

BIBLICAL PARENTING STUDY TEN

Accepting Reproof from Those Who Love Us

Selected Proverbs and Ephesians 6:1–4

Confrontation comes after thought and prayer and at just the right time. Speak the truth in love so that your child can grow.

—Charles R. Swindoll

CHILDREN don't grow well in a household with a one-size-fits-all parenting style. If parents try to force fit them into a style that isn't tailor-made for each child, they'll bust out the seams. Children yearn to be known intimately and personally, which requires that parents care enough to spend time with them; care enough to listen to their thoughts and share their feelings; and, when needed, care enough to confront.

Confrontation done well isn't condemnation, criticism, or humiliation. It doesn't erupt in angry outbursts or leak out as sarcastic fault-finding. It is speaking truth in love—which is perhaps the highest expression of care (Ephesians 4:15).

In this study, we'll take a biblical tour of God's thoughts on caring confrontation, and our first stop is the hall of wisdom: the book of Proverbs.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman who “shouts in the streets” (Proverbs 1:20). She is like a mother pleading with her child to listen to her.

*“Come and listen to my counsel.
I'll share my heart with you
and make you wise.” (1:23)*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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When children stray into danger, it can be difficult to know *what* to say and *how* to say it. We need God’s wisdom in this area of confronting our children, so take time to ask the Lord for help.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the *Searching the Scriptures* process, a helpful exercise is determining what type of book you’re studying.¹ The Old Testament book of Proverbs falls into the category of *books of poetry*. Read through the introductory material in your study Bible at the beginning of Proverbs or the [introduction](#) on our website to become familiar with this unique biblical genre.



Observation: Defining “Reproof”

Where can parents turn to find a model for reproofing their children? To our heavenly Father, who demonstrates reproofing with a firm hand *and* a loving touch. Let’s consult Proverbs for a deeper perspective based on the way God deals with His children who need correction.

Wisdom’s Perspective on Reproof

Read [Proverbs 3:11–12](#) and write down how the wise receive God’s reproofs and the heart behind God’s corrections.

When God confronts, wise people see beyond the sting of reproof to God’s deep concern for them. They understand God’s motive is to protect them by correcting behavior that only leads to greater pain. Consequently, they don’t resist His reproofs but welcome them.

Did you observe the word *delights* in Proverbs 3:12: “A father corrects a child in whom he delights”? When a father pulls back his child from stepping in front of a speeding car, the father is expressing his love. The child is the father’s delight, and he wishes no harm comes to his child. Children, however, may not see the danger they narrowly avoided and may lash out in anger, “You’re mean, Daddy!” They don’t understand that the correction was for their good.



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What warnings do *Proverbs 15:5, 10, and 32* issue to those who resist correction?

Children must learn by experience that, “If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself” (Proverbs 15:32). Likewise, parents must learn that not disciplining actually harms a child—as well as the unfortunate people in their unruly children’s path. A parent who avoids confrontation and adopts a peace-at-any-price approach with his or her child will pay a steeper price later.

Wisdom’s Guidelines for Reproof

Proverbs also teaches us *wisdom’s guidelines for reproof*. After reading the following verses, answer the questions below.

*Like apples of gold in settings of silver
Is a word spoken in right circumstances.* (Proverbs 25:11 NASB)

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.* (27:6 NASB)

*In the end, people appreciate honest criticism
far more than flattery.* (28:23 NLT)

Who has the right to reprove?	
What is the lasting value of the wound?	
Friendship includes the freedom to do what?	
What harm could listening to flattery cause?	
How should criticism be done?	
At what time should reproof come?	



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Reproof done *in private* with words that *build up*, not condemn, and given *at the right time* will give life to your children. If they accept your words, they will dwell among the wise (healthy peers), and they will acquire understanding (of how life works). Parents couldn't wish for more!

When we reprove another person, we confront attitudes or actions that need to be corrected. We refuse to look the other way because we know that what we are sharing is good for the one we love and those whose lives he or she touches. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: A Balanced Approach to Reproving

How can parents help their children avoid the inevitable life storms that defiance and disrespect stir up? The apostle Paul advises parents to take a balanced approach.

Read [Ephesians 6:4](#). What does Paul warn against? What does he command?

Two Greek words in this verse are worth excavating. First, *parorgizete* means “provoke to anger.” Compare its usage in a parallel passage, [Colossians 3:21](#). How might a father provoke his children to anger or, as the word appears in the New Living Translation, “aggravate,” or, in the New International Version, “embitter”? According to Paul, what happens to the child as a result?



