

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

05.12.2023 | Wise Parenting | Proverbs 23:12-28 | Clark Fobes, Associate Pastor

We are continuing on in our series in Proverbs, and of course it being Mother's Day, it also happened to be the one Sunday that our two other pastors, Pastor David and Pastor Ben, are out of town. For good reason, they're not just leaving me here on their own out to dry. Pastor Ben is celebrating, finishing his PhD and walking for his graduation, and Pastor David and his wife are often Greece celebrating their 25 years of marriage. So we can clap for them on the live stream if they watch. So as far as I'm concerned, and by the way also two other of our staff are out of town today, so there's only three of us here, so as far as I'm concerned, as long as the church doesn't die and nothing bad happens, it's a good Sunday. But I was also told and reminded that it being Mother's Day, some of you may be looking forward to Mother's Day lunches after, so to try to keep this short. So if I start speaking fast, it's not because I'm trying to give you a lot of information, I'm trying to get you out of here earlier, so, and honor mothers in that way.

But let's now turn, if you have a Bible, to Proverbs 23. Proverbs 23, we're going to look at verses 12 through 28 as our anchor text for Proverbs on Parenting. We're going to reference a few other Proverbs, but this is largely where we'll be this morning. If you need a Bible, there should be one at the pew pocket in front of you, and you can turn in there to the book of Proverbs, about almost immediately in the middle place of your Bible. Proverbs 23, starting in verse But continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off. Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. By truth, and do not sell it, by wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice. He who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let not your father and mother be glad, let her who bore you rejoice. Yes, please let them be glad. My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my commandments. For a prostitute is a deep pit, an adulterous, a narrow well. She lies in wait like a robber, and increases the traitors among mankind.

We're looking today at the topic of parenting, and if you are a parent today, like I am, I have young kids, six and three. Parenting can feel overwhelming. I don't know if this is a new thing, but it seems like there's an endless amount of parenting styles today. As I've been researching just for youth ministry and leading our parent seminars, by the way, we are having a parent seminar gathering next Sunday at 9 a.m. downstairs on the fellowship hall. So if you want to learn more about that, you can go there. But something I've found is that there are generally four main agreed upon parenting styles today. I think they're on the screen, but they are denoted as the authoritarian, permissive, passive, or authoritative parenting. But there's also a variety of other parenting styles. There's the helicopter parents, there's the snowplow parents, there's the lawnmower parents, there's a lighthouse parents, and also there's the all too familiar tiger parents. There's also another variety of views that I came across called the attachment parenting, which probably should just be called, I don't know, koala parenting, slow parenting, you can call that snail parenting maybe, and then free range. I don't think that means fair trade, organic, free range, but parenting of that style might be. And most prominent today that you may have heard of, especially if you're on social media, is the gentle parenting movement.

What's interesting is if you go through all of these parenting styles, they seem to give equally important and yet contradictory advice to parenting. For instance, they may say you have to be firm and set boundaries with your kids, but you also need to be gentle and give them independence. You need to be totally approachable and loving, but don't praise your kids because they'll become dependent on your approval and affirmation. Let your kids choose what to eat and make their own choices, but also make sure they have a healthy, balanced, organic, non-GMO, no-sugar diet. As a parent of young kids, I've found this overwhelming. And even through all of this, I think parents in general find parenting difficult and overwhelming. There was a 2023 Pew Research study that surveyed over 3,700 parents, and they found that 62% of parents found parenting harder than they expected. Whereas 26 saying it's a lot harder than they expected. And that's especially true of moms. You notice some of the figures up here. Moms in particular, 60% of them say it's harder than they expected. 47% of moms say parenting is tiring all or most of the time, compared with 34% of fathers. Go figure. 33% of moms say it's stressful all or most of the time, compared with 24% of fathers.

And maybe that's due in part, this is Mother's Day, so I thought I'd share some figures about mothers. Maybe that's in part due to the, maybe the imbalance of how mothers tend to be expected to just bear the load of parenting in the home. That may not be the home you grew up with or what's culturally expected for us today, but by and large, that seems to be the default when. And that's also true of the global cultures. The Pew Research study found that mothers

tend to say they do more than their spouse or partner, while fathers tend to say they share responsibilities about equally. There's a misconception of the sharing of the load. 78% of moms say they do more when it comes to their children's scheduling activities. 54% of dads agree, mom does more. 65% of moms say they help more with homework, but 62% of dads say they share it equally or do more. 57% of moms say they do more for basic needs, bathing, feeding, changing. 65% of dads say they share it equally or do more than mom. Again, probably a misconception here, maybe this is more confession than fact for me about what goes on in my own home. But no wonder if you're a mom here, no wonder you're tired and stressed out all or most of the time.

