

Why Kids Go Wrong?

by David Wilkerson

The root of troubled kids is a lack of discipline, permissiveness, and parental involvement, and the solution is for parents to know how to say no, discipline based on scripture, and use a rod of correction to drive foolishness out of the heart.

Duration: 47:24

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6, Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 29:15, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21, Hebrews 12:11

Topics: "Parental Responsibility", "Discipline and Love"

Description

David Wilkerson addresses the reasons why children go astray, drawing from his experiences with troubled youth and his own parenting. He emphasizes the lack of parental involvement and discipline, highlighting stories of young people who feel neglected by their parents, leading them to seek acceptance elsewhere. Wilkerson argues that many parents are overwhelmed by their own issues and fail to provide the guidance and love their children need, resulting in rebellion and emotional turmoil. He calls for parents to take responsibility, establish boundaries, and foster open communication with their children, while also urging a return to biblical principles of discipline and love. Ultimately, he stresses the importance of parents being present and engaged in their children's lives to prevent them from falling into destructive behaviors.

Transcript

Why kids go wrong. I think after 10 years of working with troubled kids around the world, I have a right to say something about it. And I'm not talking to you just as a gang preacher now, I'm talking to you as a father of four children, two of them teenagers.

You see, there's no school in the world, no college in the world that teaches people how to become parents. You only get on-the-job training. And sadly, too many dads and moms never do learn how to become good parents.

In a crusade in San Francisco a few months ago, a group of hippies invaded the crusade. They wanted to see me after the meeting. And I was accosted by one teenage girl.

She had eyes painted with green paint to make herself look like a cat. And she had the sandals and the knocker rings and the Carista prayer bead and incense pot. And I said, why do you look like that? Why

have you joined the hip rebellion? She said, if you really want to know, Mr. Wilkerson, I can tell you in one word, parents.

She said, I live in Idaho. My parents are two people back there who were hung up on their own problems. My mother's up in society circles and she helps sponsor charity balls.

She can't go to bed without a pill. She can't wake up without a pill. She has to have a pill to stay awake.

And then she lectures me about drugs. Dad has to have his whiskey all the time. And then he tries to sell me on his kind of morality.

She said, I ran away from my parents because there were big phonies. She said, my hippie friends may not be what you call respectable, Mr. Wilkerson, but at least they're honest. And in the same meeting were two sailors.

They had their hair messed up and they had these prayer shawls on. They looked like two demon monks. I said, why would two sailors leave shipboard and join the hippie brotherhood here in Haight-Ashbury? They said, one reason, Mr. Wilkerson, our parents tried to tell us that all there was to life was a home in the suburb, two cars, a double car garage, a color TV, and a deep freeze.

And we wanted more out of life than just a little material empire. And we ran away from that kind of establishment and rat race. And we came down here to Haight-Ashbury to look for brotherhood, understanding, and reality.

I'm thinking tonight also of a 17-year-old lad. We had a teen challenge center, a mainline drug addict spending \$50 a day in narcotics intravenously. I said, Randy, why would a boy from a middle-income class family, from a so-called good home, why would you have to turn to drugs? He said, Mr. Wilkerson, it's not too hard to explain.

My dad is a businessman. He never had time for me. I'd come home from school when I was 13 and 14 and I had emotional problems.

And I wanted to talk to dad. I wanted more than anything else for that man just to sit and talk to me. But he'd pull out a five or ten dollar bill and say, boy, run along some other time.

I'm busy. He said, I didn't want his money. I used to throw his money down and just walk away.

I wanted him. I wanted his time. I figured the only way to get his time was to get in trouble.

And perhaps if I even got sent to jail, he'd have to come and know that I had a problem. He'd talk to me. He said, I robbed a gas station with some boys.

I got put in jail. All right. And dad did come, but only long enough to tell me that I disgraced the family name and that I should never again set foot in a house.

He said, I never went back. I turned to narcotics. I haven't seen my dad to this day.

Now, friends, you know, I've just concluded a world's tour this past year from Helsinki to Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, Athens, Rome, and now just South Africa, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and around the world. I'm speaking to an average of three to ten thousand kids every weekend now. Every weekend, heartbroken

kids who are down on their parents.

The majority of those that I've talked to that have traumas, that are emotionally upset or disturbed or lonely or sad, are down on their parents. Dad, mom are too busy. They're wrapped up in their own problems.

They don't understand. This was brought home to me very clearly in a crusade recently in Orlando, when a 15-year-old girl came backstage and put her head on my shoulder and started to cry like a baby. And she said, Mr. Wilkinson, didn't you read the paper? I couldn't understand why she was so broken.

