

RESTORING YOUR FAMILY'S FOUNDATION

STUDY FOUR

Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalm 139:13–18

In the womb, God put together the one-and-only you. Think of what this knowledge does for young children when they learn that they are an “original” from God’s hand!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

YOUR child is like a beautiful tapestry knit together by God, the master weaver of the soul. David marveled at God’s handiwork:

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body;
and knit me together in my mother’s womb. (Psalm 139:13)*

Your child’s hair texture, eye color, voice timbre, and body shape; personality, interests, moods, and abilities—God entwines all these intricate threads into a unique pattern to create the masterpiece that is your child.

Each stage of your child’s maturation from infancy through early adulthood reveals new features of God’s design. Seeing the child’s bents accurately is the first parental task. Responding appropriately is the second.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study looks deeper into the concept of bents—both toward good and toward sin. Yes, implanted in your child is an inclination to sin that all humans share. We’ll examine this aspect of your child’s nature and discover the balance between *affirming* and *cultivating* the good bents while *acknowledging* and *counteracting* the sinful.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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1

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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 Pastor Chuck Swindoll 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



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

To grasp the context of our passage, read [Psalm 139](#) in its entirety. Now step back and look at the progression of thoughts. David composed this ancient hymn in four thematic stanzas: God Knows Me ([Psalm 139:1–6](#)); God Is with Me ([139:7–12](#)); God Made Me ([139:13–18](#)); My Response ([139:19–24](#)).

Just as God was intimately “acquainted” with David’s “ways” (Psalm 139:3 NASB), so is He with your child’s ways. The Hebrew word for *ways* is the same word used in [Proverbs 22:6](#) and includes every aspect of your child’s life . . . your child’s sitting and rising (behaviors), ups and downs (moods), and comings and goings (pursuits). Even his or her thoughts that are secret to you are pages of an open book to God. How can God read your child so well? Because He is the author of your child!

Having overviewed the Psalm, now tune your ear to the message in the section, God Made Me ([Psalm 139:13–18](#)), as you imagine God saying the psalmist’s words to your child.



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalms 139:13–18



Observation: The Origins of Your Child's Bents

Observation is the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study. Reread [Psalm 139:13–18](#) focusing on each phrase and letting it sink in. Substitute the pronouns, “me” and “my,” with the name of your child. By personalizing the psalm, what do you see that you may have never noticed before? Write your observations in the space below.

Your child's personality, features, and abilities all bear God's fingerprints—but not his or her sin. Where did your child's inclination toward sin originate, according to [Romans 5:12](#)?

How did David explain the transmission of our sin nature in [Psalm 51:5](#)?

All people are born sinful. Your precious child, lovely and cuddly, soft and beautiful, has a nature that is sinful. It must be confronted, counteracted consistently, firmly, and fairly. That's the job of a parent. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalm 139:13–18



Interpretation: The Good and the Evil Bents in Your Child

The book of Psalms is a collection of Hebrew ancient hymns that declare doctrinal truth through worship. In interpretation, we ask, “What truth did the author intend his audience to understand?”

The Good Bents—Psalm 139:13–16

Use your Bible study tools to examine the author’s intended meaning of the words referenced below in the verses from Psalm 139. For an online resource, consult [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#). What truths was David describing when he penned these picturesque phrases?

“**You created . . . wove . . . skillfully formed . . .**” (Psalm 139:13, 15 NASB, emphasis added). See also, Job’s clothing metaphor in [Job 10:11](#) and the making of the exquisite curtain in the tabernacle in [Exodus 26:36](#).

“**My frame . . . made in secret . . .**” (Psalm 139:15 NASB, emphasis added).



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalms 139:13–18

“Your eyes have seen my *formless substance*” (Psalm 139:16 NASB, emphasis added).

“In Your *book* . . . all the days . . . *ordained for me*” (139:16 NASB, emphasis added).

Summarize the meaning of these verses in your own words. If you were to share with someone the biblical truths about life in the womb, what would you say?

