Genesis the Bible tells us that God created the entire universe out of nothing and then He made His greatest creation—man and woman. God created Adam and Eve to be like Him. He gave the man and woman perfect bodies, a perfect environment, and a perfect Father. These two had a beautiful, perfect place to live and everything they could possibly want or need. They lived in a world with no pain, sorrow, suffering, hate, war, violence, sickness or death. Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with each other, but most important of all, they had a perfect relationship with God.

God's first two kids had all this and they chose to rebel anyway. How is that possible? It is possible because they had a free will to choose. God loved His kids (and yours) enough to create them with a free will. He could have easily made them like robots or puppets who have no choice other than to do what their Creator directs them to do. But God's love is so great; He made every

human with a free will to choose, and He will never, under any circumstances, take that away. If the perfect Heavenly Father accepts the heartache that can come because His kids have a free will to choose between right and wrong, then earthly fathers and mothers must do the same.

Memories of past disappointments with your children can sometimes cause more pain than anything else. If those memories are not reconciled, you will feel like life has treated you unfairly. This can cause you to be spiritually, mentally, and emotionally unstable. Release

from your pain won't come until you resolve the disappointments you are holding against your child. This can only happen when you make the choice to forgive. Author David Seamands said, "...I have come to the conclusion that the major causes of most emotional problems among Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people. We read, we hear, we believe in a good theology of grace. But, that's not the way we live. The good news of the gospel has not penetrated the level of our emotions."

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Choosing to forgive to your child is not denying, excusing, or minimizing what happened.

God's grace—do you really understand it? Have you experientially and emotionally accepted it? If so, do you grace others? Grace is God's love coming free of charge with no strings attached. Dr. Robert Jeffress says, "Grace is a deliberate decision to give something good to someone who doesn't deserve it." That pretty much describes a rebellious child, doesn't it? As a Christian, you received God's grace because He offered to release you from the eternal consequences of your sin. But grace doesn't mean God overlooks your sin. God is holy, and because of His holiness, He can't just ignore sin. Someone had to be accountable; someone had to pay the sin debt; so Jesus Christ chose to assume the obligation for your sin.

When you became a Christian, not only did God place your sin upon Christ, but He took the righteousness of Christ and credited it to your spiritual bank account. This would be like having a bank account in your name that is seriously overdrawn. Jesus has an account in the same bank, but His account has a million dollars in it. When you got saved, God took your name off of your account and put Jesus' name on your account. At the same time, He

put your name on Jesus account! Now the resources of Jesus belong to you, and Jesus is totally responsible for the debt you owe the bank—that is grace!

If you choose not to forgive your child, your unforgiveness will be like a chain which binds their heart and prevents the Holy Spirit from working in his or her life. On the other hand, making the choice with your will to forgive daily, releases that child to God and gives the Holy Spirit the freedom He needs to work. Choosing not to grace your child with the same kind of forgiveness God has shown you will also chain you to the past, the offenses, and the offender. It is like being confined to a small prison cell with the very person who hurt you, a prison of your own making where you are not only the prisoner, but also the jailer. Granting forgiveness provides a way to be "unshackled" from your offender. When you choose to release your offender, you can walk out of your prison cell and move on with your life, regardless of what your child chooses to do. Lewis Smedes said, "...When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us."

Choosing to forgive your child is not denying, excusing, or minimizing what happened. It is being honest and objective about the offense, the pain, and the consequences caused by the choices the child has made. Forgiving is giving an undeserved pardon and an undeserved release. Forgiveness is the releasing of an obligation. Of course, the only ones in need of forgiveness are those who owe a debt, so forgiveness would have to be, by definition, only for the undeserving. If you think forgiveness is only for those who ask for your forgiveness or deserve your forgiveness, then you don't understand forgiveness at all.

Granting forgiveness is not letting your child off the hook. Forgiveness is acknowledging what was done is wrong and inexcusable, but

choosing to show your child the same kind of forgiveness God showed you, which is unconditional and complete. You didn't deserve it and God provided it before you ever asked for it or even knew you needed it. Choosing to forgive can be a problem if you mistakenly believe your child must be repentant before you can offer to forgive them. This is not true, and not Scriptural. You need to understand there is a difference between receiving forgiveness and granting forgiveness. Of course, you must repent before you can receive someone's forgiveness, but repentance has nothing to do with granting forgiveness to someone else. God forgave you "while you were still a sinner," the Bible says.