Her best girlfriend, 16 years old, the most popular girl in the Orlando High School, during halftime at the basketball game, took a pistol out of her pocketbook, aimed at her stomach, shot herself. Fell over and died in this girl's arms. The girl said, Mr. Wilkinson, the last thing she said before she died, my arms.

Dad, mom just don't understand. They don't understand me anymore. There is a communication gap, no doubt, in many homes.

But I want you to know that I am not down on parents, even though I've written a book, Parents on Trial. I'm not down on parents. I believe that most parents in America, God-fearing people, are in a state of panic.

Pick up your newspaper almost any day now and you read of the problems. Shocking, recently, to pick up the paper, read of a young boy, a bad trip on LSD, cut the family cat up and ate it raw. The boy steps out of an 18-floor window, thinks he can fly.

He had three joints of marijuana, falls to his death. A young girl, the daughter of an airline executive in California, douses her body with kerosene and ignites her body with a cigarette lighter. This destroys her own life, a bad trip on LSD.

And it's almost impossible to keep up with it now. Pick up your paper and you read about it. Right now, the riots at Columbia University in New York.

I saw some 150 kids hanging out the windows, bearded young men and unkept young ladies, young hippies, many of them who were not students, but turned that whole campus into a riot scene. And I think a lot of parents think to themselves like this, is it possible that I'm going to raise my children the best that I know how by the book? And with all the love that I have in my heart, and then send them off to some school and have a pink professor or some permissive professor in school chop away at their faith and rob them of their zeal and vitality and send them home as agnostics? And I think there's a panic on in America when our parents find out what's happening in our high schools. Even high school teachers making permissive statements that marijuana smoking is no more dangerous than tobacco or drinking.

That's the biggest, fattest lie on American scene. That's a lie from the pit of hell. And yet many of our students have to sit in classrooms now and listen to articulate professors and teachers give them this kind of garbage.

And I think there's a parental panic. Now let me go a little step further now and tell you that I'm in no position tonight to talk to you as a psychiatrist. I can't give you any psychology because I'm not clinically trained.

And I'm at odds anyhow with Dr. Spock and all of his friends. Dr. Gennady has just written a book on how to raise kids. It's number two on the best selling list this week.

This is the gentleman who appeared on the Today Show and I heard him and I dare the good doctor dispute what I heard him say. He told the American mother this. If your little girl has resentment against her little brother, give her a pencil and paper and tell her to draw an ugly picture of her brother.

That'll make her feel better. Take out a resentment. But if that doesn't do it, give her a pair of scissors and tell her to cut up that picture in little pieces and she will feel better.

But if that doesn't do it, let her throw the pieces in a garbage can and jump up and down in the wastebasket. Take out a resentment by jumping on the pieces of paper. You know what you ought to do in all those books on how to raise kids? Put a handle on them and spank them with them.

This Dr. Spock-Pablum philosophy has ruined more kids than anything I can think of at this present moment. Let's go to the Scripture, pure wisdom. Let me give you what the Word of God says.

I cannot conceive that God looks upon this scene in America today, this moral landslide, this juvenile delinquency, and moral decay, drug addiction rampant. I can't believe that God looks on this scene with unconcern. I can't believe that God will not soon move in the hearts of thousands of ministers around the world to raise their voice against it.

And I want you to know that God has not left us without a witness. There's no story in the Bible can be improved on other than the prodigal son story. Here's the story of a permissive father who woke up one day to find a rebel on his hands, a teenage rebel, the first runaway in the Bible, the first hippie who ran away to the Haight-Asbury of his day, the first hippie of the Bible, the prodigal son.

And by the way, we wouldn't have that story in the Bible if this father had been the kind of father he should have been, and if he'd have done what he should have done as a father, this boy would have never run away in the first place. Oh, he'd have got mad, he'd have fussed and fumed a bit, but he'd come back with respect for his dad. And the story begins simply like this.

A certain man had two sons. Now, we're not given the name of the man because I believe he represents all parents. A certain man had two sons.

Now, I want to talk to you about discipline and permissiveness at this point. The youngest of the two came to his father and he said, Father, give me the portion of goods I have coming to me. And right here, my friends, you have the beginning of all juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, and moral decay.

Stubbornness. In ten years of working with thousands of drug addicts, gang leaders, and delinquents, I can tell you that's one thing I've seen in every single case, a stubborn streak that was not broken. Stubbornness, self-centeredness, give me the portion of goods I have coming to me.

