



## The Wise Family

Proverbs 3:11-12; 11:29; 13:22; 14:26; 15:20; 18:22; 20:20; 22:6, 15; 23:22; 29:15, 17; 31:10-11, 28-31

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We turn today to examine in the Proverbs the wisdom of God in relation to the family. In both explicit references and implicit references, no place in all of Scripture has more to say about the Christian family than the book of Proverbs. And to be honest, I knew today, as summer comes to an end, would be one of the days of the year when our students are back, and we have a lot of visiting students. And so I struggled, I wondered: here are our students, seemingly stepping out finally from the shadow of their family and not subject in the same way to their parents, not yet parents, not yet married, what wisdom is here for all of us? Is this wisdom in Proverbs unjust meant to be stored away for when we need it? But when I prayed and sought God, it became clear I was mistrusting the authority and sufficiency of his word for his people. A treatment of Proverbs that ignores the instruction of the family is incomplete. And God's Word, being a revelation of his very nature, is not confined to a specific stage of life. Wisdom is for all. So today, the table is set for all: single, married, parent, grandparent, child, empty nester. Let me quickly give you four reasons we all should care about the wisdom of the family.

**1. Everyone is shaped by family.** Everyone has a family, even if they're not your natural family, everyone is raised. You may deny it, but your most formative years are shaped by your family influence. This means you have baggage, good and bad, associated with your family, that you can never simply bury. Your family is part of you: is it not then appropriate to seek God's wisdom as to how the family is meant to function? To do so will allow you to rejoice and mourn for the past and hope for the future.

**2. Families are fragile structures.** We should care, because we need it. None of us have perfect families, and none of us are perfect fathers, mothers, daughters, or sons. Kingdoms rise and fall on the backs of family dynamics. And history shows us that families are often more fragile than they are strong. In other words: it's easier to not follow God's wisdom in family life than to follow God's wisdom.

**3. The church is a family.** You may be single, without children, or newly broken from your parents' disciplinary care, but if you are a follower of Christ, the life of the family has not left you, it has only taken on a new form. We have at Grace Church spiritual brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons. We are all members of one another, God's family—and each of us have gifts given



to serve and bless that family, including the gift of singleness. Seeking God's wisdom in family life will help your church family to flourish, and you along with them.

**4. God is our Father.** The church is a family, and God is the Father of all those in Christ by the Spirit. Every godly family and unified church is an imperfect picture of God's heavenly family which will one day be perfect with him. So if we want to know our heavenly Father, we need to know his plan for family. Understanding the wisdom of the Christian family is paramount for understanding the character and nature of God the Father.

So with that need in mind, let us consider the wisdom of God. What is a wise family? I will outline it very simply for you. According to the Proverbs of God, a wise family is marked in all it's interconnected relationships by three things: *Honor, Discipline, and Inheritance.*

## **The Wise Family Is Marked By Honor**

**15:20** A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother.

**20:20** If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.

**23:22** Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

The most important piece here is the negative word that comes up in several different ways in each of these Proverbs. You see it there in 15:20: *despise*, repeated in 23:22, do not *despise*. 20:20 has an even harsher word: *curse*. These instructions, as are the bulk of the Proverbs, are given to the child, so all of us can relate. Regardless of our age, we all have parents, even if those parents are gone and passed away in death. And so we have the path again before us of foolishness and wisdom. We can go one route, which is the route of despising our parents, hating them for how they treated us or didn't treat us, for all the ways they failed in raising us, for their disconnect with our struggles and our perspectives, for their narrow-mindedness or overprotectiveness, or even for their outright abusive wickedness. Our despising of them and their character leads to not only bitterness but cursing. Cursing a parent would be like saying: "I don't care about them anymore. I am better than them. I have transcended them. They are worthless to me now."

And this is one path to take. There comes a point in every child's life—some of you have gotten here but some of you haven't yet, usually it's in the early 20s after a few years of independence—when you realize just how messed up they are. You are no longer able to cover up their sin. And when you place such value on seeking their approval, on making them proud, all of a sudden that comes crashing down when you're old enough to really understand that they are not superheroes anymore, they are incredibly human. The question is: how will we respond when we come to see our parents for who they really are?



Despising them may seem liberating at the moment: a sudden jolt of independence and autonomy and confidence in self may result. The image in Proverbs 20:20 is actually one of a son who seeks his inheritance prematurely. He has realized his parents are not all he thought they were, and so now he wants to use them for his benefit. And he gains a quick reward, but the path he is leading on actually is not towards freedom and life, but towards death and destruction. He has sealed his fate. How? Simply by disregarding his parents as beneath him.