You must understand that choosing to forgive your child does not automatically free that child from the consequences of his or her actions. You can release your child from any personal obligation toward you, but you do not have the power to release him or her from the consequences of those actions. When God forgives, He removes the eternal consequences of your sins but not necessarily the temporal consequences of your actions. Choosing to forgive your child doesn't mean that you lower God's standards for what is acceptable or unacceptable in the way of behavior or attitudes. It simply means that you choose to love the sinner, while hating their sin.

One last thing about forgiveness: Giving grace and granting forgiveness are not forgetting about the offenses of your child. The Bible says in verses like Jeremiah 31:34 that when God forgives your sin, He forgets about it.

This doesn't mean He gets a case of holy amnesia. It simply means He puts your sins "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12) and He chooses not to remember them. Forgiving as God forgives is to be your example, but this is one aspect of forgiveness where you are different. Forgetting is a function of your brain; forgiveness is a function of the spirit. Forgetting an offense is not humanly possible. But when you choose with an act of your will to forgive, eventually you will find that the choice to forgive has taken the "sting" out of the memory for you.

One thing all hurting parents must guard against at all costs is the temptation to compare themselves to other parents and their child to other children. Comparison is a very dangerous thing because it has the ability to take everything which is good in our lives and destroy it. This is the oldest and most deadly trick in Satan's

bag. It was the thing he used in the Garden of Eden to get Adam and Eve to take their eyes off of all they had and put them on the one thing they didn't have. Comparison was what led them to doubt God's Word and not trust Him, and as a result, to forfeit His perfect purpose and will for their lives. Satan still uses comparison today to rip apart lives, marriages, families, and futures by tempting us to use a measuring stick or a standard for success God never intended for us to use.

When you play the comparison game two things always happen:

1. *You will distort the success of others.* You automatically think those you are comparing yourself to have it so good—that everything is wonderful and perfect for them because things on the surface appear to be fine. The truth is that there is no way you can really know the secret problems, heartaches, and needs of another family. All that glitters isn't always gold. You also have no way of knowing what is on the horizon for anyone else. All may be great for them now, but there are no guarantees as to what tomorrow may bring.

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2. *You will discount yourself.* When you take the attitude that “they have it all and I have nothing,” you discount all the good in your life. You get a warped perspective of your life and of all the blessings God has given you.

Comparison is a thief—it robs you of peace, joy, and contentment. Choosing to play the comparison game will only worsen your pain and damage your relationship with God and with your child.

One thing all hurting parents seem to run short of is hope. They get to the place where they have no reason to believe that relief will come, or that things will ever be any different. It is easy for Christians to feel hopeless, too, when they either forget, or don't know, what God says. Maybe you are a hurting parent who needs to be reminded that God offers hope to His kids. He says to you in Jeremiah 29:11, “I say this because I know what I am planning for you,” says the Lord. “I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you a HOPE and a future.”

When the world uses the word “hope,” it means to express a wish, a desire, or a dream. But, when the Bible uses the word “hope,” it means a “confident expectation,” an assurance

of something future and unseen. God wants to remind you today that with Him, you have the assurance of a future, and that as He said in Jeremiah, it is a good future, not a harmful one. That future may not be exactly what you dreamed it would be, but it can still be good. The Word of God confirms your hope and your future if you are a Christian, no matter what your past, and no matter how bad your present.

In Romans 15:4 Paul writes, “Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have HOPE.” When you are feeling hopeless, you need to go to the scriptures to get a word from God for your life because that is where you will find hope. There is a wonderful story told in Matthew 14:22-23 that is an example of a situation that looked hopeless before the disciples got a word from the Lord for their lives. Do you remember the story? Jesus has just finished feeding the 5,000 with the five loaves and two fishes. He sends the crowd away, so He can spend some quiet time alone with God. Jesus tells the disciples to get in their boat and go on to the next destination while He goes up on a mountain to pray.