Maybe you think back on your own parenting if your kids are older and grown up, and you think about how tiring it was, and many of you have lamented with me over my exhaustion as a parent. Maybe you're a young parent or want to be a parent, or you're a young adult thinking about parenting, and just the whole idea of parenting just confuses you, scares you, There's a quote in the famous book, "All the Lights We Cannot See" by Anthony Doar, one of my favorite quotes in a fiction story. He's talking about a single dad parenting his daughter, and this is what Anthony Doar writes. He says, "There's always been a sliver of panic in him, deeply buried when it comes to his daughter. A fear that he is no good as a father, that he's doing everything wrong, that he never quite understood the All those Parisian mothers pushing buggies through the Jardin de Planté, or holding up cardigans in department stores. It seemed to him that those women nodded to each other as they passed, as though each possessed some secret knowledge that he did not.

How do you ever know for certain that you're doing the right thing?" It's a question many of us may think about with parenting. How do we know we're doing the Especially with the weight of parenting today, how can we just not screw up our kids might be the question. And when it comes to this topic of parenting that I'm preaching on, I have to say it's on the one hand a very easy topic for me to preach on because I'm in the thick of it. But also it's a very hard one because I see my own failures as a parent every And so as we approach this question, how do we parent, what does Proverbs have to say about parenting? And I think with Proverbs it gives us a parenting style, if you will, that I'm just going to coin here as wise parenting. All these other styles of parenting, but I think Proverbs gives us this parenting style of wise parenting. So again, if you are a parent, I hope that this will maybe not be new, but just further ingrain and give you insight that the Proverbs teach us about our own parenting. But if you're not a parent, I hope you would still not just check out, but find some relevancy for you in this. Even if you're a parent or maybe you feel your kids are grown up and it's too late, I think some of these principles can still apply with adult children. Maybe you even have a grandparents role to play in your future, whether literally or even spiritually, to be a spiritual grandparent here in our church.

Maybe you're a single person and you want to store up some parenting principles for in the future if you hope to have kids. Maybe you're a single person and you don't have kids and maybe you never will, but I hope you would even see that as the church is called to be the new family of God, that you would liken yourself to at least what we call in Asian culture and Asian church, the aunties and uncles to all of our kids in this church. I don't know if any of you who grew up in the Asian circle have Korean and it's just funny how you always find out there are aunties or uncles that you realize are not actually your aunties and uncles when you get older. They're just close family, friends or church members. And I think that's the heart behind parenting in the Proverbs is that we are a collective family of God. And hopefully you would see by the end of this that even if you don't have kids, you still have a role to play in supporting our parents and families and even being that village, so to speak, to come alongside and parent our kids and help encourage and support them. So what is wise parenting? We're going to talk about this topic of wise parenting in three parts. What is wise parenting? How can we be wise parents? And then last, why should we do wise parenting? So let's first look at the what.

What is wise parenting? All these parenting styles give us these varying degrees of philosophies, but I think there's one philosophy that the Proverbs emulates or portrays for us above all. And it's that wise parenting devotes children to the Lord. Wise parenting devotes children to the Lord. We see this in maybe one of the most often quoted Proverbs about parenting in Proverbs 22 verse 6. It's when I even was talking to the church member this morning and was quoted in our conversation about mothers. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old, he will not depart from it." You may have heard this and thought, well, that's a great sentiment. But what if I tried to train my kid up in the way of the Lord and he or she do depart from it? This Proverbs has often been taken as somewhat of a promise, but the Proverbs, they don't give us promises as much as principles for wisdom. And I think this proverb is meant to be a principle, not a promise that bears weight and burden on us so that if our children depart from the faith, or maybe you're an adult parent and your kids have departed from the faith, I hope you would not feel a sense of failure

as if you did not train up your child in the Lord well. This was meant to be a principle in that the seeds of faith that are planted in children when they're young give them a path to follow that are harder to depart from, not necessarily impossible to depart from, but harder to depart from. I think it's a principle that we see even when it comes to evangelism and reaching youth and young adults and young singles today. Many young people that come to the faith, they're not coming to the faith new, they often come to the faith or come back to the faith. As they had seeds of faith planted when they were young, it's incredible to me how many people I've met, even in our own city that have come to our church or even come to Christ, saying that they either grew up in church or maybe even like myself had a grandparent that taught them the way of faith that planted a seed like my grandmothers did when I was a young child, even though I didn't come to faith until I was 13 years old. And so even if you have an older child, I just want to encourage you that God can and probably still is writing their story.

