

The Wisdom of Fathers, Mothers, and Other Ancients

Proverbs 1:1-10ff; cf. 2:1-9; 3:1-4; 4:1-13ff; 5:1-2; 6:20-24; 7:1-5

The wise man's son is to listen to the instruction of his father and the law of his mother. Solomon doesn't say "listen to God's law" because (1) the young man hasn't lived long enough to have mastered it, and (2) because father and mother's law ought to be a restatement and application of God's law. Over against this submission to parental authority, Solomon sets a self-destructive alliance with violent gangs (or, later, the "strange woman").

1 Kings 12:6-16

Even Solomon, the wisest of men, had counselors from whom he sought advice. But when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was faced with his first political decision, he forsook the counsel of these older men and turned to the younger men who had grown up with him. His use of pronouns is instructive. To the older men he says, "How to ye advise that **I** may answer this people?" To the younger men he says, "What counsel give ye that **we** may answer this people?" These childhood friends, sons of nobles no doubt, had become Rehoboam's "gang," to the destruction of the kingdom.

2 Samuel 20:15-22

The wise woman of Abel turned back an army because the people of the city (including the elders) listened to her counsel and acted upon it. They listened to her, no doubt, because she had a proven reputation for wisdom.

Titus 2:3-5

Older women are to be mature in the faith so that they can teach the younger women the practical outworking of godliness in their character and home life. For this to happen, younger women must be teachable; older women must be humble, kind, and wise; and each must listen to the other.

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25

When Moses needed help in ruling Israel, God appointed seventy elders, men who were already respected rulers. "Elder," of course, has as its original meaning, "older," but Timothy at least is an example of a younger man who served in the gospel ministry (1 Tim. 4:12).

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Those who serve as elders in the church ought to be mature in the faith, a maturity that is reflected in their home life and public character. Novices need not apply.

Hebrews 13:17-18

We are to obey with a submissive heart the elders God has set over us. See HC Q&A 104 below.

Psalms 78:1-8 (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:2)

The godly are to teach their children the law of God and His great acts in history in such a way that those children will teach their children, and those children will teach their children.

1 Timothy 3:14-15; cf. Ephesians 4:11-16

The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is within her pale and testimony that we will find the true word of God and its proper interpretation.

Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 104: What does God require in the fifth Commandment?

That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me; submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

On the authority and usefulness of creeds in the Church, see: Greg Uttinger, "Creedal Christianity,"

<<http://chalcedon.edu/research/articles/the-theology-of-the-ancient-creeds-part-1-creedal-christianity/>>.