Now, legally, that portion of goods, that inheritance, did not belong to that boy until after the father's death. The boy knew it, the dad knew it. But the dad looked at that boy in his state of rebellion and he thought to himself this, if I say no to him, he's going to turn against me, he'll get bitter, he'll run away, and I'm going to lose him.

This father should have said, boy, as long as you're under 21 and you live under my roof, you abide by the standards of this home. You're too young to handle it, you'll get it when I think it's right, and you'll get it in legal time. And friends, we need in America, not only an old-fashioned woodshed revival, we need some parents who know how to say no.

We need parents who know how to say no. My dad never had to give me excuse for discipline. You know, the experts tell you, don't discipline your children unless you give them a reason for it.

What are you going to do if they don't buy your reason? You're going to dream up another and soon you're going to have to cop out on them. My dad said, David, you'll do it because I said so, period. And I believed him.

And come on, dad, mom, that's how you were raised too. Your dad and mom did the same thing. You remember, as long as you're under 21 and under my roof, you abide by the standards of this house.

Pastor Ralph, isn't that right? Say amen for me. You were raised by the belt and by the book. I was talking about woodshed therapy on a radio program in St. Louis.

One of these call programs, they call in questions, and a lady called me up and she said, oh, you kind of preachers make me so mad talking about spanking kids. She said, you're giving comfort to all the sadist and child beaters in St. Louis. She said, I serve beer to my four-year-old daughter and my six-year-old son at this upper table so that they'll learn how to handle their alcohol and know how to choose between right and wrong when they're teenagers.

I said, mom, you're the one that needs to be spanked, and you better keep my teen child's telephone number. Your kids are going to need it when they're teenagers. That night at one of the, at our crusade in St. Louis, a 15-year-old boy met me backstage and he said, Mr. Wilks, you got to pray for me and for my dad.

My dad's chicken. He's a coward. He said, I blow cigarette smoke in his face and I curse at him just to rile him up, to make him deal with me.

I come in drunk all hours of the night, and my dad just walks away. He never says one word to me. He's never shown me that he cared.

He said, the last time I blew cigarette smoke in his face and cursed at him, he just smiled and said, I'm going to tell you, mother. And whenever there's a woman who rules the house, there's going to be trouble, mother. God has ordained that the man is the head of the house.

And every mother said, amen. Every mother said, amen. Kind of weak, pastor.

I was on an airplane recently and sat next to a social worker, and I introduced myself. She said, oh, you wrote the cross and switchblade. I said, yes, ma'am.

She said, you wrote that book Parents on Trial about woodshed therapy. I said, guilty, because it looked like she didn't like it. And she said, well, I didn't buy that theory, Mr. Wilkerson.

You know, I've always thought of raising them by the book. I didn't want to see a trauma or a sibling rivalry, interpersonal relationship, or an intensified anxiety state. He said, but my neighbor taught me a lesson.

My neighbor had a 17-year-old daughter that was coming in all hours of the night, drunk. She would pull into the driveway with her boyfriend in his hot rod, and they'd park there in the driveway and disgrace the family by their actions. And mom and dad wouldn't go to sleep until she came in.

They'd be peeking out the second floor bedroom window and sitting in a rocking chair waiting for Janet to come in. But one night, dad looked down, and he peeked out the window, and he saw something he didn't like. And he turned to his good wife.

He said, mama, I've had it. That is enough. He raced downstairs to the driveway, yanked the young lady out of the car, slapped her across the backside, and said, girly, get to your room and don't move until I get up there.

Yes, sir. And up she ran. He went around the other end of the car, pulled the young hot rodder out, and stuck a finger on his nose.

And he said, boy, if you pull your hot rod within 100 yards of my house again, I'll get a shotgun and blow your head off. Yes, sir. Zoom.

Off he sped. Dad went up into the bedroom, determined to spank some sense into his daughter. She saw him coming.

She leaped on him and started to cry and said, dad, it's about time. She said, Mr. Wilkerson, they didn't have, they haven't had a bit of trouble with her in three weeks now. She said, I think I buy your philosophy now.

Well, friends, this is not my philosophy. This is the word of God. This is the word of God.

Spare the rod and damn the child. That's pure wisdom. That's the scripture.

You know, I don't believe in spanking children on the face, hitting them on the face or on the hands or on the leg. I believe God has so designed the human anatomy. There's a special place for discipline.

I was preaching this message in Columbus, Georgia. And, and, uh, the first night, the second night of the crusade, I was walking backstage to go on platform and a little 12 year old girl came up to me, put her hand in mine and looked up at me real cute. And she said, Mr. Wilkerson, you sure got me in trouble with that sermon last night.