The wise family is not marked by this kind of despising and rejecting. Even in the midst of imperfection, even egregious imperfection, the wise son and daughter is not marked by a tearing down of their parents, but a building up. What is the opposite of despising and cursing? It's honor. God says to us: "honor your Father and mother, and it will go well with you in the land." This does not mean we always agree with our parents, it doesn't mean we cover up their flaws. It means that even if their flaws are incredibly hurtful, we recognize several realities and give them honor where it is due:

Honoring our parents is honoring God. We don't honor them because of their inherent worth, but because of their position set by God. God has used them in our life, and if we are his, it is for our good. Thank them for acting in that way, even if they often failed to do so. Seek out the ways in which they have taught you to follow the wisdom of God, and rejoice in that by modeling them.

Let's move on to another area of honor in the family: the honor that spouses give to one another.

**18:22** He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22 is not saying to us that the man who does not find a wife is not worth anything. No, both the value of a godly wife and the value of godly singles don't have to single themselves out. What it is saying is that if God has given you a Godly wife, you have received a magnificent blessing. God has given you unmerited, undeserved favor. Don't squash it. Husbands, give honor to your wife. This is expressed further in chapter 31:

**31:10-11** An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Proverbs 31 is famously a poem or song of praise for a Godly wife. It's purpose for us today is not to teach through the examples it provides for the wife, but to show the response of husband and children to the wife. A Godly wife is praised as being more precious than jewels, surpassing all other women. Now, you can look at proverbs 31 as a woman and be dismayed that you do not reach that standard, but remember that the Christian life is an ongoing sanctification process. A wife who has been bought with the blood of Christ and lives by the spirit is worthy of praise and



honor as she develops the characteristics of the woman of wisdom, regardless of where she is on that journey.

But why no proverb saying the same thing for husbands, aren't they also worthwhile? Well, yes, but I think the Biblical principle that is being expressed here is worth considering. The Christian household is shaped like the Gospel of Jesus Christ: In what this means is that both the husband and the wife honor one another and love one another and are equal to one another, but the way that that love and honor is expressed is often times in different ways. We see this in a passage like Ephesians 5. Here is the command for husbands, which is different from that of wives:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Do you see it? The husband is tasked with honoring his wife for her inherent loveliness in character, not just her outward Beauty although that is a piece, but that wisdom that she possesses that Purity that she has is praiseworthy, and it is the role of the husband, as it is a role of Christ, to cultivate wisdom in his wife and praise her often for it. This models Christ and his church. He honors us by cultivating in us as the bride-groom, a husbandry of wisdom and purity and beauty, which he then delights in outwardly.

So what does a wise family look like? It looks like a family of Honor. It looks like a family that gathers around the dinner table and he loves to shower blessing and praise on one another for the ways that God is working his grace in them. How do we be part of this family of autumn? We honor our parents as we honor God, we rejoice in our wives and rejoice in being the delight of our husbands, and we outdo one another in showing honor as the body of Christ. Jesus Christ himself has made us into an honorable, beautiful family. Let us throw aside slander and division and strife and honor God as a wise family.

## **The Wise Family Is Marked By Discipline**

Oh, we despise that word *discipline* don't we? It pulls us back. But notice here how the family is marked by discipline.

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

This may be one of the most quoted and misunderstood passages on parenting in Scripture. The principle is simple: if children are trained when they are young in the way of wisdom, they will gain a greater profit in the end when they are old. We all know how fast children learn at the early stages of life: this proverb is teaching us to take advantage of it. The word for *train up* is more like



*dedicate* or *consecrate*. It's a term used for a foundation, a start.. Dedicate your child to the way of wisdom, and he will not depart from it.

Of course, this is not guarantee of the infallibility of Christian education or something like that. Too many parents have to lament that they did everything they could to train their child up, but now they have left the faith. Sadly, that happens. The proverb is saying that your work though is not in vain. Whether you are a parent or a grandparent or an aunt or an uncle or you love the children of this church, your work is not in vain. Train children in wisdom, and it has a permanent effect. Whether they end up like you desire or not, they cannot reprogram themselves. The gospel seed you plant is only sprouted by God's grace, but it is planted and watered by you in the life of the child! Every Christian influence in the life of a child is worthwhile and significant.