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The second Greek word is *ektrephete*, translated “raise up” or “nourish.” Compare its usage in Ephesians 5:29: “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (NASB, emphasis added). In this verse, Paul challenges men to nourish their wife just as they nourish themselves—and to view Christ’s love for the church as a model. As a father, a man must also create a nourishing environment for his children by providing for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Compare the two words in the following chart. We’ll list a few descriptors, and you can fill in some of your own.

Provoke to Anger <i>Parorgizete</i>		Nourish <i>Ektrephete</i>	
Exasperate	Lecture	Affirm	Support
Nag	Harass	Encourage	Clear Boundaries
Aggravate	Ridicule	Praise	Patient Instruction

To sum up, when we reprove our children, we confront an attitude or an action that needs correction. We choose not to “look the other way” but to say the hard thing for the good of our child. Reproving need not be frequent; in fact, reproofs are best heard when they are rare and carefully considered. Reproving isn’t done in public; rather, it is a private, sensitive conversation. Reproving doesn’t come across as nagging, nitpicking, or faultfinding; rather, it is speaking “the truth in love” so that our children can grow “in every way more and more like Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).



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Correlation: Wise Counsel for Children

Parenting also includes training our children how to receive reproof. What are the two commands for children in the following verse?

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1–3)

Obedience is the appropriate *action*; it involves a child’s behavior. Honor, which conveys the ideas of respect and devotion, is *attitude*; it involves a child’s thoughts and emotions. Both right action and right attitude are essential. To obey without respect is defiant compliance; to respect without obedience is empty lip-service.

What is missing in these scenarios of compliance and lip-service? *A trusting relationship.* At the heart of children’s obedience is a trusting relationship in which they are secure in their parents’ love. They know that their parents truly desire what’s best for them, and so they are willing to accept reproof and submit their will to their parents’ will. Submission is the theme of this entire section in Ephesians which addresses husbands, wives, children, parents, workers, and bosses: “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (5:21 NIV).

Why does God instruct children to obey and respect their parents? Can you spot the two reasons in the verses above?



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On the flipside, how might things *not* go well for disobedient and disrespectful children when they grow up and get married, try to hold a job, and live as citizens in a community?

A significant part of cultivating both obedience and honor in children is related to the parents' faithful, consistent, and appropriate reproofs. It takes a lot of wisdom. It includes talking straight, not talking down. Standing your ground. Establishing boundaries. Saying the truth. Confronting what is wrong—a wrong attitude as well as wrong actions. And then rewarding good behavior with affirmation. —Chuck Swindoll

Application: Taking the Necessary Steps

Confrontation is a dance between two partners who must learn to step in sync with one another. The confronter moves first with a gentle hand on his partner's back and an assertive step forward. The partner responds, trusting the gesture and submitting in turn. Back and forth the partners move, giving and taking, saying what's needed and responding with respect—all in time to the music of love.

Here are a few guidelines for the dance.

- *Think and pray before you say anything.* If you react rashly and rush your reproof, you'll surely step on someone's toes. It will be difficult for others to trust your next move.
- *Don't share the reproof with anyone else.* The dance is for two people. Be wary of talking about your child to all your friends—and never when your child is in earshot.
- *As the change occurs, affirm!* Notice the subtle movements of your partner's response, and celebrate his or her success!



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Do you need to confront one of your children? Take time now to pray and use the space below to write down the words you need to say. You'll know that you've done well when your child realizes how much you care, respects you for talking straight, and experiences the benefits of listening, learning, and changing.

So far, we've learned what the Bible says to parents when their children are still in the home. But what about parenting young adult children who no longer live in your home—or who have “boomeranged” back home after moving out? In the next study, we'll look to God's Word to find help for parenting grown-up kids.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your reproofs which come at just the right time, always for the right reason, and in ways that we never forget. Give me Your words, timing, and lasting results as I reprove those I love for the sake of peace and harmony in my home. In the name of Jesus, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



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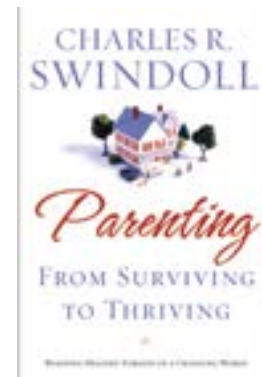
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

