

Family Matters

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

(Genesis 1:27 ESV)

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

(Proverbs 22:6 ESV)

*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

(Matthew 10:37 ESV)

*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household,
he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

(1 Timothy 5:8 ESV)

Parenting

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Proverbs

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the Book of Proverbs, that's on page 527 in your pew Bibles. This morning we are going to be talking about parenting. We are making our way through a series called "Family Matters", we began last week by discussing marriage and we move on this week to a discussion of parenting, and that is a logical progression.

Marriage generally results in children, we talked about that last week. God said to the first husband and wife:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion (Genesis 1:28 ESV)

Part of how we execute the Dominion Mandate is by having and raising babies who will live and work according to the Word of God. We want to fill the earth with men and women who love and obey God. We want to make disciples of our children! Parenting is evangelism! Parenting is at the very heart of the Great Commission. Jesus said go and make disciples and the most obvious objects of that commission would be of course, the children that are born into our homes. The mission field begins in the nursery room. As parents we want to reach and disciple our kids.

And so that probably explains why most of what we read in the Bible about parenting has to do with instruction – with disciple making. That’s really the first thing you notice when you survey what the Bible has to say about parenting. There are not a lot of verses on loving your kids – in fact the only one you’ll find is the one that warns you about loving your kids more than you love Jesus. There are not a lot of verses about playing with your kids or taking them on vacation and there are no verses at all about entertaining your kids. Now, I’m not saying those are unimportant or illegitimate I’m just saying that if you are going to preach a sermon on what the Bible says about parenting then you are going to be talking first and foremost about instruction. That is where the emphasis lies.

So this morning, we are going to look at that and we are going to base ourselves in the Book of Proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is divinely sanctioned parental counsel – and I mean that in two different ways. First of all, in Hebrews 12:5 the Apostle refers to the whole Book of Proverbs as God’s counsel to his children. Before citing from Proverbs the Apostle says:

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? (Hebrews 12:5 ESV)

And then he quotes from Proverbs – meaning the whole Book of Proverbs is a message from our heavenly Father and in that message God speaks to us as a parent about parenting. The entire Book of Proverbs is presented as wise instruction from a mom and dad to their kids. Have you ever noticed that? Look at Proverbs 1:8:

Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching (Proverbs 1:8 ESV)

That’s the introduction to the Book of Proverbs. It is Divinely sanctioned and communicated parental counsel – it’s God telling you what you should be teaching to your kids. So in the time that we have this morning I want to share with you 10 parenting imperatives from the Book of Proverbs.

10 Parenting Imperatives From The Book Of Proverbs:

The first one is this:

1. Teach your children to fear the Lord

That's where Proverbs begins. The parents say to their son:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7 ESV)

This is where we must start, son. Before we teach you anything we need to teach you a proper and life giving fear of the Lord. I love how Derek Kidner explains this verse. He says:

*The beginning ... is not merely a right method of thought but a right relation: a worshipping submission (fear) to the God of the covenant, who has revealed himself by name*¹

That's where you have to start – that is the beginning. You have to teach your children how to have a right relationship to the God of the covenant who has revealed himself by name. You have to teach your kids how God has revealed himself and how they should relate to him. Now that's a slightly different task in the New Testament than it was in the Old Testament. I think you could say that it's an easier task because God has revealed himself clearly and climactically in the person of Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews says that:

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1–4 ESV)

Ok, so you need to teach your kids about that! That, my friends is the Gospel. You need to teach your kids about how God has revealed himself – his holiness and his mercy – in Jesus. You need to teach your kids how Jesus has made purification for sins and how he even now sits at the Father's right hand to make intercession for us. That is how your kids need to relate to God – that's the only way you can relate to God - and if you don't start there then nothing else you do will matter.

This is where it has to begin.

¹Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 56.