And what is the marker of *consecration*, or *training up*? This is not osmosis, like you just bring them to church or you just think about God around them or something like that. No, training them in the way they should go is *instruction*. Think about how often that word is used in proverbs: instruction, teaching, training. Parents use *words* to train their children, they use ideas and imagination and every tool they have. Their job is to form, to teach. And this word for instruction is also translate as *discipline*. Discipline is not a dirty word: it is a holy word. When used rightly, discipline is instruction, it is teaching, it s forming wisdom. Our number one goal as a family of faith in regards to our children is to give them wisdom, to discipline them into the joy and the life of the wisdom of God. It is a learned skill, we must teach it. Again, consider these proverbs:

**22:15** Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

**29:15, 17** The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Don't be scared by the mention of the *rod* of discipline. The word "rod" here is used in many different ways in Scripture. The connotation is not just corporal punishment, although that is not outside of the scope. Rod simply means authority: it is a scepter, a symbol of authority. Discipline is teaching that comes from loving authority. Some kids may need the tactic of the physical rod, some kids just need the threat of it, and some kids simply need a stern look, but the common denominator is *authority*. We must show our children that God has placed us in authority over them for their good. And we back up that claim by our loving actions for their good. We teach with the rod of discipline not to get to external behavior, but look at these proverbs. Where is the folly? It's not in behavior: it's in the heart. Where is delight found when the child obeys? Not in his actual obedience, but in the heart of the one who disciplines.

So the goal of discipline, in whatever form you decide is best to take for you family, is not to correct behavior. That is a result, but the goal of discipline is to shepherd the child's heart towards the loving wisdom of God. It is to teach the child that God, as you model it, is a good Father, who provides loving discipline and training for our good. We all need to understand that we are under



authority, and we are not our own, but belong to God. And that is why God gives us parents who discipline.

Let me give you a few more practicals:

1. **If you are not a parent, you can be involved in the discipline of the family of God.** But it means you must be involved in the life of a family, and you must defer to that family. For instance, I am more than okay with you telling my son Judah that he should not hit another child. Does that mean I want you to spank him for it? No, you can leave that to me or my wife. But do I want this church family to teach Judah and instruct him in wisdom and discipline him in love? Yes, absolutely! We are all in this together. Parents, you can honor those without children in our congregation by helping you or to respond to them to get to know them, to honor them as adults. And those without children, please get to know our children ask them their name even if you're not sure they are old enough to respond volunteer to work with them teaching them the Bible in equipping our or in our pre-school Ministry get involved in a community group where you can know the children of the church and see them and their home.
2. **Discipline is not the only tool of instruction, but it is God's way of reinforcing instruction.** What I mean by this is that I do not want you to take away that you can only teach your child if you are disciplining him for something that they have done wrong. no instruction comes by gentle, kind firm and clear words and actions. But when instruction is not heeded or clearly disobeyed, and foolishness is chosen instead of wisdom, every child needs some sort of discipline that fits the moment which reinforces the instruction that they have already received. In this way discipline is instruction but it's also a reinforcement of previous and future instruction.
3. **Never discipline when you are angry or overcome with emotion.** Do not do it. Bring your anger to God, lament and be angry over the sin of the child, but do not discipline a child out of retribution or anger. This is not discipline or instruction at all and it is not wise and it will not help your children see the loving character of God.

Ultimately, in our discipline our prayer must be that we, as a family of God, live out our believe in the restorative discipline of God for us. We disciple well our children because we have learned how to accept discipline form God himself.

**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.

When you sin against your heavenly father, he is not apathetic. He does not stand by and do nothing. He disciplines those he loves. There are many times in your life where you will ask the question: "what is God doing?" This suffering I feel, this pain, this stage of life, can't it just stop? Can't I just grin and bear it and forget about it when it is over? No, the Christian understands and delights in the discipline of God because they know that it is a sign that they are a son or a daughter of God himself. Jesus Christ, the son of God, was disciplined by the father on our behalf.



Not because he was full of sin, but because we were full of sin. He learned obedience through what he suffered. In order to show us that he truly was the son of God, he endured the pain of our discipline, so we can say: truly this was the son of God, the one in whom the Father delights!

And so for us, discipline is a pillar of the family of faith. We all are being disciplined by our heavenly Father and his loving care, we are all growing in wisdom. And so we are growing into a family who trains one another and discipline our own children in wisdom to see Jesus and be called sons and daughters of God.

## **The Wise Family Is Marked By Their Legacy**

You want to know an interesting thing about family? Is that in every culture, in every age, all families have understood this: the line must be continued. And with the continuation of the family name and line comes family inheritance. We are continually reaping and sowing the fruit of what is not ours but what has been passed down to us. Although we live in an individualistic age, this is still true, for good or bad. What family line we are born into has the possibility of setting the trajectory for the course of our life. Look at **11:29**

**11:29** Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.

**13:22** A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.

There are two ways to receive an inheritance of wisdom, which is even more valuable than wealth. First, it can be given and passed down from a wise parent. That kind of inheritance goes beyond one generation, but even to children's children. Wisdom is a commodity that is passed down through generations. The wise family understands that their actions now and their faithfulness now is laying the inheritance of the next generation.

