

LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

Shaping the Will with Wisdom *Selected Proverbs*



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Being a parent is one of life's most delightful and rewarding experiences. At the same time, it can be one of life's most exasperating and demanding challenges. Parenting works best when we are loving and understanding in our attitudes, consistent and calm in our reactions, and wise and mature in our actions. *But who on earth does all of that all the time?* We're parents who are grateful for our children, but we're still part of fallen humanity. This means that we're often too busy and too impatient, too quick to jump to conclusions and too extreme in our reactions. The last thing healthy parents want is to hurt and discourage those they love so much. Yet, standing firm is a necessary part of training, which means our love must sometimes be "tough," and our actions must sometimes be strong. After all, we're dealing with children who will one day have to discipline and restrain themselves. They learn how to do that from parents who discipline them for wrongdoing and restrain them from defiance and rebellion. Simply put, we must learn how to shape each child's will with wisdom.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Some Necessary Distinctions

Before getting into the specifics of correcting our children, let's address a few common misperceptions and draw some important boundary lines.

First, discipline and abuse are not equal. Abuse creates terror in the heart of a child. Discipline leads to an increased sense of security. Abuse degrades and demoralizes. Discipline upholds the dignity and the value of each child.

Second, when we shape the lives of our children, we must take care not to go too far—we must not crush them. Children are delicate. They require care. When we fail to account for their unique personalities, we risk stamping out their personal strengths, leaving them open to anger and resentment.

Finally, we need to recognize the difference between normal childishness and willful defiance. Kids make mistakes . . . often. Spilling a drink, breaking a vase, forgetting to hang the coat in the right place—these are childish



Quotable

*I need to warn
you. If you intend
to shape the will
of your children,
please understand
you will be
misunderstood.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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behaviors that take time for our children to overcome. However, at other times, our children exhibit willful defiance—deliberate, stubborn resistance. Childish behavior needs teaching and positive reinforcement. Defiance requires a firm hand in order to prepare our children for life as adults—where defiance has little benefit.

2. Practical and Workable Suggestions

The Bible makes it clear that God supports our disciplining of our children. They need to be taught, and that teaching sometimes includes correction in addition to positive guidance and encouragement. The writer to the Hebrews rooted the idea of parental discipline in the actions of God Himself (Hebrews 12:5–11). God loves those He disciplines. In the same way, we show love to our children when we take the time to discipline them.

Every parent wants to avoid the dramatic problems that come as a result of a lack of discipline in our children, but many parents simply don't know how. Let's take a look at four practical strategies parents should keep in mind as they discipline their children.

- First, *start early*. Don't wait. Overlooking the sins of our young children only yields heartbreak. Firm boundaries that have long been established are the best defense against the vices and temptations that await our children as they cross the bridge into independent adulthood.
- Second, *stay balanced*. Proverbs 29:15 presents two elements of good discipline: corporal punishment (the rod) and verbalized correction (reproof). Our children need to hear what they've done wrong so they can move forward with the confidence that comes from knowing where the boundaries lie. We should also use our words to teach our children the beauty of God's grace—we have all fallen from the path, but God is always ready to offer forgiveness to repentant hearts.
- Third, *be consistent*. Consistency in discipline helps our children learn to live under authority, first as children and later as adults. Our consistency in discipline helps model for our children how to be consistent in their own lives.
- Fourth, *remain reasonable*. Often when our children stray from the path, we make rash decisions that engender exasperation in our children. However, when we remain reasonable, our children benefit from our clear thinking about who they are and the appropriate discipline we apply to what they have done.



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GETTING TO THE ROOT

Spare the Rod . . .

In most Bible versions, the Hebrew word translated “rod” refers to a wide range of wooden implements, including a thick club, a short stick, and a long pole. In Hebrew, *rod* refers to a tool used as a cooking utensil for grinding herbs and spices such as dill and cumin (Isaiah 28:27), as a weapon (2 Samuel 23:21), and as a shepherd’s staff (Psalm 23:4). Very often, the Hebrew word for *rod* refers to a scepter (Genesis 49:10). *Rod* also indicates an instrument of punishment for slaves (Exodus 21:20), fools (Proverbs 10:13), and sons. Depending on the context, the rod symbolizes protection, authority, and correction, and in some cases, it carries a sense of all three at once.

When used in connection with parents, the rod often addresses discipline in the broadest sense: authority, leadership, correction (29:15). It usually refers to corrective action, including but not limited to corporal punishment (13:24; 19:18). And sometimes, “the rod” is an expression for spanking (23:13–14), pointing to a neutral implement in the hands of an authority figure. In every such case, the rod is an instrument of love, never an outlet for parental anger. Its purpose is correction, never punishment for its own sake.



LET’S LIVE IT

In the arena of disciplining and shaping our kids’ wills with wisdom, parents and children can benefit from setting two significant goals. First, parents should strive *to release into the world a very responsible young adult who loves Christ*. Responsibility will not come without discipline. Second, children should strive *to become mature, Christ-honoring individuals*. Maturity comes as a result of discipline. And that result will positively impact every person our children come into contact with.

