

Mothers of Wayward Children

A Mother's Pride

by Carolyn Mahaney

“A foolish son is a sorrow to his mother” it says in Proverbs. Some of you know all too well the truth of these words. If you have a wayward son or daughter your sorrow may have many shades and sides:

You may feel grief—grief over the foolish choices that bring consequences to your child, pain to others, and reproach to God’s name.

You may know fear—fear of the future and what will happen to your child and to your family. *Will they ever turn from their sins? Will they ever trust in God? Will our relationship ever be restored?*

You may have regret—regret over discipline not given, sin unchecked, and regret over angry words spoken and unloving actions taken.

You may feel shame—shame before other parents (*What do they think of me now?*) and even shame before God (*Is He disappointed in me?*).

Certainly, there is a place for sadness and self-examination. But we can’t get stuck there. We must not wallow in our deficiencies. We must not think that success or failure depends entirely upon our parenting, because it doesn’t. We must resist the temptation to make our children’s behavior all about us. We must turn our gaze to God.

You see, excessive self-focus reveals what we believe in. It reveals pride. As moms we can be proud when our children are doing well, by taking credit for their good behavior and receiving the praise of others as if it was due to us. But did you know we can also be proud when our children are doing poorly? If we believe their foolish choices are solely the result of our failures, or if we are consumed by fear of what others think about us, or if we rely on our words and methods to change their hearts, we prove we are leaning on ourselves, hoping in ourselves, wanting glory for ourselves, instead of trusting in God.

So if you know the sorrow of a wayward child may I encourage you—stop staring at your failures. Lift up your eyes and look to God. Receive his comfort in your grief, His joy for your fear, His forgiveness for your sin, His righteousness for your shame, His hope for your future.

A Mother's Prayer

by Carolyn Mahaney

If you are the mother of a rebellious child, the great pastor Charles Spurgeon has some encouraging counsel for you:

“Children are a precious gift from God, but much anxiety comes with them. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one receipt for the curing of all their ills, ‘Bring him unto me...Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives. The Lord sometimes suffers his people to be driven into a corner that they may experimentally know how necessary He is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the strong for strength, and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever our morning’s need may be, let it like a strong current bear us to the ocean of divine love. Jesus can soon remove our sorrow, he delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to Him while He waits to meet us.” (*Morning and Evening*, September 17)

Are you “driven in a corner” today by an ungodly child? Then may I encourage you to “flee to the strong for strength”? Jesus delights to comfort you, to give you hope, and to hear your prayers.

Remember: “No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.”

A Mother's Conversation

by Carolyn Mahaney

I’ve been a mother to four teenagers now—three are adults and one is still a teen. I’ve had hundreds (probably thousands) of conversations with my kids. Most of these have been meaningful and memorable talks. But, like all sinful parents and teens, we’ve had difficult conversations as well; and over the years (I hope!) I’ve learned a lot from my mistakes.

The following is a list of seven “reminders” that have served me in those challenging conversations. These are not rules, but guidelines drawn from

Scripture that have helped me as I seek to navigate these talks in a God-glorifying way. I've included key quotes and verses that have inspired these thoughts.

In prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, may I encourage you to...

1) Communicate humbly with your teen.

“Teens will quickly detect Mom’s, Dad’s genuineness by their humility. Let us recall that we are weak people speaking to other weak people, who simply happen to be younger than us.” Rick Horne

“The most helpful thing to remember is that your teenager is more like you than unlike you.... There are very few struggles in the life of my teenager that I don’t recognize in my own heart as well.... Come [to the conversation] as a fellow sinner.” Paul David Tripp

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

2) Postpone talking if you’re angry.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1:19-20

3) Postpone talking if your teen is angry.

“There are times when serious injury is done by urging the claims of religion. Your child is angry. His flushed cheeks and violent motions show the sinful irritation of his mind. Shall the mother now converse with him upon the wickedness of these feelings and God’s displeasure? No! It is unseasonable.” John S.C. Abbott

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. Proverbs 17:14

4) *Don't talk too long.*

“Guard against long and tedious conversations on religious subjects. The mind of a child cannot be fixed for any great length of time upon one subject without exhaustion. Every word that is uttered, after there are manifestations of weariness, will do more harm than good.” John S.C. Abbott

“Listen, don't lecture. You can usually say all you need to say in about 2 minutes and 30 seconds before you start repeating yourself.” Kenneth Maresco

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. Proverbs 10:19

5) *Correct only what you must; overlook what you can.*

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. John 16:12

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11

6) *Acknowledge your own sin.*

“Even if you are only 10 percent to blame for a given conflict, Jesus' words from Matthew 7 apply to you as much as if you had been 90 percent to blame. You need to acknowledge 100 percent of your 10 percent. The point of Jesus' teaching is that the first and most important thing for you to realize in any conflict is how your own blindness and sin contributed to the problem.” Rick Horne

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Matthew 7:3-5

7) *Don't let the conversation end until you have encouraged your teen.*

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul. Proverbs 16:24

A good word makes him glad. Proverbs 12:25

Grace Abounding to A Teenager

by Carolyn Mahaney

At the Sovereign Grace Pastors Conference last week we received exceptional teaching from God’s Word. As a mom, I was particularly encouraged by Jared Mellinger’s sermon on Psalm 78. In 2008, Jared succeeded Dave Harvey as the senior pastor of Covenant Fellowship Church, but as a teenager he slept through his father’s sermons and openly rebelled against his parents. God’s grace pursued this rebellious young man and he told a little of his story in his conference message.

In light of this week’s topic, we thought all mothers would be encouraged to hear the long version of Jared’s testimony, which he shared with his church last year. It was Jared’s hope, and it’s ours as well, that his story would inspire, “increased confidence in the unstoppable power of the grace of God.”

We also wanted to recommend several other resources that may serve those with difficult teens:

1. *Get Outta My Face!* by Rick Horne. Paul Tripp writes of this book: “Here is the wisdom of a man who has experienced the courage and hope that transforming grace can give to you and that hard teenager God has placed in your life.”
2. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* articles from Summer 2005 and Winter 2007 are full of insightful wisdom from God’s Word for leading teenagers.
3. A recent interview w/ Bob Kauflin and his son, Devon, by Nicole’s husband, Steve Whitacre (of Sovereign Grace Church, FFX VA) will provide hope and help for parents and is great to listen to along with your teen.

Grace Abounding to A Mom

by Carolyn Mahaney

We thought we'd close out this week with encouragement from God's Word for all moms to meditate on:

The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you. Psalm 102:28

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Psalm 112:1-2

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Psalm 128:1-3

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. Isaiah 44:3

“For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you. “O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold... All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.... This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, declares the Lord.” Isaiah 54:10-14; 17

“This is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.” Isaiah 59:21

“Believer, here is encouragement. Are you praying for some beloved one? Oh, do not give up praying, for Christ is “mighty to save.” You are powerless to reclaim the rebel, but your Lord is Almighty.... The best proof of which lies in the fact that He has saved you.” *Charles Spurgeon* (January 14 Morning and Evening)*

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