Even if you have older children that have walked away from the faith, it's never too late for God to bring them back to the path of life with Christ. But also this is a principle because of the way we can look at this word train. The word train is most often used as dedicate specifically of when the temple was dedicated to the Lord. And so I've used this term devotes because I think what Solomon is saying is that children are like vessels of the Lord. And when we dedicate them to God, when we devote them over to the God and the things of God and His path and His person, then there's a high chance that they will come to know and walk with Him well into their adult years.

So what is this devotion? What is a wise parenting say about this devoting kids to the Lord? Well, I think in our passage Solomon tells us that devoting kids to the Lord, it's a matter of both spiritual and practical instruction. We dedicate or devote our kids to the Lord spiritually and practically. You know, when we think about previous eras of parenting, many of us grew up with probably highly behavior driven parenting or a legalistic parenting where our parents really just wanted us to obey them and do the right things. Maybe you grew up even in a church, kids ministry or youth ministry where it was all about the right behaviors, the right beliefs even. And if you just did the right things, then you would be saved and be a Christian. And I think this is where some of the good of modern parenting comes because there's a correction on this overly practical parenting. I think a lot of modern parenting has realized that legalism will not produce good kids. There's a huge movement, especially in the gentle parenting movement, to focus not just on the kids' behaviors, but what's going on in the hearts.

I mean, it's funny with my own kids, especially at the dinner table, there's so many times where I look at my kids and say, "Man, my mom and dad would not care how I felt about my chicken nuggets this morning. They would say, "Eat it or starve or smack me if I didn't." But I think that's a good movement. It's a good correction because the Proverbs tells us that before caring about our behaviors, God is after our hearts. Proverbs gives us this model of parenting that's concerned with the heart of the child. There are four times throughout our passage where Solomon talks about the heart. They're on your screen in verse 12, "Apply your heart to instruction." Verse 15, "My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. Direct your heart in the way. My son, give me your heart." See, Solomon was realized that dedicating kids to the Lord is not first about right behaviors, but about a heart devoted to the Lord. So in our wise parenting, our goal, our aim is to help our kids to dedicate their hearts to the Lord, to embrace the beauty of God with their hearts. And that's not something that just rules and regulations can instill in a child.

I think about maybe a metaphor for parenting kind of like this. I think showing kids the beauty of who God is and embracing it with their hearts, it's kind of like learning a language. Does anyone go in learning a language really excited about the rules of grammar? Do you see the beauty of a language by loving syntax and semantics? I mean, maybe if you're David Bush, but he's not here to argue for that. If you guys know David, Pastor David, he loves languages, but I didn't love language. I didn't love English when I was a kid. I always got C's in English because I didn't understand grammar and syntax and semantics. See, how do we see the beauty of a language? It's when we see its purpose. When we see language as a means of communicating with people that maybe we couldn't communicate with before in a different language. We see the beauty of language when we see how it can communicate beauty with prose and poetry and fiction and arts. See, language is beautiful, but you don't learn the beauty of a language by just getting in the nitty-gritty details of following the rules. And that's, I think, what parenting is kind of like. We want to show our kids the beauty of who God is.

We can't start with the rules. On the flip side of that, though, rules and behaviors do matter. That's something that I think the Proverbs recognize. We need rules and behaviors because our hearts won't always want what God wants for us. That's something that we recognize as adults, but especially as children. We don't always want what's good and beautiful because our hearts can be deceitful and be drawn towards sin in something else. And I think this is one of the shortcomings of modern parenting. See, because if all we're told to do is focus on a kid's heart, well, there's going to be times my kids are not going to want to eat their peas, but I know they need to eat them. There's going to be times my kids are not going to want to follow the rules. And even if their heart's against it, they still need to follow the rules, even if they can't see it's good and beautiful just then. Again, very similar to language, especially early on when you're learning a new language, you kind of need to know the rules of grammar. You need to know and follow the rules of language. You can't rush to see the beauty of communication poetry before you understand the basic simple rules of language. And so I think that's true of parenting. There's oftentimes we need to teach our kids the rules just because that's what's good and true and beautiful for them, even if they can't see it. And again, Proverbs reveals this. Not only does Proverbs look at the heart, but Solomon mentions all these different body parts and senses of how children are to be instructed.

