



## First Baptist Church Fair Oaks Ranch

**Proverbs 4:1-6** “Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.”

This passage encapsulates the essence of paternal instruction and wisdom. Attributed to Solomon, from a historical and Jewish perspective, these verses offer a rich tapestry of insights into the role of a father in imparting wisdom and guiding his children. He speaks to his sons, urging them to listen to their father's instruction and gain understanding. It reflects a multi-generational transmission of wisdom, as Solomon himself received instruction from his father, David. The historical context underscores the continuity of wisdom and the importance of familial teaching in maintaining the covenantal relationship with God. The role of a godly father or father-figure in a child's life cannot be overstated. The presence or absence of a father in the home can significantly impact various aspects of a child's life. Consider the following statistics. According to research: children in fatherless homes are four times more likely to live below the poverty line compared to those in homes with both parents. They are twice as likely to drop out of school and are less likely to pursue higher education; whereas when a father is present and involved, they are 43% more likely to earn 'A's' in school. When fathers are not involved, children are more apt to exhibit antisocial and criminal behavior, have greater concentration of mental health disorders and depression, and significantly more likely to participate in substance abuse. If fathers are present, young girls are 75% less likely to have a teenage pregnancy, 50% less likely to have childhood obesity and young boys are 80% less likely to become incarcerated.

In a culture that downplays the role of fathers being necessary and impactful, it cannot be overemphasized regarding the importance of fathers. A father bears the burden of teaching and instruction in many ways. It is important to note that the goal of all instruction is that the child would take the lessons 'to heart'. In this same Proverbs a few verses later, the Psalmist reminds us to keep our heart with all vigilance because it is the well spring of life (v23). Therefore, all instruction is heart training first and foremost. First, the father should impart moral and ethical guidance. Proverbs 4 emphasizes the importance of wisdom and understanding, which are foundational to living a righteous life. This includes introducing them to the gospel message and helping them become aware of their sin and their need for a savior. Helping your children learn, understand and keep God's commandments puts them on the path to life and blessing. Second are practical life skills. Jewish Talmudic instruction required fathers to teach their sons a trade. Thirdly, fathers should take the lead in providing religious and spiritual instruction. In Jewish tradition, fathers are responsible for ensuring their children understand and observe religious practices. This includes teaching them to pray, observe the Sabbath, and follow dietary laws. For the New Testament Believer this would include training in reading the Bible, prayer and meditation. It is easy for fathers to get distracted chasing dreams and career goals; however, it is important that we never forget the impact you can have on a child's life when you make that a priority.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, it is an amazing privilege and honor to be a father. You have granted tremendous responsibility to men to be integral in the raising of the next generation. May we re-commit ourselves to raising our children in the discipline, instruction and wisdom of the Lord. In Jesus Name.