Practically speaking moms and dads, that means that job one for you as a parent is converting your children. Until they know that God is holy, and they are not – you’re going to have problems. Until they have confessed their sins and put their faith in the life and death and resurrection and transforming Spirit and eternal intercession of Jesus Christ on their behalf - all of your parenting efforts are going to be for not. Right? So behavioural management must take a back seat to Gospel apprehension. You’ve got to get the Gospel into your kids! You’ve got to get them **SAVED** and **SPIRIT-FILLED**. After that, everything you do will be amplified in its effect; you’re going to be saying stuff on the outside and the Holy Spirit is going to be grabbing it from the inside. That’s when the magic happens – that’s when the change happens, but until that happens everything you do will be frustrated and limited in effect.

So we have to start here. We have to start by teaching our kids the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Proverbs says, we need to:

2. Teach your children to value God’s Word

Look at Proverbs 2:6:

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6 ESV)

Wise moms and dads know that they can’t be the ultimate and final authority in the life of their kids. You need to get them off of you and onto the Word of God. Your words need to point them to God’s Word. That’s where wisdom, knowledge and understanding ultimately come from. The father goes on to tell his son in chapter 13:

Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded. (Proverbs 13:13 ESV)

In chapter 16 he says:

Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord. (Proverbs 16:20 ESV)

Teach your kids to value and revere the Word of God. Let them see you reading it early in the morning and let them hear it often on your lips and let them see it slowly but surely changing your life. Teach your kids to tremble before the awesome power and authority of God's Word.

Thirdly, Proverbs tells us to:

3. Teach your children to honour the Lord

Look at chapter 3:9-10:

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:9–10 ESV)

Parents teach your kids about generous, faithful, regular giving! Teach your kids that money and success ultimately come from the Lord – you are not a self-made man or woman. God gave you the talents and gifts and opportunities that allow you to make what you make. Show your kids that you understand that by giving back to the Lord – not your leftovers; the Bible doesn't say that, it says give your first fruits. The first and best of what you make.

That's where the idea of tithing comes from. Now I know that tithing is different in the New Testament than it was in the Old. The Old Testament saints paid about 23% in a variety of tithes that went to support the temple and the priesthood and the poor and it's impossible to translate that directly into the New Testament context because our situation is different. The church isn't a nation anymore it's a multi-ethnic gathering made up of people from every nation. And we don't have a temple anymore – although the Bible says that we are the temple of the Lord. We don't have a priesthood anymore, although Christ is our great high priest and he said that Gospel workers are worthy of their wages. So it's not exactly the same but it's not as different as we sometimes like to think and the principle remains in effect. Generous, sacrificial giving is part of how we honour the Lord. It's part of how we communicate to God that we know that everything we have comes from him. It's part of how we say to God: "You give and you take away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

You need to teach that to your kids.

Very practically, one of my concerns with on-line giving – which is fine – but one of my concerns is that your kids don't see it. I used to watch my dad fill in his envelope and drop it in the plate. I make sure that my kids see our envelope. I explain to them that we can't go on fancy vacations every year. We can't buy new cars because we give generously to the Lord. I want them to feel the thickness of the envelope and hear it thud into the plate because I want them to know that everything I have comes from the Lord. It is all his and he can take it all back at any time. I am only what he makes me. And it is my joy and my honour to give it back.

I want my kids to see that and I want my kids to imitate that when the Lord gives them substance.

Fourthly, Proverbs tells us to:

4. Teach your children to receive correction

Look at chapter 3:11-12:

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11–12 ESV)

I find it interesting that Proverbs doesn't just tell parents to discipline their kids; it tells parents to teach their kids to LOVE IT. That's a bit of tall order. Spank your kids and get them to say thank you!

Funny thing is though, it can happen. I'm 43 years old now and I often look back fondly on the discipline that I received from my mom and dad. My kids love hearing stories about the time grandma hid out under my window in the bushes with a broomstick ready to pound me on the head for trying to sneak out of the house. They love hearing about how my mom officiated dinners with the wooden spoon at her side and how she was like a gunslinger with that bad boy! They love that! And I love that! I love that my dad was THE LAW in our house. If we didn't respond to mom then we dealt with dad. If my dad even put his hands on his belt I blacked out with fear. Just the suggestion of going into that bathroom with the belt was enough to instil in me a strong desire for righteous living. My dad will tell you that he never actually gave me the belt.