She said, I don't think I'm going to be able to sit in your meeting at all. Mom has been making up for lost time all day today. May I repeat some may have heard it, but the experience I had in my home, my dad was a minister of the gospel and he believed in raising me by the book.

I'd started a basketball team in my dad's church. We were playing the Methodist one day. They had beautiful red and gold uniforms.

And we had these old sweatshirts, dirty overalls and canvas shoes. And by the way, they beat us. And I got our team together after I said, fellas, we need uniforms.

Well, I'll tell you, we needed more than that, but I told him we need uniforms. We rushed to the sports store and I picked out \$26 worth of beautiful, uh, uniforms. And I told the man behind the counter, now don't sell them.

I'll be back within an hour with the check for \$26. And I raced home determined to get that check for \$26. And I peeked in the driveway to see if dad's car was there because I always waited until he went visiting.

Mom was an easier mark. Dad had gone visiting. So I went into the kitchen where mom was peeling potatoes.

And I said, mother, I've got this basketball team in church, you know, and we were playing the Methodist. We got beat. We need uniforms, mom.

We just can't play like this. I said, I want a check for \$26 right now. I gave her an ultimatum.

She said, well, you won't get a check right now, David. You need school clothes. And just wait until your dad gets home.

And that's one thing I didn't want. So I said, mother, I want that check right now. I gave her another ultimatum.

She said, you won't get it. So I threw myself on the floor and I put on a fit. I yelled and I screamed and I sassed.

And I'll tell you, I put on a show. You see, kids will bluff you as far as you'll let them bluff you. And I stood up and pointed finger in my mother's face.

I said, mother, if you don't give me that money, I'm running away from home and I'll never come back. My mother's the kind that packed my bags for me. I had no alternative but to run away.

But I always came home when I got hungry, of course. And 12 hours or so later, when I got hungry, I came home. This time, I wasn't worried about uniforms.

I just wondered if dad was in on it now. I thought if I could, I slept on the third floor. If I could just tiptoe up to the third floor, dad could sleep it off and he'll cool off in the morning.

I may not catch it. And I got past the second floor ready to go up to the third floor with my shoes in my hand and dad's door squeaked open, a bedroom door, and he opened it and he said, David, into my office for a personnel meeting. He called them personnel meetings.

He walked into that office next to his bedroom. He said, understand, David, we've had some discussion while I was going about uniforms. I said, well, dad, we can just forget all about it.

He said, oh, we won't forget about it. He said, we'll talk about it right now. He said, understand, you sassed your mother in my house under my roof.

There it was again. He said, is that right? He said, you, you sassed your mother and you put on a fit and you ran away from my house. I said, yes, sir.

He said, you know what that means, don't you? And I said, yes, sir. He said, stay right where you're at. In my little mind, I could picture every move he was making down the steps into the kitchen, open the basement door, and there on a nine-penny nail hung a big black leather strap, my dad's security blanket or his badge of authority.

He walked up the stairs into the bedroom. He said, David, kneel over that bed. He didn't mean to pray either.

And my dad came down across my backside, quoting scripture with every stripe, down hard as he could in God's specially designed disciplined place. Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child and the rod of correction will drive it far from him. That's in your Bible too.

That's in your Bible. Down again, spare the rod, damn the child, and I'll not ruin my boy. Down again, a child left to himself, bringing his mother to shame.

And just when you thought he was killing me and I was screaming and crying at the top of my voice, he'd quote this scripture when he came down, and spare not for their crying. And that's in your Bible too. And then my dad figured out seven evils.

I did that one thing. I got seven stripes. Then after he spanked me, he said, now raise your hands up to God and ask him to forgive you for grieving the Holy Ghost.

See, my dad always brought the Holy Ghost into it too. And after I prayed, then the worst part came. Oh, no, this was worse than the spanking.

He'd make me stand up eye to eye and toe to toe and make me love him. He'd love me. And you see, there's the difference between child beating and discipline.

If you just spank your children to vent your spleen, if you do it out of anger, you're a child beater. You've got to balance it with love. I appear on panel shows across America with the experts, and they say, Mr. Wilkerson, we disagree with this old-fashioned philosophy, this squared doctrine of yours.

He said, we can show you in the prisons young men that have been beaten all of their lives. It didn't help their life patterns at all. I said, yes, and only because there was no love.

They were beaten, but they were not loved. You spank your children according to the scripture and drive that foolishness from them, and then balance it with love, and you'll not lose your children. You've got to break that spirit before they're 12 years of age, or it'll take a miracle from then on out.

It has to be broken, that stubborn nature. It has to go. This father should have told that boy the truth then.

