

Wisdom for families – Parents & Children

Intro: The Trouble with families

When I became a Dad, one of my first thoughts was “I’d better not mess this up.” Focus on how big a responsibility it is to be a parent. Need all the help we can get. Proverbs is God’s wisdom on how to be a wise parent (and child).

Parents role

- Instruction/Direction

Prov 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Prov 4:1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. 2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. 3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, 4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. 5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

Our role as parents is to teach our children how to live wise lives in this world. We are to give them instruction in how to live and direction as to which way to go in life so that they will live wise, godly lives.

Proverbs doesn’t provide an exhaustive list of everything you need to teach your children, but it does give some examples of instruction:

Who they follow

4: 14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.

How they speak

4: 24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

How they relate to authorities

24:²¹ Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious,

Adultery & Marriage

5:²⁰ Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

Money

6:1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have struck hands in pledge for another,

³ then do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands: Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor!

We instruct and direct our children each day in a thousand ways, and as they grow older the topics may change but the goal is always the same

From the mundane

How to tie your shoes, how to do that maths problem, how to drive

To the really important

How young men should behave towards young women, how young women shouldn't get their self esteem from how they look or which guy is interested in them, how to choose a wise husband or wife.

Constant instruction, changes as they grow. But more than anything else our goal in all this direction/instruction is that they become Christians and live wise, godly lives on this earth.

Focus to be on helping child grow in relationship with God – fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

E.G. Idea of a path – walking along this path – right way to live – leading to heaven. Going off this path is wrong way to live – leading away from heaven. Instruction/direction is how to walk along this path and which way to go.

But sometimes they won't want to listen to us, or they will ignore what we say.

- Discipline

Prov 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Prov 19:18 Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.

Prov 23:13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.¹⁴ Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.

Prov 29: 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Rod equals discipline here – not saying that the only way to discipline is with a rod, but that discipline is important. Not focussed on what form of discipline, but on whether you do it or not.

Idea is to discipline so that the child gains wisdom/becomes mature.

Focus to be on helping child grow in relationship with God – fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

E.G. Idea of a path – walking along this path – right way to live – leading to heaven. Going off this path is wrong way to live – leading away from heaven. Instruction/direction is how to walk along this path and which way to go. Discipline is when they go off this path, helping them to get back onto the path and start living that godly, wise life again.

Paul doesn't mention the path, but talks about the different things a person (in this case a minister) might do to try to help someone get on the path and stay on it.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Teaching – this is where the path is and how you walk along it

Rebuking – discipline when you have gone off the path

Correcting – this is how you get back onto the path

Training in Righteousness – this is how you grow into Christ as you walk along the path.

So that's the goal – parents are to instruct, direct, discipline their children so that they become Christians, grow as Christians, and lead wise, godly lives here on earth.

E.G Set boundaries of acceptable behaviour and explain consequences for stepping outside those boundaries. Again this will change as they grow, but the goal remains the same.

Young – play nice, don't hurt your siblings/friends. Consequence of deliberately hurting another child might be to have to have a time out where they think about their behaviour and then apologise to the other child.

Growing up a bit – Saying rude or nasty things to their parents or siblings after a couple of warnings could result in losing pocket money for the week.

Teenager – stay out too late – grounded for a week

Reason that you are doing it is not so that they will be nicer people. No the reason is so that they will become Christians and grow as Christians.

So you will need to help them to understand the reason their behaviour was unacceptable.

Hurting others/being rude to others – God has made the person you have hurt/been rude to and God loves them. God wants us to love and value other people just like he does and so hurting them or being rude to them is not loving and valuing them.

Child's role

Accept parents discipline and direction and become wise

1:⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

4:1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.

¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.

What's the goal in all this listening to your parents?

Become Christian and grow as a Christian

Prov 2:1 My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

And if you do that, your parents will be overjoyed

23:15 My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad;

20: ²⁴ The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.

Not parents fault if children don't accept discipline and direction &/or don't become a Christian as they grow up..

13: 1 A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

15:5 A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

E.G. Statute of limitations on blaming your parents runs out by the time you are 35.

Naomi Campbell – Super model. Between 1998 and 2008, Campbell was accused ten times of committing acts of violence against employees, associates, and, in one instance, police officers.

In 2008, Campbell pleaded guilty to assaulting two police officers at London Heathrow Airport. She had spat at the officers following an argument about her lost luggage. Campbell was sentenced to 200 hours of community service and fined \$4,600. She was banned for life from British Airways. The following year, Campbell settled the lawsuit brought by her former maid Gaby Gibson, who claimed Campbell had hit her and called her names.

Blamed her parents for her bad behaviour. Said there was something wrong with the way she was raised. Either they were too strict or not strict enough, I can't remember which. Not claiming abuse, nor am I talking about the victims of abuse. Apart from abuse, there comes a time when a child grows up into an adult and must stand on his or her own two feet and be responsible for the choices they make and the way they live. Can't blame your parents forever.

In the end it is the child's responsibility whether they accept their parents direction and discipline and become Christian/grow as a Christian.

Role/Relationship between parent and child changes as the child grows.

We are called to honour our parents as adults, but not necessarily obey them.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise-- 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Obey when we are young. Continue to obey as long as you live under their roof. When you are living independently, not obliged to obey but must continue to honour. Listen to their advice and try to live the wise/godly life they have raised you to live.

Big Idea: Parents are to direct and discipline their children so that they will become truly wise (Christian) and children are to accept their parents discipline and direction.

Why are parents and children to act this way?

God is our heavenly father – he disciplines/directs us

Prov 3:11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

In OT

Provides the law to direct his people how to live

Punishes them when they turn away from him and follow other gods/nations around them

Rewards them when they obey

Parents are to follow God's example

Biblical Theology:

Jesus is the perfect Son – accepts the father's discipline/direction

Jesus is wisdom acted. That is, in all his relationships, mostly notably his relationship with his heavenly Father, Jesus acted as the obedient son—the perfectly wise child—should. Put differently, Jesus, in his time on earth, perfectly and continuously feared the LORD. From the cradle to the cross, he walked the way of wisdom.

Children are to follow Jesus' example

We have a great model of the parent child relationship in God and Jesus

We join God's family through Jesus – Gal 3-4

Gal 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,

"Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Great news for us in that we are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus and brought into God's family.

Also good news for those of us who didn't have parents who were good role models growing up. If your parents weren't Christian, or they struggled to raise you as the Bible suggests, you aren't doomed to make the same mistakes as they did. You have the example of God and Jesus to follow. You have the wise words of Proverbs and other parts of the Bible to learn from. And you have God's spirit, the spirit of his Son, living in your hearts, helping you to grow more and more like him every day. The Spirit will take the words of the bible as you read it and help you apply it to your lives. The Spirit will help you be a better parent. The Spirit will help you be a better child.

Application

So what are we to take away from Proverbs today?

Parents

- Be like God
- Direct/Instruct and discipline your children like God does to us

Children

- Be like Jesus
- Accept the direction/instruction and discipline of your parents
- Obey and grow up to be wise/godly adults

Everyone

- Know that we are part of God's family through Jesus
- God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit will help us be a better parent/child.