In verse 12, he mentions the ear. Verse 16, he mentions lips. Verse 19, he says to hear. And verse 26, with the eyes. I think Solomon gives us this picture of why he's parenting that's very balanced in that God is after our hearts, but even when our hearts are far from him, we still need to follow the rules. Now, let me speak a little bit to children and youth in here because I know a sermon about parenting, you may think this has nothing to apply to me. If you're a kid in this room, I think one of the purely practical instructions for you is that God has given you parents to teach you the rules and help you follow them. I know that's not really cool to hear, but that's for your good. You may think your parents are just old fashioned or just old, but they want what's best for you. They care about you enough to instruct you in the rules. Even if you don't like them, can I encourage you to trust that your parents' rules are still for your good, even if you don't agree? You know, it's funny, my older daughter is six, and one of her favorite things to say right now is, "Daddy, stop. You already said that." You can already feel the naggingness, and sometimes I realize, "Oh, you're right. I did already say that. Oh, man, I'm turning into a nagging parent." But you know what? One of my favorite things to say back to her when she says that? Well, it's for your good. Mommy and daddy want what's best for you, and so your job is to listen. I think about Joey and Fred, "Listen, if you like friends." See, our job as parents, your job as kids is to hear the instruction of the Lord, and for us as parents to impart that to our kids so that even when their hearts don't believe or see God's beauty and goodness, that we're devoting them to a path that eventually leads there. We care about the heart and the behavior. So I think that's generally what Solomon tells us what wise parenting. Now let's get into the how.

How does Solomon tell us to be wise parents? I think there's three simple principles. First, wise parents prioritize spiritual matters. They prioritize spiritual matters. Let's look again at verse 19, chapter 23. Solomon says, "Here, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags." What is Solomon saying here? He gives these two groups of people, the drunkards and the gluttons, those that were indulging in their vices of drinking and eating. And I think maybe on a very basic level, Solomon's giving a practical instruction that as we instruct kids, we want to instruct them again practically to not throw their life away to indulging in sins and vices. To realize that a life lived in just pure indulgence in the world will lead to destruction. Probably some of the parents would love to hang over their kids and say, "Yeah, work hard, get good grades, don't be lazy, don't run off into the vices of the world."

But I don't think this is also an instruction for Solomon to say to then go and be ultra successful and rich. So he mentions poverty and rags. I don't think Solomon's saying actually to then go and work hard and gain riches and wealth. Because the goal of the Proverbs is never earthly riches or success. As much as we may want our kids to succeed in the world, Solomon's goal and the goal of the Proverbs is not to be after earthly success. It's not to indulge in sins that destroy life, but neither is it to indulge in sins that seem to succeed in life or to bring earthly success. Because if you even think about in his metaphor, who are the ones that are gluttonous in the drunkards? Who are the ones that can get drunk off wine and meat? Well, it wasn't the poor, it was the rich. Solomon's also warning against incredible wealth. Solomon's warning that our goal and our parenting is not to lead our kids into incredible success or safety or even comfort. The goal of Proverbs is not the treasure of the world, but the treasure of wisdom. Just a few verses later in verse 23, he says, "By truth and do not sell it." "By wisdom, instruction, and understanding." Throughout this passage, Solomon's goal as a father is to instruct his child, his children, to walk a path that leads not to destruction or shame or death, but a path that

leads to life. And so I think he's using the drunkard and the glutton or poverty and rags as a physical metaphor to illustrate the Much like we saw earlier how there was the physical metaphor of adultery for spiritual sin and temptation, I think we see this physical metaphor of poverty as a metaphor for spiritual poverty. See, the goal for Solomon, the opposite of poverty is not prosperity, and the opposite of rags are not riches. Poverty and rags are this metaphor for the destruction of life. And what is the opposite of a path that leads to destruction for Solomon? It's wisdom and fear of the Lord. And it's this fear of the Lord that Solomon wants to instruct his children in to find their hope in. Not in this future hope of earthly success, but hope that's found in wisdom and fear of the Lord. Look at verse 17 and 18. See, why is parenting? It prioritizes spiritual matters by prioritizing our kids' heavenly future over their earthly tomorrows.