You'll not get it. He should have said no, but the Bible said he divided unto them his living. He gave into the boy, and friends, if you give in to your kids, you're going to lose them anyhow.

The Bible says not many days later, he gathered together his goods, and he ran off. Here's the first hippie, the first runaway of the runaway generation. He went off to the hate aspire of his day, and why did he go? Because evidently, he had allowed bitterness and rebellion to build up in his heart against his parents.

Some reason drove him out of the house and out onto the streets. Life Magazine predicts 500,000 kids running away this year, 500,000. Sometimes I think I've seen them all.

Sometimes I think I've talked to them all, just thousands of them, full of bitterness and anxiety. The Bible says there's a generation that cursed their father and doth not bless their mother. I was at a youth camp this past summer, some 600 young people, and I had a lot of time on my hand.

I thought I'm going to find out just what do our kids think of their parents. I wanted to find out, and I had a receiving line. They came up past me for prayer.

The first girl, 17 years old, in this receiving line, she said, Mr. Wilkson, you talk about bitterness and rebellion toward parents. She said, my dad's a preacher. He's sitting right over there on the front bench.

She said, I hate him. He's a big phony. She said, I haven't talked to him in two years.

The only reason I go to his church is because he makes me, but he's a big phony, and I got so righteously indignant. Well, no really, I got mad. I laid hands on her, and I said, in Jesus name, I bind that rebellion and bitterness, and her hands went up, and she started crying.

Oh, God, don't kill him. I don't want him to die. Now, evidently, subconsciously, she was whizzing.

He was dead. I said, you get over there and make up with your dad. She went over and sat beside him, and there was a brick wall, it seemed, between them.

They just didn't know how to break the ice. For a full five minutes while I kept praying for young people, I kept peeking through the corner of my eye. I thought, it'll never work.

What's wrong with those two? Then suddenly, she looked the opposite direction, leaned over, and patted him on the hand. That broke him up. He jumped up and hugged her and kissed her, and they made up.

They were crying, both of them, as they came up stage, and he came right over to me. He said, Mr. Wilkerson, I don't know what happened. He said, I lost this girl when she was just 15 years old.

She's 17 now, but the last two years have been a hell in our home. She won't talk to me. She thought I was a phony.

He said, the only thing I can think of is the fact that I had to take a stand in my pulpit against the way she wanted to dress and the kind of friend she wanted to be associated with. I just didn't think it was right for my daughter to look like a hippie. She wanted to dress like her crowd, and I wouldn't have it, and I had to take the stand that I thought was necessary, and she kept saying, Dad, you just don't understand.

You don't understand, and friends, I as a parent am fed up to here with all this talk about parents not understanding kids. Come on, kids. I'm going to tell you what I feel, and Dad, Mom, I want to tell you what I feel, too.

Now, I'm a father of four children and two teenagers, and I refuse to let anybody accuse me of not understanding my children. I think a lot of times when it's said, Mom and Dad don't understand me, the teenager's actually saying, Dad, Mom won't go along with my hang-up. They won't do what I want them to do.

They won't see it my way. Come on, kids. I know what I'm talking about.

A little 12-year-old girl came up to me in a crusade recently. She was crying like a little baby, tears and mascara running all over her face. She said, Mr. Wilson, I've got to talk to you.

She said, My mother doesn't understand me at all, at all, and she was so heartbroken. I thought, well, I'd better talk to her. I sat down beside her, and I took her by the hand.

I said, Honey, tell me all about your misunderstanding, Mother. She said, Well, Mr. Wilkerson, she doesn't understand my inner drive, my need for fellowship and friendship, the need to belong and to feel a part of something. She just doesn't understand.

She looked at me so innocently, and she said, You know, my mother gets mad just because I'm going with a boy 21 years old and coming in at 11, 12 o'clock. I said, Honey, I feel like spanking you, too, right now. How can any parent try to understand that kind of activity? And you know, I found out that night that those 600 kids, by actual count, 70% of them had bitterness and rebellion against their parents.

70%. 70%. And most of them were teenage girls who had resentment against their mother.

And you know, sometimes it's a very difficult thing for a mother to take a stand. And I just don't like to hear mothers say, Just wait till your daddy gets home. Mother, don't say that.

And you see little Johnny doing something wrong, and she says, You do that one more time and you'll get it. So he does it just one more time. So he does it one more time.

And he keeps on doing it one more time because mama's bark is worse than her bite. And then mama can't understand when daddy comes home and says, Honey, they give me trouble all day and you walk in and they're like angels. Why? Because dad has a belt behind it.

Mother, take action. Don't talk about it and never scream at your children. I believe that causes more trouble than anything I can think of right now among the drug addicts that we work with.

