

FAMILY MATTERS: INVESTING IN THE THINGS THAT LAST

Surviving Those Challenging Years
Proverbs 1:8–11, 15; 9:10–11; 12:1; 24:3–4



LET'S BEGIN HERE

It doesn't take long for parents of teenagers to trip over a difficult truth every parent of teens must learn to accept: teens believe that parents are about as smart as sea urchins. A direct correlation exists between the age of a child and his or her perception of a parent's intelligence. On average, children aged 0 to 12 believe their parents possess an IQ greater than Albert Einstein. Children aged 13 to 19 think their parents are semi-moronic. And as children aged 20 and upward get older, they gradually observe a remarkable increase in their parents' intelligence.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Overall Guidelines for Parents to Remember (Proverbs 24:3–4)

Three critical family building blocks are found in these two verses of Scripture: *wisdom*, *understanding*, and *knowledge*. Combined with the right mortar mixture of love, discipline, and consistency, these three blocks can build or rebuild a strong family.

Solomon instructed that *wisdom builds a home* (Proverbs 24:3). Wisdom, or the ability to see with discernment, is the only way to build a home. Keeping things in proper perspective, wisdom looks beyond today and peers into tomorrow, taking into account future ramifications from present actions. Like X-ray vision, wisdom looks beyond the obvious and sees what others miss.

Wisdom builds a home, but Solomon also instructed that *understanding establishes a home* (24:3). Understanding is the ability to respond to people and situations with insight, to hear what is really being said—not just the words but the intention behind the words. When we heed Solomon's wise words, stability, order, and security are created in the home.

Finally, Solomon instructed that *knowledge furnishes a home* (24:4). Knowledge is the ability to lead with perception or with the ability to grasp the “big picture.” A knowledgeable person is a teachable person—one who is willing to listen and learn and who has a desire to discover truth. For those who seek and find truth, Scripture promises that “the rooms [of a home will be] filled / With all precious and pleasant riches” (24:4). With knowledge, a home will overflow with an abundance of priceless treasures—love, peace, harmony, joy, laughter, precious memories, and rock-solid character, which cannot be destroyed by fire or stolen by burglars.



Quotable

Want to motivate your kids? Cultivate good relationships, pleasant memories, and mutual respect.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Specific Principles for Kids to Ponder (Proverbs 1:8–11, 15; 9:10–11; 12:1)

From the very beginning of Solomon’s book of wisdom, we learn an important lesson: *wisdom emerges when children heed their parents’ warnings*. Solomon wanted to capture the attention of young readers early on, “Hear, my son [or daughter], your father’s instruction / And do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8). Children, Solomon warned, must pay careful attention to and obey what their fathers and mothers have to say about the company they keep, because their friends determine their reputations. If children listen to their parents and stay away from those who always get into trouble (1:10–11, 15), they’ll be people worthy of respect because their lives will be attractive (1:9).

A second important truth in Proverbs: *understanding grows as we get to know God better*. Teenagers must get serious about biblical things now, and there’s no better verse to take seriously than Proverbs 9:10. If teenagers really get to know God, three areas in their lives will come into sharper focus. First, *teenagers will know themselves better*. They’ll appreciate their strengths, skills, and gifts more and be able to look at their weaknesses and failures. Second, *teenagers will like themselves more*. Their identity and esteem will be found in Christ, not in what others think, how good their grades are, or how great their accomplishments. Third, *teenagers will be themselves with greater ease*—they’ll be more comfortable in their own skin.

Solomon punches us in the gut with this third truth: *knowledge increases while we adjust our lives to right living*. God places us within the families of His choosing. Our parents’ responsibility is to prepare us for real life by instructing and disciplining us, so we might live skillfully (wisely). If discipline and instruction are done with love, consistency, and in an environment of godliness, we’ll turn to the Lord and grow in our understanding of Him and His will. And with greater understanding comes a greater capacity for knowledge, that we might better absorb and apply truth in our lives. This is the smart way to live; anything less is just stupid.



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DOORWAY TO HISTORY

Teenagers in the Bible

Lest we think the Bible is just a book full of adults shaking a scolding finger in the face of teenagers, we'd do well to remember that these teens of the Bible made a significant difference during their time and were highly praised by God.

- Joseph courageously withstood his jealous brothers' harsh treatment and became the prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 37:1–36; 41:1–45).
- David, a young man after God's own heart, was anointed king of Israel and killed the giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 13:14; 16:1–13; 17:1–58).
- Josiah came to the throne of Judah at the tender age of 8 and ruled in righteousness for thirty-one years (2 Kings 22:1–3).
- Daniel, along with three friends, was taken captive and carried away to Babylon and distinguished himself in the university without compromising his faith (Daniel 1:1–21).
- Mary as a teenage girl was chosen by God to be the mother of God's Son, Jesus (Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–20).
- Jesus as a young man challenged in the temple the learned teachers of God's Word with difficult questions (Luke 2:39–52).
- John Mark fled from the garden of Gethsemane and had to sneak back into his home in Jerusalem completely naked but became a man greatly esteemed (Mark 14:51–52; Acts 13:13; 15:36–40; 2 Timothy 4:11).



LET'S LIVE IT

Solomon's teaching can be summarized like this: you cannot be a great man or woman until you learn to surrender your rights in obedience to your parents. No one said it would be easy. Obedience and surrender are difficult but required if you desire to live your life in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

For you who are teenagers, you likely struggle with surrendering your rights—your desire to go your own way—while living under your parents' roof. Yet, you must learn to submit without argument, which is a sign of true maturity.

For you who are parents of teenagers, you likely struggle with surrendering your rights to maintain ultimate control of your growing children. You must learn to release them without fear.

What “rules” must you live by in your parents' house? Why do you think these rules exist? What did Paul command in Ephesians 6:1–3? What is the promise in verse 3? What do you think this promise means?



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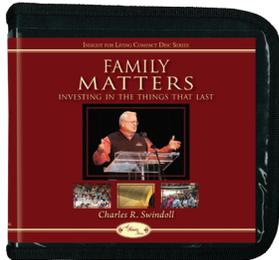
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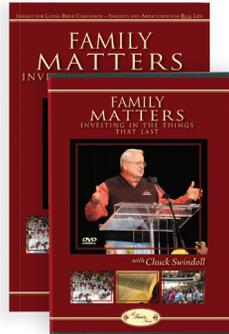
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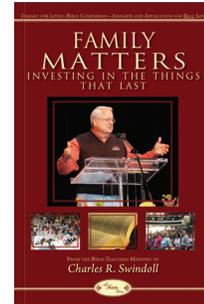
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