It's really easy as a parent to feel the temptation that we need to do everything we can to secure the tomorrow for our kids, to enroll our kids in all the best schools and coaching programs. To build their resume from the age of five so that they can get into the best colleges. To spend as much money on the best extracurriculars so they can build up the most amount of talents and skills. But as much as those can be good things if that's all we're focusing on or that's our priority as parents, we're giving our kids a hope that's not of the future but of tomorrow. We're giving our kids a future hope that's merely just residing in the temporal and the temporary. See, why is parenting? It realizes the far greater priority of forever, the hope of forever. Because what good is securing an earthly future for our kids if they don't have an eternal future? What good is it to help our kids gain the whole world as Jesus says but lose their soul? And to gain Christ as Jesus often shows us especially in the Beatitudes often means not gaining the world but losing it. It means inviting not earthly success but actually earthly poverty so that we can gain richness in Christ. That's a hard call to wrestle with as a parent. I can be honest, I don't want poverty for my kids. But if we're to really be honest and ask ourselves the question, would we take physical poverty so they could have spiritual riches? Isn't that far better? When we fear the Lord all the day as Solomon says, we do have a hope for the future. We do have a hope that leads us beyond just tomorrow. That's a hope for us but also when we can impart to our kids.

And that also means, which I think our second point that Solomon gives us is if we're to prioritize spiritual matters in our kids, wise parents are to prioritize spiritual matters in our own hearts. Wise parents are to set a spiritual example. Verse 26, Solomon goes on, he says, "My son, give me your hearts and let your eyes observe my ways." Solomon recognizes that as much as he can tell everything to his kids, he wants his kids to learn by watching his life. That's a far better principle than saying, "Obey me." Why? Because I said so. See kids, that's something maybe you can turn on your parents. I don't want to give you too much ammo but if your parents ever say that, you can say, "Well, let me see your life and then I'll follow and obey." Solomon recognizes his life was a living embodied example of being trained up in the Lord, of being dedicated, devoted to the Lord. Elsewhere in Proverbs chapter 20, Solomon says, I think it's on the screen, "The righteous who walks in his integrity, blessed are his children after him." See what Solomon is saying in Proverbs 20 is that blessing comes to our children through our integrity, through our righteousness in walking with God.

Makes me think about the 17th century Scottish preacher Robert Murray and Ms. Shane. One of the things he used to say is, "The best thing I can give to my people as a pastor is my personal holiness." And I'd argue the same thing goes for parenting. The best thing we can give to our children as parents is our personal holiness. Again, I think this is where there's a lot of good in modern parenting. I've come to find that modern parenting styles say that parenting is as much about parenting my own heart and emotions as it is about parenting my kids. So that when I'm getting angry, instead of just lashing out at them, I recognize what's going on in my own hearts. Or to use a phrase that my wife and I use in the home, we say we're emotionally compromised. There's a focus that Solomon gives us that parents are to recognize that it's in our own following of Jesus in emotional spiritual health, in earnest and sincerity, in integrity and righteousness, that we will bring the greatest blessing to our kids. Because I can tell you honestly, when I am not pursuing Christ personally in a spiritually and emotionally healthy way, the first way it's revealed, even as a pastor, is not on you, our congregation. It's not even on my wife in my marriage. It's often on my kids as a parent. See, that's where the clearest shortcomings come in my own spirituality. So setting a spiritual example, it includes spiritual activity, but I think it's more. It's not just about spiritual activity, although we are to model spiritual disciplines and church attendance and serving in the church, but far more than that, it happens in these small ordinary moments in the home, where kids get to see what following Jesus looks like when you wake up at 6.30 and you're tired, when you're irritated because everything's going the wrong way, when you're simply just faithfully making a meal. What does it look like to honor Christ in our hearts in those small moments? You know, one of the number one reasons why children and youth and young adults are walking

away from the faith, one of the number one reasons young people are walking away from the faith is because the spiritual beliefs of their parents do not match their spiritual lives at home.