The memory of screaming, haranguing mothers who are on their backs from morning to night. Let's talk about attitude, teenager. This young man made no attempt to reach his father, the man who sat there waiting and watching, longing to communicate, longing to get through to that boy, trying to find out where he was and what he was doing.

I know what it is as a teenager to outgrow parents. My dad, as I've already told you, was a minister as well as my grandfather. And you've heard of the church down by the railroad track, the old fashioned church down by the road.

My dad didn't pastor a church down by the road. My dad pastored a church underneath the railroad. An elevated train ran right over the top of the church, right on one edge of it.

And it was a converted house in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania. Have you ever heard such an obnoxious name for a town? I never saw a turtle in 15 years. I used to go to school with other preachers' kids.

They'd pass their dad's churches and look at it rather admiringly. And I was so ashamed of my dad's church on the railroad. And more than that, I was ashamed of the fact that my dad did not have a degree from a seminary because, you see, he was a self-made man.

I never did doubt that my dad was a man of God. I knew better because I'd heard him pray and groan in the Holy Ghost in his secret closet of prayer. I knew I'd seen tears rolling down his cheeks as he pleaded for lost souls.

But you see, now I was the young intellectual, and poor dad, he just didn't have it anymore as far as I was concerned. And I was especially ashamed of my dad's church and the way he conducted his meetings. I outgrew my dad and his church.

You see, in my dad's church, they really enjoyed their religion. Those are the days they really clapped their hands in church. Dad said to a place in the Bible, he said, clap your hands and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

And every Sunday night, we'd start at 7.30, and at 7.36, an eight-minute freight train would run over the church. Right over top, the church would rumble and shit would pour in the windows, and we'd have to stand and not sing the train. An amazing grace six times equals an eight-minute train.

You didn't need a songbook in those days. Everybody knew at least 500 choruses, you know. And oh, did they get happy singing Sweet Honey in a Rock.

Those were days when even the free Methodists were free. And after singing Sweet Honey in a Rock, they would start on the Ark is Coming Down the Road. And now, you know, we had a few dear ladies in our church that get so happy, they'd wave their handkerchiefs.

And if they really got blessed, they'd get up and march around the church, calling it a Jericho march. But you know, the biggest, most shameful thing to me was Sister Jordan. She had an inbuilt Holy Ghost pump, but when she'd get blessed, that pump would go in and out, and then when it'd come up, she'd go, whoa, glory.

We called her the fire whistle. I used to think if any one of my friends ever came to my dad's church, I would never face them again as long as I live. If they saw those people clapping their hands and getting happy, or somebody waving a handkerchief, or they heard that fire whistle, I'd never live it down.

And I became very ashamed to walk into that church, and I'd kind of look down at Dad. Poor Dad, you see, I was going to pass him up. I was going to be the young, educated preacher.

Well, one day, Timothy Ashcroft, the President of Student Council, came to me. He said, hey Dave, did your dad pass that church down under the railroad? I said, yeah. He said, do they really climb the walls down there? I said, no.

Why don't you come and see for yourself? He said, oh, we are, we are. Sunday night, six of us from the student newspaper. We're going to come and examine your church.

We're going to do an article about all the churches in town in the school paper, and if there'd been a hole there, I would have jumped in and died. Can you imagine little David in his dad's office Sunday afternoon, telling him how to act and behave so he wouldn't embarrass his son in front of his friends? And it went something like this. Now, Dad, you know I love you.

You see, that's a Holy Ghost dig. You bless him before you dig him. I said, you know how much I love you.

I said, but Dad, I've got six of the best cultured friends in school, the real cream of the crop, coming to our church tonight. Can we please have a quiet Episcopalian kind of meeting tonight? I said, Dad, please preach the biggest sermon you got with the biggest words so they won't chew you up in English class. Now, I was trying to, in a nice way, to make reference to the idea that he hadn't been to seminary, see, and he should try real hard not to let anybody know it.

And then I said, Dad, please don't sing Sweet Honey in the Rock tonight. And Dad, please, no clapping, just once for me, no clapping, and please don't let Sister Jordan take off tonight. But you know something?

Dad looked at me, said, are you finished, David? I said, yes, sir.

He saw me at the door of his office. He said, son, I intend to let God have his way tonight. That's all he said.

I had to go. And you see, I was the janitor of that little church, and I thought, at least it's going to be clean tonight. And I went down the church, started pushing that broom and kind of praying, God, don't let anything embarrass me tonight.

You know, I love you, but please don't let anything happen out of the ordinary that would embarrass me in front of my friends. And help Dad. You know, he hasn't had much of an education.