He didn't need to. Once it got to here, I was converted. I was rejoicing in the truth and hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Listen, I didn't love it at the time, but I love it now. I love that my parents taught me self control. And I know now, as a parent how much that cost them. When you love your kids it's hard to discipline them. It's hard to withhold things from them as a consequence. It's hard to spank them when they really do need it. It's true actually that it hurts you a lot more than it hurts them. My mom was a hundred pounds soaking wet. My brother – who was a little slow on the uptake – used to laugh at her when she spanked him, which is foolish because it causes you to be referred to dad. I always cried like a baby even though it really it didn't hurt. But I know it hurt her. She disciplined me because she loved me.

The Bible says that you've got to do that:

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

Now you have to do it in accordance with the laws of the land – so the rod is out, the wooden spoon I think is out too, but you can spank your kids with your hand – in love. With concern. Because your kids need to know that sin leads to harm. That's the message – that's the connection you are trying to forge. Sin leads to harm. We hurt ourselves and we hurt others. Kids learn that when they are corrected, appropriately, by mom and dad.

Teach them to receive it, more than that, teach them to love it. The Bible says:

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1 ESV)

Don't raise stupid kids. Teach your children to love discipline.

Fifthly, Proverbs tells us to:

5. Teach your children to pursue a spouse

It's actually a little bit surprising how much word count in Proverbs is given to matters of

sexuality and marriage. Apparently parents should spend a fair bit of time talking to their kids about this. The father in Proverbs does. He says to his son:

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones. (Proverbs 12:4 ESV)

A great wife is the best thing in life, a bad wife is like cancer – that’s pretty pointed counsel! He goes on to say:

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 18:22 ESV)

Finding a spouse, he says, is ultimately a blessing from God. You need God’s help to find a suitable partner. He says the same thing again in the next chapter:

House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord. (Proverbs 19:14 ESV)

Your daddy can’t get you that – only the Lord can. Now there is a whole chapter at the end of Proverbs – chapter 31 – that describes in detail what a good wife looks like. There isn’t much about her physical appearance but there is a great deal about her character. Here is just a quick sample:

15 She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.
16 She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. (Proverbs 31:15–16 ESV)

She is a good homemaker and a good businesswoman. Verse 20 says:

She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. (Proverbs 31:20 ESV)

Verse 26 says:

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Proverbs 31:26 ESV)

That’s quite a woman! She is hard working, multi-talented, charitable, merciful, wise and kind. If you find a woman like that, son, you put a ring on her finger and take her home. A woman like that is a gift from God.

Practically speaking moms and dads, this means that part of your job as parents is to guide your children in their pursuit of a mate. Don't let your child's hormones make the most important decision of their life. Get a word of wisdom in there! Stick your foot in that door before it slams shut. Guide the process. The wise mom and dad in Proverbs had no problem speaking very specifically about the sort of spouse their son should pursue. They gave counsel on this matter and so should you.

Sixthly, Proverbs tells parents that they need to:

6. Teach your children to control their lusts

The father speaks very frankly to his son on this topic. He says:

He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. (Proverbs 6:32 ESV)

Colouring outside the lines, in terms of your sexuality, will destroy your life. That's straight forward counsel. Sex is powerful. In bounds it produces blessing. Out of bounds it destroys everything. Your kids should know that.

The father tells his son to stay away from immoral women. He says:

Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house (Proverbs 5:8 ESV)

Paul says the same thing to young Timothy. He says:

Flee also youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22 NKJV)

Run away! Run away boy! You aren't strong enough to keep company with loose women. That is good counsel. You can say the same to your daughters. You aren't strong enough at this point in your life to resist the temptations of the flesh – so just don't go there. Don't awaken desire before the time. Keep the horses in the barn until race time but then, the father says, when the race is on, let those horses run. That is part of the counsel we need to give to our kids too. He says to his son:

18 rejoice in the wife of your youth, 19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. 20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? (Proverbs 5:18–20 ESV)

Get married young son and have lots of sex with your sweet heart. That will be a great tonic against adulterous and destructive temptation. You aren't parenting Biblically unless you are speaking that frankly about sex and marriage and adultery with your kids.