One of the greatest ways we can pass on the faith to the next generation is by modeling a spirituality that cares deeply about Jesus and following Him, and how the gospel is applied to every area of our life. This famous altruism we say in youth ministry, but especially in discipleship ministry, is that discipleship is caught more than taught. It's caught when we observe it in people's lives more than it's taught to them the principles of it. It's actually something that the sociologist and psychologist, Christian Smith, noticed. He did this vast study called "Handing Down the Faith" on what are the main key ingredients to kids staying in the faith as they grow up under religious homes. All religions, not just Christians. He says this, he says, "What makes every other influence pale in a virtual insignificance in the importance or not of the religious beliefs and practices of American parents in their ordinary lives, not only on holy days, but every day throughout weeks and years." What Christian Smith is saying is that the most important tool we have in passing on the faith is how our faith matters in our ordinary lives. Not just on a Sunday, not just when we go to community group or Bible study, but in every single day modeling it in our lives.

We set a spiritual example when we pursue wisdom and righteousness. Solomon continues in verse 27, says, "My son, give me your heart, let me observe your ways. For a prostitute is a deep pit, an adulterous is a narrow well. She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind." Now on the one hand, I think Solomon could be saying that he has avoided temptation into adultery. He's avoided giving into sexual sin and temptation. But again, as we learned, what Pastor Vance showed us in Proverbs chapter 7 and 8, that adultery and the adulterous often is a metaphor for spiritual temptation, not just the physical act of sexual sin. So I think on another level, what Solomon is saying is that he has avoided this, what he says, the deep pit or narrow well of the ensnaring and enslaving ways of He's run from sin to pursue Christ and his righteousness and wisdom. So I think one of the main ways we set an example, a spiritual example in the home, even if you are here in the church, one of the ways you can set a spiritual example to our next generation is by fighting sin and pursuing Christ. It's by showing them that Jesus is worth embracing our hearts, is beautiful because we want him more than sin.

But I think there's another side here because we're not going to be perfect, right? We're never going to be perfect at this as parents. There are plenty of times I give in to sin, probably most often at the dinner table. In those moments, how do you set a spiritual example and model spirituality of wisdom and righteousness when you fail and fall into sin? I think it's by modeling repentance. One of the hardest and yet most central points of our faith of any Christian is to come to Christ in repentance over our sin, to confess in repenting knowledge we are sinful. And I think the Bible gives us plenty of evidence that we're also to do that to each other. So I think one of these ways that we can model, we can be a spiritual example is by modeling repentance and even just think, who is it you need to repent to most in your life? You know, when I was a younger man, I used to think it'd probably be my spouse because they're the person you're with 24 seven.

But as I got older, and especially as I became a parent, you know who I've found that I've had to repent to the most of my life? It's my first born daughter. Because all of my failures as a parent, all of my parenting experimentation, it's she's born the brunt of it. It's come out upon her. She's the one that's seen probably more than anyone in my home in her short six years of her life, daddy's sin. See, it's upon our kids that often we need to come in repentance. And it's in that posture, I think of weakness, that we demonstrate the strength of Christ, that even in our weakness, Jesus is strong. There's a temptation for parents to be strong for your kids all the time, to try to be the perfect parents. You know what, we're not supposed to be the strong perfect parents all the time. If we could be, if I could be the perfect dad, my daughter would not see the need for a perfect Heavenly Father. If I was strong for her all the time, she wouldn't need, she wouldn't have a need for a stronger Heavenly Father in her life.

See, in our imperfections, in our failures, even when we draw near to our kids and repentance, we get to model them the most beautiful truth of all, that Jesus is strong when we are weak, that Jesus covers all of our sin and weakness, that Jesus is the perfect Holy One, and we are unholy and imperfect. So it's Him we need to run to. Model that early on. Wise parents set a spiritual example. And third, wise parents, they're also to discipline children in the Lord. Discipline children in the Lord. Verse 13, Solomon goes You know, more than any other parenting principle in the Proverbs, discipline is the most often mentioned one. Of any parenting principle in all the Proverbs, discipline is mentioned 10 times.