Please help him, God, to get through tonight without embarrassing me. And I was hoping Sister Jordan had had a fight with her husband, so she probably wouldn't get a blessing. But at 725, here she comes in, bouncing happy.

I said, that's trouble. That's trouble. 730, we started the service.

736, the train. Amazing grace. But I wasn't worried about the young people now.

I'd forgotten them. They were already there standing in the back row. But I was watching Sister Jordan, and already the pump was going.

And I thought, if she screams tonight, I'll never live it down. I'll not come in this church again. If she screams, I can't take it anymore.

And all of a sudden, here it came. Yeah, I stood there, wallowing in a pool of self-pity. I said, poor Dad, poor Mom, poor people, poor David.

You know, while I was standing there feeling sorry, and this terrible resentment and bitterness springing up in my heart. And you know, my mom, who's still living, and one of the most beautiful young ladies in the world, works with me at Teen Challenge. She heard this for the first time when I preached about it.

She remembers it, I'm sure, very well. But she didn't know the bitterness and resentment that I had built up in my heart. Dad died without ever knowing it, except what I told him that night.

But as I stood there, suddenly Dad stopped the service, and he said, we're going to pray. And that night, as I looked up between two people standing in front of me, Dad's face suddenly lit up with the glory of God. And I got scared, because when my dad prayed, he touched God.

And I thought, there's the one man in the whole world that knows God, and he loves me. Why should I worry what my friends think that my dad doesn't put on a show? My dad didn't even know those kids with him. I'm sure he forgot all about it.

He didn't put anything on, but he was touching God. And I bowed my head in a state of repentance, and I looked up to God, and I prayed, oh God, take all this resentment toward my parents out. Take all the rebellion from this day on.

Never again let me be ashamed of my dad or my mother. Never let me be ashamed. Let me love them from this day on.

I can feel that resentment just ooze out the bottom of my feet, so to speak. And by the time my dad was preaching, I was his amen corner, as if to say, sick him, Dad. Get him.

Get him. And boy, he preached that night. I went home, and I said, Dad, you did great.

I said, I've had a hard day. He said, you're learning, boy. You're learning.

I went to school the next day and got ready for criticism. Timothy came up. He said, hey man, your dad really lays it on the line, doesn't he? He said, boy, they love religion.

They love to sing in your church. He said, my church is dead. He liked it.

And you know, from that day on, I was never ashamed of my parents. I love my parents dearly, and I believe much of the blessing of God that I've witnessed in the past 10 years has been a direct result of being able to look into my heart to know that I have not had any resentment or bitterness. I can't remember a day after that that I ever had anything but love for my dad and my mother.

And to this day, I love my mother dearly. I think she's the greatest woman of God in the world. How many of you young people can say that about dad and mom? Aren't you saying, well, my dad's not converted.

I can't respect my mother. She smokes, and she drinks, and she curses. You're still to respect your parents.

The Bible doesn't describe their condition. He said, honor your father and your mother that your days may be long on the earth. But how many of you right now have resentment and bitterness? I found by actual count that 70% of all the Christian young people I've talked to, 70% have resentment toward their parents, and most of them are teenage girls who have feelings of resentment and an attitude toward mother because mother has to usually take a stand.

It has to do about dress often, about the friends they run around with, and this little insignificant thing is the way they take care of their room. Oh yeah, I've got two teenagers. I know what I'm talking about and how mother has to keep after them, you know, and mother having to keep after the little girl.

The little girl develops an attitude. Come on girls, when's the last time you've told your mother you really loved her? When is the last time you've looked her right in the eye and say, mother, I'm so glad that you belong to me and I belong to you. Mom, everything's good.

Everything's fine. You're great. The last time I preached this message, California, Melodyland, Disneyland rally, after the service, when some 450 kids responded to the invitation, Pastor Ralph separated, along with Pastor Gene, separated about 100 of these young people, lined up against the brass rail.

They wanted to talk to me personally. I'll tell you, that night marked my life. It did something to me.

I've never been the same. The first two girls in the line were teenagers, one 14 years old. Mr. Wilkinson, you talk about bitterness toward parents and about girls and attitudes toward their mother.

What do you do about me? My daddy started molesting me when I was 12 years old and my mother found out about it and she blamed me instead of getting medical attention from my daddy. Now they placed me in a foster home and I'm not mad at daddy. I still love him.

I think he's sick and he needs help, but I want you to pray for a miracle that mother will call me up and tell me she's sorry and she'll let me come home. The next girl standing in line, 15 years old, she said, Mr. Wilkinson, you can see I'm going to have an illegitimate baby. I'm staying in the same home with Judy, foster home.

