

Parenting from Proverbs

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Session 4

We want to talk a little bit about foolishness. In fact, of all the sessions that we deal with, this is one of the most important.

I don't think we fully appreciate or understand how comprehensive the biblical idea of foolishness is and how affected our children are by it.

As we go through this, you may think, "Wait a minute, you're describing me, not my kids." And that may be true.

Let's get started by turning to the book of Ezekiel before we return to Proverbs. Turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 18.

This weekend, we've been working off the premise found in Proverbs 22:6, which we discussed earlier is not a promise but a warning. If you allow your child to grow up and dedicate their life to walking their own way, when they are old, they will continue in that way. You must intervene and interrupt that child's natural course. Parents are incredibly influential in this area, but they can't determine the outcome.

We used Isaiah chapter 1, verse 2, as an illustration of that. God, the perfect parent, raised children, but they still rebelled against Him in their ungodliness, sinfulness, and foolishness. Here's the perfect parent, yet His children still rebelled. That's humbling. It means that as parents, we have to constantly depend on and trust in what God is doing in the lives of our children.

In Ezekiel 18, God lists a proverb that He hated. Look at verse 1: "The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?" God hated this proverb because it basically accused Him of wrongdoing. It suggested that the children were suffering for the sins of their fathers, and God declared that this was unjust. He lays out the principle in verse 4: "The soul who sins shall die."

Each generation is responsible for its own sins. There's no blaming parents or previous generations. This popular teaching on "generational curses" is a terrible teaching and not biblical. God rejects the idea that the sins of a father are directly responsible for the sufferings of a child. Each person is responsible for their own choices.

Ezekiel 18 goes on to provide case studies. In verse 5, God describes a righteous man who does what is right and just, and his righteousness is credited to him. But in verse 10, He talks about a son born to this righteous man who chooses to live wickedly. Despite being raised in a godly home, the son is held accountable for his own sins. The same principle is true for a wicked man who fathers a son who chooses to live righteously. Each generation chooses its own path.

This is important for us as parents to understand. There's no guarantee that our children will turn out the way we want, even if we raise them in a godly home. That's where trust in the Lord comes in. We give them all the godly input we can, but they are ultimately responsible for their own choices.

Now, let's go back to Proverbs. We want to answer the question: What is a foolish child?

Proverbs 1:22 says,

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?”

Our postmodern culture says that a foolish child is someone closed-minded, bound by rigid principles. It promotes free self-expression and claims that a fool is someone who doesn't accept all worldviews as equally valid. Our society believes that authoritative structures are limiting and outdated. But God's view is very different.

Proverbs outlines three stages of foolishness:

1. The Simple or Naive

A simple child lacks discernment. Proverbs 1:22 says they are open-minded, but from a biblical perspective, open-mindedness without discernment is foolishness.

2. The Scoffer

The scoffer is a know-it-all, someone who thinks highly of their own opinions. They scorn wisdom and reject instruction, believing they know better.

3. The Fool

The fool believes they are above the law. They reject restrictions, thinking they are a law unto themselves. This is the epitome of foolishness from a biblical standpoint.

To combat foolishness, we must teach our children that wisdom and knowledge begin with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). Fearing the Lord is not a feeling; it's a choice.

Proverbs 9:10 says

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

A wise child chooses to obey God over their natural inclinations. This choice leads to a life of security and joy.

Finally, we must warn our children about the appeal of wicked living. Proverbs 1:10-19 warns of sinners who entice the naive with promises of wealth and excitement. But these promises are lies. Wicked living has a boomerang effect—it may seem appealing at first, but it leads to destruction.

Appendix 1

Scripture References

1. Proverbs 22:6

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

2. Isaiah 1:2

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: 'Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.'"

3. Ezekiel 18:1-4

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.'"

4. Proverbs 1:22

"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"

5. Proverbs 1:7

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

6. Proverbs 9:10

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

7. Proverbs 1:10-19

"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent... for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood... but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives."
