



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Great anticipation and excitement mark the beginning of marriage. Then challenges arrive with the birth of children, which require the couple to learn parenting skills without a handbook. With each stage of their child's growth—from preschool through elementary school, middle school, and high school—parents must fine-tune their skills if they hope to sustain harmony in the home.

Then, after all that adapting, a new set of challenges arises when the children reach adulthood. Can there still be mutual respect and meaningful relationships in the family? Can harmony continue between parents and their grown-up kids? Absolutely! Let's look to Ephesians 4 for God's direction.



DIGGING DEEPER

The theme of harmony winds through Ephesians 4 and flows into six practical principles about relationships in the church that we can apply to families with adult children.

In the third verse, we discover the sparkling source of family harmony:

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,
binding yourselves together with peace. (Ephesians 4:3 NLT)

“Keep yourselves *united in the Spirit*,” Paul urges church members—and this command is particularly fitting for family members. The Spirit joins us to our adult children with a power that is stronger than any family tie. No rift is too cavernous to cross; no issue is impossible for God through His Spirit to solve (Luke 1:37).

Quotable

Your grown-up sons or daughters deserve to hear the truth from you. Not necessarily what they may want to hear, but at the right time what they need to hear.

— Charles R. Swindoll



Not only is the Spirit with us, He equips us. According to Ephesians 4:7, the Spirit “has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ” (NLT). What is the purpose and result of using these gifts? Read verses 12–13 to find the answer.

There’s our word again, *unity*. We achieve more and more unity as we *build up* one another, *grow up* in Christ, and *measure up* to His standard.

Finally, we experience the benefits of unity. List these benefits as you find them in 4:16.

Now that’s harmony at its best! As each family member matures into who God made him or her to be and contributes his or her unique gift, the whole family becomes “healthy and growing and full of love” (4:16 NLT).

That’s the hope, anyway. An ear at the door of your family home may overhear less than harmonious sounds. Paul’s melody of unity within church and family is possible with God’s help, but it takes practice on our part—specifically, by putting into practice the following six principles.

Speak Truth

Think of the “neighbor” in the following verse as your adult child.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another. (Ephesians 4:25 NASB)



Searching the Scriptures Tip

Versions of the Bible follow different formatting rules to indicate special cases in translation. For example, the NASB version uses small caps to indicate that a New Testament author quoted from the Old Testament and italics to show which words don’t appear in the original text but have been added to clarify the ancient



syntax for modern-day readers. In this verse, you can see the added words in italics, as well as the phrases that the translators believe Paul borrowed from Zechariah 8:16.

Your grown-up son or daughter needs to hear the truth from you. Talk straight. Don't fudge the truth by saying something is okay when it isn't; by holding back your honest feelings (about the person he or she is dating, for example); by shading your better judgment when asked for advice on a moral dilemma.

Have you been sidestepping an issue with your adult child? If so, raise your right hand, and swear to tell the whole truth from now on! Here's some space to write down what you may need to say.

Get Passionate

The next verse may surprise you with Paul's opener: "Be angry . . ." (Ephesians 4:26 NASB)! The form of anger Paul describes here isn't an out-of-control temper caused when a person doesn't get his or her way. Instead, Paul's saying, "Get passionate!" Get fired up about an injustice or wrongdoing.

Let your adult children see your tears over evil and the resolve in your heart for what's right and good. Find a cause that lights your fire. If you can't find one, borrow a spark from your adult child's enthusiasm and join his or her cause!

Stop Stealing

Paul adds, "He who steals must steal no longer" (Ephesians 4:28 NASB). Parents may not be pocketing their adult children's cash, but they can swipe other valuables. Their adult children's *freedom* is one example of a treasure parents sometimes steal:

- Freedom to make their own decisions
- Freedom to think independently
- Freedom to do for oneself

Some parents steal these freedoms by overcontrolling their adult children, not allowing different points of view, and taking care of them when they should be taking care of themselves. Stealing adulthood's freedom leads to a second theft: stealing *consequences*. When we rescue adult children to spare them the pain that naturally follows poor choices, we steal an opportunity for growth. In addition, we contribute to a mind-set of entitlement in which the adult child expects and then demands unearned privileges—which is a form of stealing!



Pause here, and use the space below to reflect on the rest of verse 28: “use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need” (NLT). Adult children must learn hard work and generosity. Have you unintentionally discouraged hard work by doing too much for your adult child? If so, how can you restore what should belong to them by granting freedoms and allowing consequences?

Stop Yelling

Read verse 29. Unwholesome words can take many forms: cursing, threatening, sarcastic putdowns, caustic comments. Parents resort to outbursts when they feel disrespected, but a volcano reaction just enflames an adult child’s rebellion and sparks even more disrespect.

Without resorting to angry words, what are better ways to work out your feelings when relating to your adult children? What does the latter part of verse 29 advise?

Give Grace

Can you sense the spirit of grace in verses 29 and 30? Parents steeped in grace hold their tongue when an adult child suffers for making a mistake. “I told you so” is not good or helpful. Just as God identifies us as His own and redeems us by His grace, so also we pour soothing oil on troubled waters for our adult children when we show grace to them.

What do words of grace that are good and helpful sound like in conversation with your adult child? List some redemptive, life-giving phrases in the space below.



Be Kind

Read verses 31–32. With this list of imperatives, Paul wraps a reminder string around our finger with a summary statement: *be kind*. Simple as that! You can express kindness through a warm embrace, thoughtful listening, and asking for and offering forgiveness.

Make “be kind” a habit through daily practice. Is there an act of kindness you can show your adult child today?

Bring It Home

Memorize this list of practical principles: speak truth, get passionate, stop stealing, quit yelling, give grace, and be kind. Share the list with a friend, and ask for help in making these principles routine in your relationships with your adult children. Then enjoy the benefits of a harmonious family that is “healthy and growing and full of love” (Ephesians 4:16 NLT).

A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in the fast-paced race of life, it is easy for us to run beyond the essentials. Truth, kindness, forgiveness, love. Remind us that we’re a family. Fill our family with the unity that is possible only through Your Spirit that is our common bond. In Jesus’ name, amen.



BIBLICAL PARENTING

Suggestions for Parenting Grown-Up Kids

Ephesians 4:25–32

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



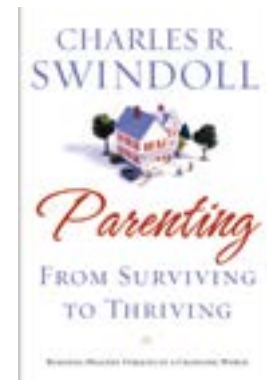
Tools for Digging Deeper



Biblical Parenting
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Top Temptations
Fathers Face**
by Charles R. Swindoll
booklet



**Parenting: From Surviving
to Thriving**
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book

For these and related resources, visit www.insightworld.org/store
or call USA 1-800-772-8888 • AUSTRALIA +61 3 9762 6613 • CANADA 1-800-663-7639 • UK +44 1306 640156

For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Copyright © 2012, 2017 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application