Secondly, if you are wise and you do not have a wise heritage, you can receive an inheritance from the foolish. In other words, there is only one kind of family that passes down true spiritual wealth that lasts: the wise one. A foolish family may pass down physical wealth, but that perishes fast. God will eventually redirect the wealth of the foolish into the plans of his kingdom. But none of goes to the foolish, Instead, they inherit "the wind" another word for "breath" or "vapor".

Everyone wants to leave something for the next generation, especially for their own children. We all want our lives to count, our legacy to last. How do we do it?

**14:26** In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.





Ah, there it is. Wisdom that begins with fear of the lord gives our children a refuge, a solid foundation. So what is a wise family? A wise family realizes that they are designed by God to pass on the torch to the next generation, and so they live their lives in such a way where what they pass on is everlasting.

So we come to the end of our time now and it's clear that they are three easy takeaways. There are some of us who need to go and apologize to our parents because we have not honored them as we should.

There may be some of us here who need to repent that we have failed to discipline our children as we should. We need to repent that we have failed to receive discipline as a child both from our parents in the past or even from God himself. We need to repent that we are too self-absorbed to be called into a place of teaching and instruction.

There are some of us who need to repent for our pride in seeing only what is before our eyes now and not investing in the future of the Kingdom to come. We need to repent because instead of placing our emphasis in our energy into making disciples to the next generation and the next generation and the next generation we have only provided for what makes us happy in the moment or it makes us satisfied in the present. And the conviction that we feel now for being a poor family member here on Earth and a poor spiritual family member to our brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and daughters and sons in Christ is very real. But we cannot leave this building simply with the weight of conviction. Because the book of Proverbs is not good steps for fools, it is good news for fools.

And so here is where the good news of Jesus Christ the crucified and risen son of God meets us this morning. Jesus Christ the son of God honored his father unto death. At the cross as he bled and died for our sake was the moment where he said to all who were watching "I am honoring my heavenly father above all else".. Jesus Christ honored his father to the uttermost so that those who fail to honor their physical earthly fathers and mothers and their Heavenly father can be found in him and his honor and his obedience can become theirs. Not only that but Jesus Christ at the cross and in his resurrection has so sanctified his people and brought his righteousness to them. It is now his job and his delight to stand before the father everyday now and to eternity and delight in his precious bride and honor them! The honor of Jesus Christ has become yours when you fail to honor and the honor that you do not deserve has been given to you as he has made you holy. So now you are free to honor those whom God has called you to honor and so on or your heavenly father in Christ.

For those who struggle to receive and give discipline when it is needed, we remember that the son of God learned obedience through what he suffered. Although he was perfect and without sin and without the need of discipline he took the discipline of the father for you. He took the very wrath of the father on himself for you so that you could know beyond a shadow of a doubt now that when your life is not going how you want it to go, when you experience suffering, you can know it is the discipline of God. As he disciplined his son, he is disciplining you in his son, and so you are called a





son and daughter of God . That frees you now to choose the wisdom of discipline for your children and to accept and love the discipline of God all because Jesus Christ was the son who learned obedience and said not my will be done father but yours.

Finally you may be weighed down with the burden this morning that you feel like you have not done enough or never will do enough to pass on the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation of Gods people. Your evangelism is not enough, your discipleship is not enough, your family teaching and training is not enough. But the reality of the Gospel is the inheritance laid aside for the saints and the legacy of God's kingdom and God's family is never up to you. When you become one with Christ by the Spirit, you are entered into a lineage full of saints from the beginning all the way to the end of time itself. And no one may remember your name, no one will remember your exploits, no one will remember your words. But your legacy is not bound up in what you do now to be remembered— your legacy is bound up in what God has already done. And so you are free to seek the reward of faithfulness in the life to come knowing that your reward is not just based on what you do or how many people remember you or what is written on your gravestone but your reward is based on the fact that you are part of the family of god. Your photo is in the family picture album of God and all the saints in all his church. And Christ has promised he will build his church, he will build his family, and not even the Gates of hell will stand against it. So who are you to think that you can stand against it, that your mistakes and failures can tarnish the family name and line? You are free to be a faithful disciple maker, to spend all your life and energy not for your own comfort now, but for the sake of God's kingdom into the future—knowing that your inheritance is secure in Christ God will not let you down.

Friends, it is a glorious thing to be called a child of God.

