

Prayers
of
Blessing
over My
Adult Children

Bruce Wilkinson
and Heather Hair



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Parental Traps

Trap One: “If Only I Had Been a Better Parent”

The first reaction parents have when their adult child or children turn away from the Lord or get involved with a sinful lifestyle is to blame themselves. But think about it—when we do that we are blaming ourselves for another adult’s poor choices. Only parents innately embrace this way of thinking. “If only I would have taught them to read the Bible better, or if only I hadn’t _____, then my adult child wouldn’t be making these terrible choices.”

The Bible is clear about our responsibilities as parents, isn’t it? As parents, we are to raise our children in the admonition of the Lord. To love and obey the Lord. To belong and serve God in a local church. To make godly decisions.

But after more than fifty years of ministry all over the world, I (Bruce) still haven’t met one parent who ever said, “I parented my children perfectly. I never overreacted. I never made a mistake. I never missed praying with them every morning and night. I never missed having daily devotions with the family. I never over-disciplined or under-disciplined my children. I never sinned personally as their parent, never lied, never stole anything, never was

privately immoral with pornography or lust, never watched anything inappropriate on TV or the Internet, never became angry with God for letting me down, never missed reading my Bible, never missed my monthly fasts...”

Numerous of our friends were raised by alcoholic parents. Guess what? Some of their siblings became alcoholics while their other brothers or sisters, living in the same home, with the same traumatic environment, chose never to drink and are living for God. Ultimately, all the children grew into adulthood and made their own choices. So, would those alcoholic parents only blame themselves for their children who made poor decisions and never embrace the joy from those adult children who made right decisions?

Other friends were married but later divorced, and some divorced when their children were at the most vulnerable stages. Nearly all of them are convinced today that their divorce caused their adult children’s problems. Yet, the truth is—their divorce did have a negative impact, but some of their children overcame those wounds and are happily married today while others have chosen to divorce like their parents.

We have other friends who had a tragic divorce at the season when their children were most vulnerable, yet they took extensive steps to help their children work through this and forgive all the hurts. Both parents continued to take responsibility to help their children learn from the process and make right decisions. Today, their children are all flourishing. This doesn’t negate the powerful damaging impact of that broken relationship and marriage, but ultimately, each of their children had to make their own decisions as adults.

I could go on and on, but I hope you are starting to get my point. All of us wish that we could turn back the clock and parent again with all the wisdom we have gained over the years. But that’s not how God organized life. His timetable to have and raise

children naturally occurs when we are young. This was God's best choice and the wisest for all concerned.

A number of important factors must be overcome in order for each of us with adult children to live according to God's best and move on with joy in our lives. The first factor focuses on a three-stage forgiveness process.

The first stage of forgiveness focuses on God. If you struggle with how you parented your children, then the first stage of forgiveness is to realize that God awaits your confession of your mistakes and sins and stands ready to forgive you. If you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, He stands ready to extend His full and complete forgiveness regarding your parenting.

The wise thing to do is to take the time to write on a piece of paper all of your parental failings as they come to mind, and then to ask the Lord to forgive you for each of them. Then, from that point, walk in the Lord's forgiveness. Live no more with the terrible burden of failure. As Paul said, forget those things that are behind and live in the present for the best future. Stop permitting continuous self-accusation. Live as a forgiven sinner, as all of us must choose to do.

The second stage of forgiveness focuses on your children. When the time is right, tell your children one at a time that you want to speak to them about their childhood for a few moments. Start by sharing your love for them and then say something like, "I wish I had been a better father/mother to you when you were growing up. I realize that I failed you by _____ (be specific), especially the times when _____. I take full responsibility for my mistakes and sins and humbly ask you to forgive me. Will you forgive me?"

Don't defend or excuse your previous actions, just seek your adult child's forgiveness. It's critical that you are as specific as you can be regarding the wounds of the past since unforgiveness is related to specific wounds. Don't fall into the trap of saying, "I

know that I wasn't the perfect parent. Will you forgive me?" Ask forgiveness for those things that were the most painful to your children.

When you are finished and the child has forgiven you, ask this follow-up question: "I know that I forgot some other things that hurt your heart. Would you share them so I can apologize?"

You cannot overestimate the power of your adult child forgiving you! And you cannot overestimate the healing that will occur in both of your hearts. Broken relationships have been amazingly restored just through that conversation.

I remember teaching truth to an audience of more than five thousand adults and what unexpectedly occurred when I asked how many of them needed to forgive their parents. Over three thousand immediately raised their hands. You should have seen the tears followed by joy as I led them in the next hour through the forgiveness process as they forgave their parents for each of the wounds they had caused.

