

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?

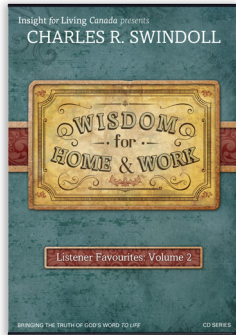


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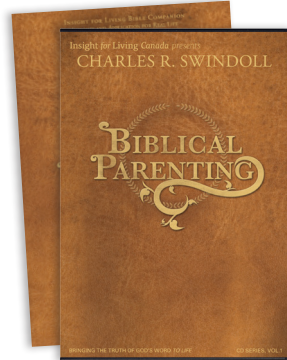
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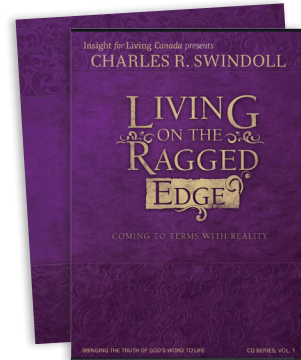
Tools for Digging Deeper



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