As a parent, how do you help your children grow in responsibility? What challenges have you and your children encountered as you have sought to teach them responsibility?



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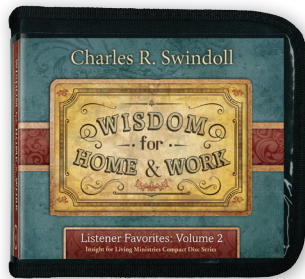
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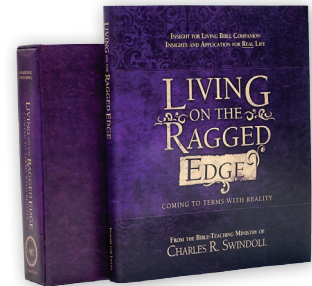
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LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

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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Ephesians 4:25–32

- 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.



LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

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Ephesians 4:25–32



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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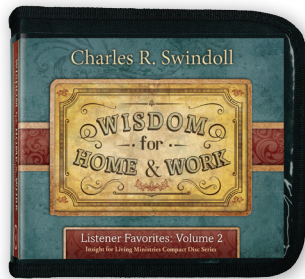
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Ephesians 4:25–32



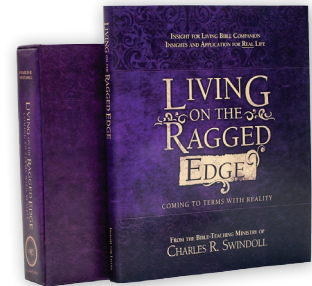
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LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

What to Do When You've Blown It
Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26



LET'S BEGIN HERE

We've come to the end of our study of biblical parenting. It's been a journey of discovery! We've probed Scripture from start to finish to find out what God thinks about this all-important subject. We've learned skills to enhance the vital relationships within our homes and families. We've covered a broad spectrum—from embryos in their mothers' wombs to grown, adult kids. And we have relied on God's Word to guide our thinking.

While we're grateful for biblical instruction, there are times it can be very disquieting, especially when we realize how we have failed to do things God's way. Too often, we end up saying, "If only I had known *then* what I know *now*." How deep the feelings of regret and anxiety in the hearts of parents who "blew it"! Since there's no way to go back and relive our lives, we need to focus on the best way to respond to these painful memories. Otherwise, we will live under clouds of blame and shame and be paralyzed by fear.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

The guilt of a parent who has made mistakes can linger for years on end. Moms and dads struggling with guilt often feel stuck in a downward spiral with little sense of how to break free. Long-lasting shame creates decay in us, and as parents, that decay spreads into our relationships with our children. How can we overcome such guilt? Is there even any hope of overcoming it?

1. Painful Realities of Being Human (Joel 2:23–26)

Parents must recognize three painful realities that can help address feelings of guilt and shame.

- First, *we are all imperfect—including our kids*. The apostle Paul made this point abundantly clear when he declared that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). However, we forget this reality about ourselves and others—including our children. And when we forget, we end up burdened by undue guilt and shame. Thankfully, repentance and God's forgiveness covers that guilt.



Quotable

*You cannot change
the past. Don't
waste your time
trying to change it.
It's done.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26

- Second, *we cannot change the past*. What has already happened is set in stone. We must press on beyond our failures, mistakes, and sins, embracing reality for what it is while trying to mature ourselves and improve our relationships as they are now.
- Third, *we are personally responsible for our own wrongs*. We all face the temptation to minimize our faults or push the blame on someone else. This tendency comes naturally and extends back to our ancestors in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:11–12). As parents, we have to recognize our own responsibility in the raising of our kids.

2. Moving from Guilt and Shame to Recovery and Renewal (Isaiah 58:6–12)

How do the parents among God's people move from guilt and shame to recovery and renewal? Let's begin by answering this question negatively.

- First, *it won't help to misunderstand biblical instruction*. The Lord made clear through His apostle what it looks like to bear the fruit of the Spirit; therefore, parents are responsible for making sure their children understand what it means to love, be joyful, to be peaceful, and so on (Galatians 5:22–23). However, if we misunderstand God's Word, we will misapply biblical instruction and lead our children astray.
- Second, *it won't help to ignore common sense*. With so many activities and concerns pulling at our attention, many parents seem to have forgotten plain old common sense. Parents do a thankless job that sometimes requires some hard common sense tasks, including strong talk, reproof, honest confrontation, standing ground, and setting boundaries.



LET'S LIVE IT

We must recognize that change is a process. Moving from guilt and shame toward recovery and renewal is no exception. It takes time. As we seek to make positive changes in the relationships we have with our children, we need to keep in mind the following three tips.

- First, *don't hide anything*. We need to be straight with our children, especially when we have failed them. Our children need us to be open about our failures so they have the opportunity to grapple with reality and grow.