Then I asked how many of them needed to ask their children to forgive them, and the same number raised their hands. After they had forgiven their parents, their hearts were open to commit to go home and apologize and seek the forgiveness of their children.

The third stage of forgiveness focuses on you. The final stage of forgiveness relates to you forgiving yourself for these painful parenting mistakes or sins. Jesus died so that a holy God could forgive you for all your sins, so don't try to be more holy than God and not choose to forgive yourself. Again, the key is to forgive yourself for each of those inappropriate attitudes and actions. Extend compassion to yourself—you are worthy of forgiving yourself!

Because this is such an important topic in every person's life, I have written *The Secret of Lasting Forgiveness: How to Find Peace by Forgiving Others and Yourself*. Tens of thousands of people have also used my video course in their small groups, their churches,

and their personal lives to find forgiveness: *70X7: Finding Peace by Forgiving Others and Yourself* (available at BruceWilkinsonCourses.org). I recently returned from the Philippines where I led 8,800 Christian lay leaders of discipleship groups to forgive others and themselves. The personal breakthroughs were massive and widespread. Their lives were set free through the act of genuine, heartfelt forgiveness. So can yours!

Forgiveness that is truly heartfelt radically changes our hearts and lives. The forbidding walls erected around our hearts against those who have hurt us crumble and fall to the ground. Relationships are restored with a wonderful new beginning. We finally are free again to love our children without hidden baggage or restraint. Without working through this forgiveness process, you will have a difficult time praying for your adult children with a free and clean heart. You will live with the weight of guilt and shame rather than forgiveness and freedom.

So, now it's your turn:

1. Ask the Lord to forgive you for your parental mistakes and sins.
2. Ask each of your children individually to forgive your specific acts that wounded them.
3. Forgive yourself fully for each of those acts and live in peace and freedom.

The final word on this topic is to practice the powerful principle of the apostle Paul: "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Philippians 3:13 NKJV). After experiencing forgiveness from God, from each of your children, and finally from yourself, then let the past be the past. Stop living in the terrible "Land of Unending Regret." Let it all go. Move on. Live free of the past and enjoy the present!



How to Use This Book

Are you ready to start using your power of prayer more fully in the lives of your adult children? It starts with you. Praying for yourself as a parent will shape your relationship with your adult children the way you hope to. We've come alongside to help you do just that.

Here are some suggestions on how to use this book. We've included sixty-five guided prayers and affirming truths to reflect on. You can choose the one or ones you feel most relate to your needs as a parent or your adult child's needs and pray it repeatedly for a number of days. Or you can move progressively through the book, picking a new prayer every day. Don't make it a big task, just read and then pray.

You can also skim through the sixty-five prayers and affirming truths to give you a mindset-boost on framing your own prayers, using your own thoughts and desires to prompt you. It's totally your call. We just know the power of prayer and how critical prayer is in shaping lives.

We've divided this guided prayer book into five sections. The first section contains prayers formed around the concepts presented in the "parental traps" section of the book. We have provided prayers and Scripture passages for each of the four parental traps. Then there are additional sections that will guide you in praying

the truths of God's Word for your adult children, praying through specific struggles as well as for present and future victories, and praying for the character qualities of Jesus Christ to be made manifest in your adult children's lives. Again, please keep in mind that some of the prayers might not apply to you or your adult child.

Along the way, we have provided headings that will enable you to find the prayers that apply to you and your adult children. Please note that we have deliberately chosen to focus on the more difficult issues faced by parents. If your adult children are successful and your relationship with them is strong and you want to pray them on to even greater successes, this book isn't intended for you. This book has been written more as a guide for those who are struggling with their adult children and have little left to give outside of prayer.

Even if your situation appears dim, remember, you do not need to pray as if you are losing the battle. When you do that, Satan has already won. Jesus secured our victory over every demonic and evil injection into our lives on earth, so praying with the mindset already secure in His victory will help you and your adult children live out the victory that is rightfully yours in Him.

In summary, in the remainder of this book you'll find:

Section One: Praying Through the Traps

Section Two: Praying in the Truth

Section Three: Praying Through the Struggles

Section Four: Praying for the Victories

Section Five: Praying for the Character of Christ

Appendix: Scripture Passages to Reflect On or Pray
Regarding Parenting and Prayer

Keep in mind that guided prayers are not magical words to make all your hopes come true. But they can help you focus your

prayers on what is often the overlooked root of spiritual issues we face. Remember, the main thing in having your prayers answered is found in your abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. But it is also our hope that these prayers will help you zero in on more specific, regular, and affirming prayers for yourself and your family members. We pray as your prayer journey continues to develop more fully that God Himself will bless you with a supernatural covering and motivation to pray regularly, fervently, and with great expectations!



