

LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids
Ephesians 4:25–32



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Living harmoniously as a family is an ongoing, intentional journey. The beginning of that journey is marked by great anticipation and genuine excitement. A bride and groom have high hopes and great dreams as they start out life together. However, as in all journeys, unexpected challenges pop up, including the arrival of children, which requires the couple to cultivate valuable parenting skills—without a handbook!

At each age, from preschool through elementary school, each child requires his or her parents to make adjustments along the way to keep the relationships harmonious. Just about the time parents get their arms around all of that, the teenage years arrive! This stretching and complicated time calls for even more adjustments and a greater willingness to change if the parents hope to sustain harmony in the home. Then, after all that adapting, a brand new set of challenges arrives—the children reach adulthood, with minds of their own. Can there still be mutual respect and meaningful relationships in the family? Can harmony continue between parents and their grown-up kids? Absolutely! The question is, *How?*



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Relational Essentials That Must Never Change

For every family, there exists a baseline of how things are supposed to function. These relational essentials do not change, but too often, they pass under a family's radar. Bringing these essentials to the surface at the outset of this message will help provide some boundaries for interacting with adult children.

- First, *no challenge in any family is impossible*. Whether the challenge involves poor health, unbecoming behavior, or other difficulties, we can easily feel boxed in. However, we know that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). He can handle even the darkest of circumstances.
- Second, *no child of any age is in authority*. Just because children grow into adults does not mean they take on authority over their parents. Adult children must still respect and honor their parents as parents. This requires forgiving past wrongs and persevering through current disagreements.



Quotable

*How valuable for
children to hear
parents apologize
when they have
done wrong.*

Done that lately?

— Charles R. Swindoll



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- Third, *no person in the family is independent of other family members*. We can compare our families to bodies, with living parts joined together to form a whole. Family members, even adult children, therefore, should not see themselves as isolated figures whose actions don't impact their parents and siblings.
- Fourth, *no reaction to any issue should be handled in the flesh*. When we respond impulsively, we open the door to acting in ways contrary to the Lord's desires for us. Rather, we need to step back, consider what the Lord would have us do, and respond appropriately.

2. Biblical Principles That Should Always Be Followed (Ephesians 4:25–32)

While the Bible doesn't say much that explicitly relates to grown children, it does teach us a great deal about our relationships with other people, and we can apply those truths to our relationships with our adult children. As we examine a passage from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we will uncover six, two-word principles that we should incorporate into our interactions with our adult children.

- *Speak truth*: This applies to issues related to family history, reproofs our adult children need to hear, and a host of other circumstances. Whatever the case, our children deserve the truth.
- *Be passionate*: Don't be passive. Our honesty about and passionate response to evil will instruct our adult children as they continually refine their approach to the world and to their own families.
- *Stop stealing*: We steal freedom from our children when we meddle in their affairs, don't allow them to be adults, and prevent them from making their own way in the world.
- *Stop yelling*: Yelling counts as unwholesome talk. When we yell, threaten, curse, or use sarcasm, we fail to communicate effectively with our children. And we can rest assured that they will not hear what we are trying to communicate.
- *Give grace*: When we speak to our grown children, especially in the aftermath of their errors, we need to speak words that communicate grace by building up and encouraging our children.
- *Be kind*: Kindness requires us to be willing to forgive our children when they fall short in our relationships with them. Kindness also requires us as parents to receive our children's forgiveness when we fall short ourselves.



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A CLOSER LOOK

Forging a Life of Forgiveness

We do well to praise God and to celebrate Christ's free offer of grace in salvation. However, at times, our minds become so focused on that initial event that we end up forgetting about the long, hard road of living the Christian life. Ephesians 4:31–32 offers Christians significant insight into how to live in the body of Christ. If we focus only on the beginning of our lives in Christ, we might think being a Christian isn't all that difficult. However, Paul reminded us how difficult it can be.

As Christians, we have been called to forgive one another. The need for forgiveness implies that some wrong has been committed or pain has been caused. When we allow hurt to dictate our actions, we become separated from our fellow believers and lost in the bitterness and malice of unforgiveness. Being a vital part of Christ's body, then, requires a life committed to forgiveness. This is not a onetime act or something we can check off a list. Forgiveness must be a regular part of our lives if we expect to make a lasting impact for Christ.



LET'S LIVE IT

How can parents of adult children use the list we've created from Ephesians 4?

- First, *memorize it*. When we commit things to memory, we greatly increase our chances of actually using them in our daily lives.
- Second, *share it with someone else*. Talk about this list with others. Not only will it give other parents more exposure to things they should be doing, but it will further solidify the list in our own minds.
- Finally, *enjoy the benefits*. When we treat our children in the godly fashion outlined in Ephesians 4, we can better enjoy the time we spend with them. And as they mature, we'll find that they want to spend time with us too.

How are you doing with the list of six, two-word principles outlined in Ephesians? Which of the six do you most often practice in your relationships with your children? Which of the six do you practice the least often in your relationships with your children?



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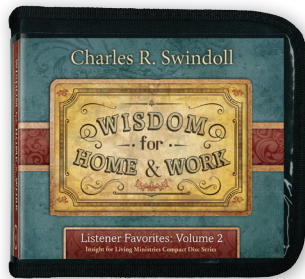
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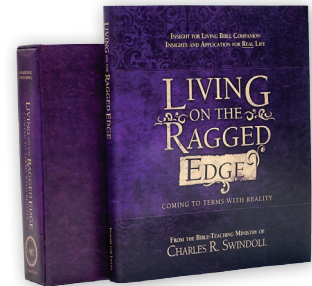
Tools for Digging Deeper



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