The next closest one after that is the instruction to listen to your father's instruction. That happens about nine times. See, there's something that Solomon and the Proverbs recognize that is good and right about correction and discipline. And I think it's unfortunately something that's in our modern society we've kind of lost. We've tended to lose the importance of discipline. But the Proverbs show us that wisdom is actually gained through discipline and correction. Tremper Longman, he's an Old Testament scholar, in his commentary on the Proverbs, he says this about correction. The wise want to be corrected no matter what the cost. The alternative would be to live in ignorance and perpetuate wrong behavior and mistaken beliefs. I think that's a good word for us to hear in our modern parenting and modern cultural age because we live in an age where no one wants to be told they're wrong. We live in a culture that tells every individual, especially children, that their innate desires are right.

This actually stems from all the way back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century philosophy that human nature is innately good and it's bad parenting, bad people and bad circumstances that corrupts the human being. And I think that's probably why our modern parenting styles have gone so far into the side of letting kids be free and independent and explored because ultimately our culture believes kids are inherently good. It's something that's I think also illustrated in a maybe not so philosophical book by Suzanne Collins called *The Ballad of Songbird and Snakes*. Yes, I read young adult fiction too. This is one of the *Hunger Game* And in this novel, Suzanne Collins writes, "People aren't so bad, really." This is one of the main characters. "It's what the world does to them. I think there's a natural goodness built into human beings. You know when you've stepped across the line into evil and it's your life's challenge to try and stay on the right side of that line." That's very reminiscent of what I think our culture believes about innate goodness of humanity and especially children. Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* is essentially the *Lord of the Flies* but with a good twist. That if kids can be directed towards a good path in a good society with good influences, kids will lead us into a future utopian future.

But what does the Bible say about the heart? What does the Bible say about the inerrant goodness or evilness of humanity? I think the Bible gives us actually a very different and maybe a more honest picture. Chapter 22 of Proverbs verse 15, Solomon says, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him." Now, let's not celebrate this too much, but it's something I've noticed. We didn't have to teach our kids how to lie. That's something I've always heard parents say to me and I was like, "Well, you know, they probably saw you lying in the home, so you should give yourself a little bit more credit." But I remember the first time we caught my daughter lying and I remember thinking, "My goodness, where did this four-year-old learn to lie to cover up her shame and it was just this innate nature that she had done something wrong and the goal was to cover it up. See, we don't have to teach kids folly. It's something that will happen. That's something true of the Proverbs all throughout in the Proverbs. And so discipline is a necessary means of sending our kids out in the world, not unfettered with no limits or boundaries, but with proper and good boundaries. To send our kids out in the world without discipline is to send them into a world to fail.

Now, again, to speak to children and youth, I know this is not a popular topic. I know you don't like discipline and correction. But what Proverbs also tells us is that discipline and correction, they're done in the context of love. See, discipline, the rod, physical correction is not an excuse for abuse. It's actually done in the context of love. In chapter 13, verse 24, Solomon tells us in this verse, "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Another place in Proverbs chapter 3, Solomon tells us, "The Lord loves him whom he loves as a father, the son in whom he delights." See, Solomon recognizes that even God disciplines his children whom he loves. And so it's the same for our kids. Correction is loving. Correction is for our good, but the focus is on the heart behind it, of a heart of love, to show kids the path that leads to life, not to destruction. Regardless of how you approach discipline, this is not me advocating for spanking your kids or whatnot, but discipline is necessary. So regardless of how we approach it, discipline is a necessary, loving part of wise parenting to lead our kids on the path that leads to life and not destruction.

Finally, why should we do wise parenting? What's the whole purpose in it all? Why take all this work that Solomon gives to us of focusing on the heart and behaviors, of prioritizing spiritual matters, setting an example, doing discipline. Why do we do wise parenting? Well, it's because what Solomon tells us, wise parenting is our legacy. It's our greatest legacy. Verse 24, Solomon says, "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice. He who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother definitely be glad. Let her who bore you rejoice." Solomon recognizes that perhaps the greatest glory and joy of a parent, maybe any person, is to see their children be devoted and raised up to walk in the ways of the Lord. The greatest crown of glory, the way Paul says in Thessalonians, is when we see our children walking in the ways of the Lord. That's our greatest legacy.