Seventh, we see Proverbs here telling us to:

7. Teach your children to tell the truth

Proverbs 28:13 says:

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 ESV)

You need to teach your kids about this, moms and dads. I don't know if my mom knew this verse but she lived it. One time back in High School, in grade 10 actually, me and my best friend decided that we would skip school. It was our first time and we didn't much of a plan so we rode the bus to school and we got off the bus and we walked to McDonalds and sat in the smoking section and ate Big Macs and smoked cigars until 3 pm when we got on the bus and went home. We thought we were quite brilliant. We figured it would just show up as a day absent on our report cards and our moms weren't going to remember how many days we were absent – so we figured this was fool proof. So I walked into my house – probably reeking to high heaven of cigar smoke – and I played it cool. I was a stone cold killer. My mom asked me how my day at school went and I told her: “Oh it was a wonderful day mother. I grew as a person and I gathered wisdom for life and righteousness” – or something to that effect. My mom, she looked at me and without missing a beat she said, “Well that's interesting because you had a dentist appointment today at 1 pm and I showed up at the school to collect you and they said they weren't there. So let's try again, how was your day at school today son?”

My mom was a ninja! She could smell sin from a mile away and she had me dead to rights. She applied some punishment, I don't remember what and the next day she drove me to school and

she marched me to the office and she sat outside in the waiting room while I confessed all my sin to the Vice Principle. I told him about the Big Mac and the cigars.

And you know what, he was so impressed that I told him the truth that he let me off with a warning. He probably knew that there was nothing he could do to me anyway that would compare with what my mom was going to do. Now my friend, he got a note from his mother saying he had been sick. I'm not judging that – they weren't a Christian family – but he missed the opportunity of a clean conscience and a valuable lesson:

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 ESV)

Teach your kids to tell the truth. Whether to their immediate harm or help. Tell the truth.

Eighth, and we need to move very fast now, Proverbs tell us to:

8. Teach your children to be good friends

There is a lot of content on friendship in Proverbs – for the sake of time let me just read you two verses. First of all Proverbs 27:10 says:

Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away. (Proverbs 27:10 ESV)

Do you hear that? The father tells his son to build a rich, thick, multi-generational community of friends where he lives. Those people will be the people who carry you when you fall. A brother in another Province is there in theory and in spirit, but friends – life long friends – in your community are there in reality. They are the ones who come over with lasagne when you're sick. They are the ones who shingle your roof and who help you move and who coach your kids in soccer. Those are the people you do life with so choose them wisely because:

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Proverbs 13:20 ESV)

If your friends are fools you will suffer harm. How many of you know learned that the hard way?

Teach your kids to choose their friends wisely.

Ninthly, Proverbs tell us to:

9. Teach your children to work hard

He tells his son:

4 A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

5 He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame. (Proverbs 10:4–5 ESV)

Teach your kids to work hard and to make hay while the sun shines! Teach them that work comes before play. And teach them to do something useful. The father says to his son:

Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense. (Proverbs 12:11 ESV)

Point your children in the direction of productive enterprise. Talk to them about careers and godly ambition. Help them identify a type of work that will contribute to the glory of God and the good of all people.

And finally, Proverbs also tells us to:

10. Teach your children to be merciful to the poor

The father tells his son:

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him. (Proverbs 14:31 ESV)

Teach your children to treat all human beings with dignity. Tell them to honour God by being generous to the needy. This is no different than what we see in the New Testament:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27 ESV)

Holiness and charity go together. Therefore teach your children to be merciful to the poor.

This is the way of life; this is the path of wisdom and this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God, let's pray together.