So, the disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee. Storms come up very quickly around there, and the Bible says that they got caught in a big one. In fact, it says that they were being “battered by the waves, for the wind was against them.” These guys have some major problems! Here are four, just to name a few:

- It is nighttime and they are out there alone in the dark.
- It is cloudy because the storm is brewing. They can't see the stars, so they have no sense of direction.
- The wind is against them, so the sails on their boat were useless.
- Not only do they have to row the boat, they have to row against the wind!

There they are, scared, tired, confused, drained, and probably a little angry at Jesus for sending them out on the water and leaving them alone. Can you identify with what they were going through? Does this sound like your life—the fear, the exhaustion, the feelings of abandonment and hopelessness?

I (God) will
give you a
HOPE
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But then Jesus comes to them walking on the water. He comes to them on top of the waves, the very things that were causing their problem! Through the wind, waves, danger, dark, and chaos, He

came to help them and to save them. What this story is saying to you is that the things in your life that cause you pain are the very things that Jesus wants to use to help you. Whenever you are feeling hopeless because of the storms of life, you need to remember several things:

1. You may lose sight of Jesus in the dark of a storm, but He never loses sight of you.
2. You will never welcome the presence of Jesus more in your life than when you are in the middle of a storm.
3. He is always closer than your heartbeat, ready and willing to help. It only takes crying out to Him to make you aware of His presence.
4. When you become aware of His presence, the undoable becomes doable, the unbearable becomes bearable, and even when you think you are at the breaking point, you don't break.

You may be feeling hopeless today because of the depression, fear, anxiety, financial problems, grief, stress, and family problems your prodigal child is causing. You may be tired and burdened. Just like the disciples, you're feeling like you are all alone and rowing against the wind. If you are feeling hopeless, then go to the written Word, and get a personal Word from God. Jesus said to the disciples that day, "Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid." He offers the same word of hope to you today. Remember, the battle you are in is not yours, it is the Lord's, and the final chapter has not yet been written. God always acts on behalf of the one who puts their hope in Him.

The Word of God gives hurting parents another example of hope in the Old Testament story of David. King David was a great man of God, but he was no stranger to disappointment. He had known the very heights of righteousness and the very depths of sin. David had paid dearly for the wrong choices he had made in his own life, and he had also suffered greatly over the wrong choices of his children. In I Chronicles 17:1-4, David

decides, out of a heart full of love and adoration, that he wants to build a house for God. But God says no to him and tells David that his son Solomon would be the one to build the Temple of God. Now David has come to the end of his life, and he finds himself dealing with another major disappointment. His sense of regret must have been overwhelming.

In II Chronicles 6:8, God gives all hurting parents one of the most loving, encouraging verses in all of the Bible. It says, "But the Lord said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for My Name, you did well to have this in your heart.'" The phrase "in your heart" means "a deep, intense longing." God was saying to David that the intent of his heart was as good to God as the work of his hands. In other words, God doesn't judge us by what we achieve but by the ambition of our hearts. The fact that David sincerely wanted to build the Temple for God and that his motives were pure was as good in God's eyes as if He had actually built the Temple. As a parent, you may not do or say everything right where your kids are

concerned, but God knows if you truly want to be a Godly parent who honors Him. That is what really matters to God. You may have fallen short of the goal, but if it was in your heart, God says you did good.

There is only one perfect parent and that is the Perfect Heavenly Father. If you are a Christian parent who has made mistakes, and as a result, has unconfessed sin in your life regarding your children, then deal with it. Don't allow Satan to paralyze and destroy your life with guilt. I John 1:9 says, "If we will confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God does not condemn you, so you have no right to condemn yourself. Neither does He want you to live in guilt, shame, hopelessness, depression or confusion.

If you are a Christian, God has put a new heart and a new spirit within you (Ezekiel 36:26). You are a new creature in Christ. The Bible says you are holy, pure, blameless, and righteous in God's sight. Because God has made you a new person and placed you in Christ, it is no longer scripturally accurate for you to see yourself as a failure. Chuck Swindoll says, "most folks, it seems, are better acquainted with their guilt and shame than with their God." It's time, as a parent, to let yourself off the hook. You need to begin to think God's thoughts and see yourself as He sees you. This will be the greatest remedy for your pain that you can possibly find.

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