

Wisdom for Parents

Topical

Russ Kennedy

The book of Proverbs is presented as the counsel and wisdom of a royal couple to their son (Proverbs 1:8) and contains many practical and spiritual lessons for parents and children alike.

In the New Testament we have two important texts that inform our approach to the wisdom for Proverbs.

Some of the main themes that parents can learn from the book of Proverbs are:

Main Themes and Lessons for Parents

There are some important themes and ideas that parents should incorporate in your child rearing. These are not addressed directly to parents necessarily, but are core character building things to teach in the context of rearing children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Teach your children to love and obey God's word.

The book of Proverbs repeatedly emphasizes the importance of listening to and following God's commands, which are the source of wisdom, life, and blessing. For example, Proverbs 4:4 says, "He taught me and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.'" As parents, we should teach our children to value and treasure God's word, and to apply it to their daily lives. We should also model this ourselves by reading, studying, and obeying God's word.

Teach your children to fear the Lord.

The book of Proverbs also stresses the fear of the Lord as the beginning and foundation of wisdom. To fear the Lord means to have a reverent awe and respect for God, and to acknowledge his sovereignty, holiness, and justice. For example, Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." As parents, we should teach our children who God is and what he has done for us through Jesus Christ. We should also help them develop a healthy fear of God that leads them to worship him and avoid sin.

Teach your children to avoid evil and pursue righteousness.

The book of Proverbs contrasts two ways of living: the way of wisdom and the way of folly, or the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness. The former leads to life, peace, and joy, while the latter leads to death, trouble, and sorrow. For example, Proverbs 4:18-19 says, "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble." As parents, we should teach our children to discern good from evil, and to choose what is pleasing to God. We should also warn them of the consequences of sin and folly while encouraging them to repent when they fall short.

Teach your children to be humble and teachable.

The book of Proverbs also highlights the importance of humility and teachability as marks of wisdom. A wise person is one who recognizes his or her own limitations and need for guidance, and who is willing to learn from others, especially from God. For example, Proverbs 9:9 says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." As parents, we should teach our children to be humble before God and others, and to seek wisdom from various sources, such as parents, teachers, elders, friends, books, etc. We should also correct them when they are wrong or foolish, and praise them when they are right or wise.

Teach your children to be diligent and faithful.

The book of Proverbs also commends diligence and faithfulness as virtues that lead to success and prosperity. A diligent person is one who works hard and does not give up easily, while a faithful person is one who keeps his or her promises and commitments.

Specific Instructions in Training your Children

- Fear the Lord: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) and the foundation of a godly life. Parents should teach their children to reverence God and his commandments, and to trust in him for salvation through Jesus Christ.

To Honor the Lord

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce (Proverbs 3:9-10) and he will bless you abundantly.

Parents should teach their children to be generous, faithful, and grateful with what God has given them, and to acknowledge him as the source of all good things.

To Seek Wisdom

Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth (Proverbs 4:5).

Wisdom is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her (Proverbs 3:15).

Parents should teach their children to value wisdom above worldly riches, pleasures, or fame, and to seek it diligently from God's word and his Spirit.

To Guard their Heart

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life (Proverbs 4:23).

Parents should teach their children to watch over their thoughts, emotions, desires, and motives, and to keep them pure and aligned with God's will. They should also warn them of the dangers of sin, temptation, and evil influences that can corrupt their hearts.

To Choose their Friends Wisely

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

Parents should teach their children to associate with godly people who can encourage them in their faith and help them grow in wisdom. They should also caution them against befriending wicked people who can lead them astray from God's path.

To Control their Tongue

Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble (Proverbs 21:23).

Parents should teach their children to use their words wisely, kindly, truthfully, and respectfully. They should also instruct them to avoid lying, gossiping, slandering, boasting, or cursing with their tongue.

Specific Instructions in Disciplining your Children

The book of Proverbs in the Bible contains many verses that instruct parents on how to discipline their children according to God's wisdom and love.

The Necessity of Discipline

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart. (Proverbs 29:17)

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. (Proverbs 19:18)

These verses show that discipline is an act of love and hope for the child's future. It is not a way of venting anger or frustration on the child, but a way of guiding him or her to the path of righteousness and peace.

Discipline also benefits the parents, as it brings them rest and delight. It prevents them from having to deal with the consequences of a rebellious and foolish child later on.

The Purpose of the Rod

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

One of the main principles of discipline in Proverbs is that it should be done with a rod, which is a symbol of authority and correction. The rod is not meant to harm or abuse the child, but to teach him or her the right way to live and avoid sin.

The Environment of Discipline

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

Parents should teach their children to obey them and respect their authority as representatives of God. They should also correct them when they do wrong, using appropriate and loving discipline that aims at their repentance and restoration.

The Use of the Rod

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

Discipline should be done in a timely and appropriate manner, not too harshly or too leniently.

Discipline should also be balanced with instruction and encouragement.

The Encouragement to Discipline

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

This verse is not a promise but a precept and a principle. The command is to train a child in the way he should go. That is the responsibility of your parenting. You will be developing a Biblically informed conscience and an ability to live well in God's world.

The principle is that children tend to actually live out that training. The principle then is an encouragement and a warning. It is an encouragement to do what we ought as parents without banking on some false promise. And it is a warning that the way we train children in their hearts, in their minds, in their thinking can be difficult to overcome in later years.

Conclusion

Parenting from the book of Proverbs in the Bible using the ESV is not only beneficial for parents and children, but also for God's glory. As parents train up a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6), they are fulfilling God's purpose for their family and honoring him as their heavenly Father.