Section One:

Praying Through the Traps



Parental Trap #1:

**“If Only
I Had Been a
Better Parent”**



Prayer One

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Lord, You know as well as I know how many parental mistakes and sins I committed over the years. I admit that I have made wrong choices that have affected my children in a negative and painful way. I wasn't always present. I didn't always walk in a spirit of peace. I was selfish, narrow-minded, and even judgmental. Lord, I have no excuse for these mistakes and sins. Blaming my own childhood, parents, or some trauma in my life will only continue the cycle of pain. No matter what happened to me, all blame for my parental mistakes and sins belongs to me because these were my choices. And I chose poorly far too many times. Forgive me, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Two

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).

Lord, I ask that You enlighten my adult children's minds in such a way that will allow them to forgive me for the parental mistakes and sins I have committed against them. Open their hearts to a greater desire to love and forgive me and their other parent (or parents) as well. I do not want to see my adult children living with regret, bitterness, or hatred in their hearts due to anything I have done or that I failed to do—or due to anything their other parent(s) did or did not do but should have done. Set my adult children free through forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Three

He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

Lord, help me not get lost in the question of what would be different had I been a better parent. Help me not rehearse the what-ifs over and over until my spirit is so low and my self-love is so lost that I am no good to You, myself, or anyone else. I cannot change the past. I cannot fix the past. I cannot undo the past. Blaming, doubting, and questioning what I did or didn't do as a parent does not help the present, and it certainly does not help the future. Please help me to let those thoughts go. Help me to release them. Help me to rest in the truth that You have enough strength and enough power to redeem the mistakes of the past and restore whatever has been lost or broken. When I spend my precious thoughts worried about the past, I am dishonoring You and Your power to overcome it. Forgive me and free me from damaging thoughts rooted in the past. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Four

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Lord, free me from guilt. Free me from comparison. Free me from the bonds of wishing I had done better, knowing I should have done better and feeling not good enough. God, I have failed as a parent in certain areas and at specific times. Had I the wisdom and maturity that I have now, I may have acted or reacted differently. I may have made wiser choices. But I didn't. And I have to live with that reality. Denying that truth does not help me, and it does not help my adult children. Help me be honest with myself, with You, and with my adult children. Free me from pretense. Free me from perfectionism. Help me lift the shield of faith, knowing that Your forgiveness and grace can cover all. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Five

Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load (Galatians 6:4-5).

Lord, sometimes I worry about what other people think. I want to look, in their eyes, like I was a great parent. I see so many parents posting on social media or I see them at church, and it looks like they have it all together—their smiling faces, their perfect poses. It makes me feel like what I did wasn't good enough. I didn't give enough. Or I didn't do enough. I ask You to release me from the chains of comparison. Help me to see behind the veil so that I am not deceived into thinking that pictures on social media reflect reality as we often think they do. We are all flawed humans. We all make mistakes. And parenting isn't a race or competition, either. I am responsible to run only my own race, with You as my judge. Help me know where to look for hope—in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Six

I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins (Isaiah 43:25).

Lord, I want to forgive myself for the pain I have caused my adult children—whether when they were younger or older. I need to forgive myself for not living up to my expectations or my children’s expectations. Your love for me on the cross was sufficient for all my sins. Yet if I hold on to blame and judgment against myself, I am negating the power of Your sacrifice. Your sacrifice is enough for me, so, in faith, I choose to forgive myself for my failures and sins as a parent. Help me, Lord, to continue to forgive myself and release myself from self-blame in the days ahead. In Jesus’ name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Seven

If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Matthew 5:23-24).

Lord, give me the courage I need to apologize to my adult children and to ask their forgiveness for the ways that I have hurt them. Give me the wisdom and insight I need to specifically identify these ways so that I can address them and ask for forgiveness. Prepare my children's hearts to receive my apology and request for forgiveness as well, please. I admit that doing this causes me anxiety and fear. I ask for Your calming peace to overwhelm me so that I can do what my adult children need in order for them to live freely in a spirit of forgiveness toward me. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____

Prayer Eight

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Lord, rather than dwell on the “if onlys” of life, I want to take this time to thank You for the things I did right. I want to give You praise for seeing me through my own growth, maturity, and development as a parent. I honor You for Your loving care, which showed me grace in the midst of the personal struggles I faced. While my kids were growing up, I was naïve on a lot of levels. But You developed and grew me each day. Thank You, Lord, for never giving up on me. Help me to recognize the good I did and to show myself grace for the ways I did not parent as I think I should have. I love You and praise You, Lord, and I am grateful for all the parenting successes and precious moments You allowed me to experience—as well as the wisdom You gave me along the way. In Jesus' name, amen.

I am grateful for _____

Notes _____

Prayer Needs _____

Answered Prayer _____