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Isaiah 58:6–12; Joel 2:23–26

- Second, *don't hurry the process*. Pushing for an immediate end to any negative situation shows our children that the exchange we're having with them is more about us than them. We need to give them the space to deal with bad news and forgive us from the fullness of their hearts, whenever they decide to do that.
- Third, *don't hold on to the past*. We have the habit of treading back over the same mistakes, time and again. Rather than being helpful, this is merely a way for us to wallow in our own guilt. Once we speak our minds and offer our apologies, we need to leave that issue in the past where it belongs.

If you have made a mistake with your children and have not yet addressed the issue with them, give some thought and prayer to apologizing and putting the issue behind you. Summarize your prayer in the space below.



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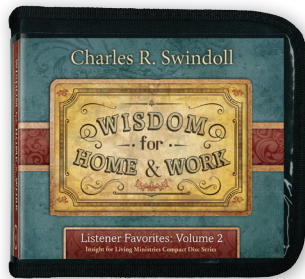
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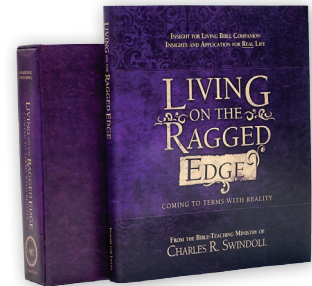
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LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

The Qualities of a Good Boss
Ecclesiastes 8:1–9



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Wisdom. This one word describes the theme of the second half of Solomon's memoirs in the book of Ecclesiastes. The terms *wise* and *wisdom* appear more than thirty times in the last six chapters, and the concept is interwoven through most of the paragraphs . . . sometimes in a subtle manner, other times boldly. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches some of the benefits that come our way when we operate our lives according to wisdom: balance, strength, and insight. In today's exposition, we'll see these benefits personified in the life of "the wise man," portrayed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 8:1–9. Obviously, this individual is in command, having authority over others . . . hence, we can apply the passage to today's CEO or anyone who exercises authority over others.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Brief Explanation of the Structure

While the first six chapters of Ecclesiastes record Solomon's exploration and observations of the futility of life under the sun, chapter 7 contains a series of proverbial principles based on his conclusions. In chapter 8, Solomon painted for us a picture of those principles personified, and in this particular instance, he illustrated the traits of a wise leader.



Quotable

*A good leader
keeps a cheerful
disposition. There
are few things
more contagious—
and rare—than a
cheerful boss.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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LISTENER FAVORITES, VOLUME 2: WISDOM FOR HOME AND WORK

The Qualities of a Good Boss *Ecclesiastes 8:1–9*

2. Clear Description of the Leader (Ecclesiastes 8:1–9)

Although Solomon viewed the king's rule from the perspective of those he was ruling, it is precisely this point of view that good leaders need. Solomon focused on five qualities of a good boss.

- *A clear mind.* Good leaders know where they are philosophically and theologically. They don't just follow the trendy, pragmatic, action-oriented approach to leadership.
- *A cheerful face.* When leaders are happy and positive, this can rub off on their followers. When bosses are negative and critical, those below them will reflect this same mentality.
- *A discreet mouth.* Leaders who exercise authority with tact, diplomacy, sensitivity, and compassion will generally receive the benefit of a supportive and loyal staff.
- *Keen judgment.* Good leaders acknowledge God's sovereignty, can map out and execute a successful plan, remain stable under pressure, and act on their intuition.
- *A humble spirit.* Good bosses depend on God to accomplish their tasks, and they draw on the strengths of those under them, giving the individuals they manage a sense of importance and dignity.

Solomon also gave two practical warnings that bosses must keep in mind.

- It is inexcusable to take unfair advantage.
- If you do, you'll be hurt more than anyone else.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Solomon's Solution to Life's Problems

The word translated “interpretation” in Ecclesiastes 8:1 is the Hebrew word *peshet*, which means “solution.”¹ Solomon's God-given wisdom gave him not only insight into the “under-the-sun” problems that face human beings but the ability to look beyond the sun, to God, to find solutions. *Peshet* is also used in Daniel some thirty times with reference to the interpretation of dreams (Daniel 2:4). Therefore, it refers to the hidden, secret, or not-so-obvious explanation of something.



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The Qualities of a Good Boss
Ecclesiastes 8:1–9



LET'S LIVE IT

Now it's time to personally appropriate these principles by understanding:

- *The value of being a model:* Our example outlives our achievements.
- *The vision of seeing a cycle:* Our followers may one day outstrip our influence.

How do you want those you have led to describe your impact on their lives? What can you do today to begin building this legacy?

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 833.



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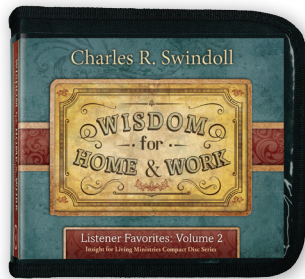
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Ecclesiastes 8:1–9



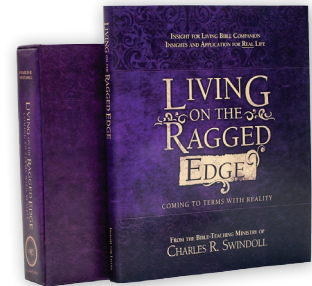
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