That's something that even modern secular parenting recognizes. To go back to that Pew Research survey, they found that 88% of moms said that parenting was the most important or one of the most important aspects of their lives. And they found it both enjoyable and rewarding. I think most of us recognize that parenting is a high calling because of just how important it is. Now, again, there's a great reward and joy in that, but there's a lot of fear in that too. Because what if you get it wrong? What if you fail in parenting? What if you are not so loving and patient with your kids? How often do we not get parenting rights? And there's not a pride in our parenting, but shame. How often do we fail to care about our kids' hearts and instead all we want is their behavior for them to listen to us and do what we want? How often do we fail in our own spiritual priorities and pursuits and just want earthly success for our kids? How often do we fail to discipline even out of love, but only out of frustration? In those moments, there's a lot of shame that comes with parenting, I think.

More and more, my wife and I, as we parent, we realize that there's a great calling. There's a great weight and burden with parenting. I've seen more and more studies revealing coming out that all of the mental health and emotional scars people tend to deal with probably stem from the first five years of their life. And so my wife and I have this saying in the home where we kind of joke and we say, "Well, there's another thing our kid's going to need therapy for." We yelled at her at the dinner table. She's probably going to talk with her therapist about that in 20 years. See, it's exhausting. It's burdensome. It's scary. This is, again, something that I think is illustrated. To go back to that Anthony Dorr "All the Lights We Cannot See" book, I love how he ends the quote. Right after we said, "How do we know we're doing something right?" He says this. He says, "There is pride too, pride that he's done it alone, that his daughter is so curious, so There's the humility of being a father to someone so powerful as if he were only a narrow conduit for another greater thing." That's how it feels right now. He thinks kneeling beside her, rinsing her hair, as though his love for his daughter will outstrip the limits of his body. The walls could fall away, even the whole city, and the brightness of that feeling would not wane.

You know, there's a love that I think parents have that gets us pretty far in our parenting. All parents acknowledge that it's out of intense love for our kids that leads us to want what's best for them. But again, I think our love is limited. Our love has imperfections. Our love will not get our kids as far as they need to go, because we are limited and finite. I do think like Anthony Dorris says, "Parenting is a conduit for something greater, but it's not our own love for our kids or our kids' greatness in the world. Our parenting is a conduit for the love of God over his children." See, in our parenting, we get to demonstrate something about who God is to our kids. Again, as imperfect and as much as we fail at that, when we love caring about their hearts and their behaviors, we show that there's a God that wants their hearts but also has a holy good and true life for them. When we parent our kids and even discipline them out of love and correction, we show them there's a God that wants to show them a better way to live according to his design. And even when we fail in sin against our kids, we show them there's a God that will never fail in sin against them, who will perfectly move towards them in love. You know, what's our greatest legacy? Our greatest legacy is that we would pass on the faith to the next generation, as Christian Smith says.

But I think that's a legacy that's not just for parents. I think that's a legacy that's for the whole church. What's the greatest legacy of our church for FirstSF? It's not that this building has been here 100 some odd years. It's not that the church has been around 175 years. It's not our ministries or teaching or events or programs. What's our greatest legacy? It's that for the last 175 years, the gospel has been passed down from generation to generation to generation to generation. And God willing will be continue to be passed down from generation to generation to generation for the next God willing 175 years. That's your greatest legacy, First Baptist, that we have been a pillar for the gospel here, both in what we teach and preach and disciple and say, but especially in how we've seen families come to faith. Some of you are living examples of that, of a generation that faithfully followed Christ and pass it on to you. So that's our legacy as a church. That's our reward. That's our rejoicing, as Solomon says, when we get to see the next generation, our youth and children in this room, faithfully choosing to say yes to Jesus and no to the world long after their teen years. What a great joy we can have as a church to pass on the faith.

So let me just give a special word to parents. Thank you for caring about the gospel and the lives of our kids. Thank you for raising up your kids in the fear of the Lord. But also, even if you're not a parent, thank you for being at a church that cares about that and supporting that vision. Thank you to our youth and children volunteers for caring about that, to



serve in our children youth ministries. Thank you to all the aunties and uncles for my kids, who they can look to, spiritual examples. But also, thank you to the mothers, who we celebrate this Mother's Day. Thank you to the moms that faithfully try to pass on the faith, even when you feel you may be alone in that. Thank you to the moms, no matter how imperfect you may feel, how much you may fail your kids, you are a conduit for something greater, something beyond yourselves. Something that God is doing, using your successes as a parent, but redeeming all of your failures for the purpose of His glory in your life and in the next generation. Let's pray together.