Dad's a businessman. When mom came home from the doctor and had to tell dad I was going to have a baby, he got mad, called me a dirty tramp and told me I'd have to leave the house. I'd ruin his business and his reputation.

She said, Mr. Wilkinson, I think parents should stick with their kids no matter what they do. She said, no, I'm sorry. I'm not a bad girl.

I just made a terrible mistake and I feel so ashamed of myself and I'm so sorry. If you believe in miracles, please pray that my dad will say he's sorry and let me come home and he'll help me when I need him now. She said, if he doesn't, within six months I'm going to hate the ground he walks on.

The next girl, 13 years of age, and I'll not forget the look on her face. She grabbed me, dug her fingernails right into the palm of my hands. She said, Mr. Wilkinson, do you believe in miracles? I said, honey, I do.

She said, you should better pray for one now. I'm going to tell you just what I told my mom. I don't want to run away from Jesus or my home, but last Thursday my dad at the breakfast table told mom he didn't love her anymore.

He's going to leave tomorrow at 12 o'clock before he goes to work. He's got his suitcase packed. She said, I've got mine packed too.

And right after he goes, I'm leaving. I'm running away. I'm going to hitchhike to Haight Asbury in San Francisco.

I'm going to take LSD and marijuana. I'm going to throw my life away just to spite him. If he can run out, so can I. And I'll tell you, the next 17 to 20 kids I talked to, it took me a half an hour, were kids from Christian homes, and there was going to be a breakup.

There was going to be a divorce. I remember one boy, 17 years old. He said, Mr. Wilkinson, I'm 17.

I can take a dad, mom, or Christians, they say, but they're going to get a divorce. But I'm worried about my six-year-old brother. He said, he cries himself to sleep now.

He said, we can't handle him. He's going to be a delinquent for sure. He doesn't understand why dad and mom are going to have to break up.

He said, and I can't tell him. He said, pray that God will give them enough courage and enough backbone to work out their problems, to stick it out until the kid's at least 14 years old so it won't hurt him. At least tell him he won't be a juvenile delinquent.

You've got to pray for that for me, Mr. Wilkinson. And I'll tell you, I had some of those kids at this Disneyland rally put their arm around me and squeezed me so tight and in such desperation. They say, Mr. Wilkinson, you talk about bitterness and resentment that kids have toward their parents, but I think one after another told me that my dad and mom are really failing me.

I said, I don't ask that much out of my parents, but is it too much? Is it too much to want to believe that you can have a dad and a mother at least until you're 17 or 18 years of age, until you can stand it? Friends, I'm sick and tired of it in Africa, Johannesburg. Remember that almost a thousand people coming forward, kneeling in the stadium on the grass, teenagers kneeling everywhere in the Johannesburg at the stadium crusade there. One teenager after another grabbing me right by the trousers or by the sleeve of my coat and saying, hey, Mr. Wilkinson, come on, pray for a miracle for me.

My home is busted up. My home is in hell. Dad, mom are fighting, there's bickering, and my problems can be traced right back to that.

And after working with troubled kids for 10 years, what else can I preach, dad, mom, but that you and I are responsible. You and I are called upon by God to put aside our petty little feelings and our pride, mind you, if necessary, swallow it and say, I'm sorry. I'm not even asking you to try for another honeymoon.

I'm just asking you to get on your knees and say, God, give us wisdom and grace. To pull them through. And I'll tell you, dad, mother, what you need to pray for more than anything else in these days is a gift of wisdom.

You need wisdom today. You need wisdom today to raise your children with fear of the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Why do kids go wrong? Why are we losing this generation? A total lack of discipline, a lack of love, and allowing our teenagers to maintain roots of bitterness, rebellion that spring up and choke their spiritual life.

That sounds like an oversimplification, but that's pure wisdom right out of God's book. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Oh God, tonight I ask you to speak to dads and mothers within the sound of my voice.

I pray for the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit that dads and mothers everywhere will be convicted of being hung up on their own feelings, saying it's not my fault. I'm not to blame. Don't look at me.

Oh God, where else can we go? Turn the searchlight on the hearts of dads and mothers everywhere. God, send a revival to America. Give us dads and mothers who will stand up against this lawlessness and be firm with their children, but with grace and with love.

Oh God, restore love to our American homes. Let dad fall in love again with mother. Oh God, give us love.

Stop the eternal bickering and fighting in our American homes. Have dads and mothers fall on their knees together in a secret closet and say, God forgive us. God, keep our children.

Let them not be lost.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/31/SID31632.mp3>

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