The one in the womb is alive. God has been working on a living being. When you held your child for the first time, he or she came prescribed by God. Your child is not a moldable piece of clay that can be altered as you please. It's not about your way. The child comes with his or her way as God planned it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalm 139:13–18

The Evil Bents—Romans 5:12; Proverbs 20:11

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). What does it mean that sin "entered" the world and death "spread" to everyone?

Sin's condition of *guilt* and sin's consequence of *spiritual death* are aspects of what theologians call *imputed sin*. No amount of personal achievement can pardon guilt or produce eternal life.

What is the gospel message according to [John 3:16](#); [Ephesians 2:8–9](#); and [2 Corinthians 5:17–18, 21](#)?

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.



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalms 139:13–18

Only Christ can remove your child's guilt and create in him or her a new nature that's supernaturally attracted to—and empowered to—pursue what's good. Parents partner with God to help children understand sin, sinful acts, and sin's consequences while also helping them pursue a life of faith, hope, and love. Let's examine ways to do that next.

The work of Jesus Christ in a child's heart provides an inner power that you can't provide as a parent, as much as you love your child. Christ in a child does wonders for his or her life.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Counteracting Sinful Choices in Your Child

Two-year-old children may test their parents to know the limits of their emerging autonomy. This is a sign of normal child development, and parents can help their children feel secure by patiently redirecting their children and keeping boundaries firm.

As the child grows older, you will detect the difference between childishness and defiance, testing boundaries and disobedience. What do [Proverbs 20:11](#) and [29:15](#) teach about a child's sinful behaviors and how to counteract them?

Be alert, discerning, and determined to quickly resolve sinful attitudes and actions by teaching your child to obey and respect authority. If parents don't confront sin in their children, who will? Don't leave discipline for the teachers at church or at school. Parents, take your responsibility seriously—for the good of civilization!



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalms 139:13–18

In his book, *The Strong Family*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll reminds us of the importance of parental discipline in society with this quote from Dr. Albert Siegel:

“When it comes to rearing children, every society is only twenty years away from barbarism. Twenty years is all we have to accomplish the task of civilizing the infants who are born into our midst each year. These savages know nothing of our language, our culture, our religion, our values, our customs of interpersonal relations. The infant is totally ignorant about . . . respect, decency, honesty, customs, conventions, and manners. *The barbarism must be tamed if civilization is to survive.*”²

Sobering words. How do we guide our children and grandchildren in light of the complexities of who they are?



Application: The Starting Place

According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, begin by communicating over and over to your child the following four realities based on the biblical truths from Psalm 139:

- 1) *The Lord made you like none other.*
- 2) *The Lord loves you and cares about you throughout your life.*
- 3) *You are important, gifted, competent in specific areas, and have a great future.*
- 4) *Your parents and grandparents are committed to helping you cultivate your God-given gifts.*

Applaud your child's marvelous qualities when they emerge. Let your child know the wonderful ways God has made him or her. Celebrate your child's unique bents, rather than compare or show favoritism. Nurture your child's self-image as you tell the story of his or her divine design.

What can you do today to put these principles into action?



Your Child Has the Bents!

Psalm 139:13–18

Like everyone, your child has good bents *and* sinful bents. Pastor Chuck offers these points:

- 1) *Start by leading your child to Christ at a young age.*
- 2) *Be faithful to confront as well as cultivate.*
- 3) *Keep consistent in both cultivating and confronting as long as your child lives under your roof.*

Do you need to address any sin issues in your child's behavior? What might they be? How can you correct your child by speaking the truth to him or her? What types of consequences for wrong behavior fit your child's personality? What rewards for right behavior motivate best?

God Himself knit together the fine details of your child in the secret workshop of the mother's womb. Your child is no mere byproduct of biological chance, but a design of God's own hand. Recite to your child or grandchild today the wonderful truths of Psalm 139, and watch his or her face beam.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, what a joy it is to call You Father! Please help me to reflect Your delight and love for Your children in how I delight and love mine. Thank You for the blessing of these precious ones. Help me to dedicate them to You and guide them in the paths that You have laid for them. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. Albert Siegel, as quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *The Strong Family* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1991), 74.

