



Proverbs What is a Godly Family?

Summary: Parents and children should be a blessing to one another, but when children rebel against their parents' instruction loving discipline is required.

Here at The City Gates Church we usually go verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, through whole books of the Bible. We finished Matthew recently, and we begin our Study of Acts in September, but we're spending the summer looking at Psalms and Proverbs, two books of the Bible that don't flow easily verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter, so we're organizing them by theme.

A few weeks ago we looked at what the Bible says about being a godly man, and then we looked at the Proverbs 31 woman. Last week we looked at marriage, and now we ask: what happens when kids come along?

What does Proverbs tell us about the relationship between parents and children? What are their obligations to each other? And what do we do when things start to fall apart?

I'll give you a quick outline so you can see where we're going. The first thing we'll note is that parents have an obligation to instruct their children. That shouldn't be surprising if you remember much about Proverbs, the whole book is a collection of wisdom that a father is attempting to pass on to his son.

So, parents have an obligation to instruct, but (2) there is always a tendency on the part of children to resist and rebel, so (3) parents also need to discipline their children, but (4) the ultimate goal is that parents and children should be a blessing to each other. In other words, parents and children should make one another's lives better – which, has been a common theme lately – that we should be beneficial to the people closest to us.

We'll give some time to each of those points, but for now, please open your Bibles with me to Proverbs 4 and let's notice that **Parents should instruct their children**. King Solomon writes:

Proverbs 4:1 Hear, *my* children, the instruction of a father,
And give attention to know understanding;
2 For I give you good doctrine:
Do not forsake my law.

3 When I was my father's son,
Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,
4 He also taught me, and said to me:
"Let your heart retain my words;

Keep my commands, and live.

So dad is speaking to his kids and he says, 'listen to me, because I want to do you good. I want to tell you things that are good, and right, and true. I want to share things that will help you and not hurt you.' And, notice he says, 'I want to do this for you because my dad did it for me.'

And here's what my dad said:

5 Get wisdom! Get understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you;
Love her, and she will keep you.
7 Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding.
8 Exalt her, and she will promote you;
She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.
9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace;
A crown of glory she will deliver to you."

This is what Solomon's dad said to him, and now, he's trying to pass it on to his own kids.

10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings,
And the years of your life will be many.
11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in right paths.
12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered,
And when you run, you will not stumble.
13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go;
Keep her, for she is your life.

So, dad has been teaching things to his son for years. He says (vs 11) *I have taught you*, and *I have led you*. In other words, I have told you how to live with my mouth and I have shown you with my life. Now I am urging you, not just to hear what I've said, but to embrace it, to accept it, to receive it as your own.

Parents have an obligation to teach and to train their children, to have talks like this. Now, sometimes the kids don't appreciate that, they feel like they already get it, like you've said this before, or like mom and dad don't really understand what it's like to be a kid and they wish mom or dad would just stop talking. But notice who is supposed to benefit here: the child. This is all done for the sake of the child.

Solomon says I want to make sure you have the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding you'll need in life. I want to make sure you know, of all the paths you could go down, which

ones are right. I want to make sure that

**12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered,
And when you run, you will not stumble.**

Because I love you. And I want to see you do well. You can picture Solomon saying, 'Son, I really do have your best interest at heart. So, I want to tell you the things I have learned, the things other people told me, the things I wish I had known earlier. I want to make sure you have heard and seen everything you need to live a good life.' Solomon felt all of this toward his children, and it's how most parents feel today, even if it doesn't come across right. Kids, your parents love you.

Now, we have been emphasizing application in our study of Proverbs so, let me ask you mom, dad: do you have a list of the character traits, skills, and abilities or nuggets of wisdom and instruction that you want to teach your children? What are things that you want to make sure get passed on to the next generation?

Have you ever made a list? Have you ever sat down and thought, these are things people taught me, and here are the things I want to make sure I pass on? I think many of us have some ideas, but have you ever written them down? Remember, a dad sat down and wrote Proverbs for his kids. He took the time to put it in writing. And I want to encourage you to do the same thing.

You might not give them the actual list, but write out the things that really influenced you and what you hope your kids will know and experience. And then, keep coming back to the list, keep it fresh, and ask yourself, how am I going to do this? If I want them to know X or experience Y, when, where and how is that going to happen?

But when you make your list, remember, it's good teach your kids life skills, to give them experiences, but the most important thing you can give them is the knowledge of God. Before he got to anything else, Solomon pointed out:

**Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

Mom and dad have an important role to play in the spiritual life of their kids. Every time we do a baby dedication we give parents a plaque that reminds them of the great opportunity they have to shape their child's soul. It quotes from Deuteronomy 6:

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You

shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Mom, dad, you need to be intentional at times, you need to initiate, notice the parents of Israel are told: **teach [these things] diligently to your children** (vs 7).

But spiritual instruction, like all other instruction, should also be woven into the normal course of your life. The kids should see things modeled in daily life, and sometimes spiritual conversations and questions will just pop up on their own. That should be normal, natural, and expected. And parents, if your kids ask questions you're not 100% sure about, reach out to the pastors. We would love to help you find the answers.

But again, the big point is: parents have an obligation to pass on wisdom and instruction to their children. Teachers, coaches, Children's Ministry workers, and staff from the youth group are all great, but mom and dad have a very special, a very unique role to play – to shape and form the lives of their sons and daughters physically, emotionally, mentally, morally and spiritually.

Unfortunately, that doesn't always go well. Here's problem – no matter how much parents want to help their kids, no matter how well they try to teach them, **there is always a tendency to rebel because we think we know more, or we know better than the person in authority over us.**

There has always been a temptation for kids to reject the wisdom, the knowledge, the encouragement and instruction their parents offer, no matter how well meaning the parents are. And Proverbs talks about that:

Pro 13:1 A wise son *heeds* his father's instruction,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Pro 19:26 He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother
Is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.

Pro 28:7 Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son,
But a companion of gluttons shames his father.

Pro 30:17 The eye that mocks his father,
And scorns obedience to his mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.

So we see that young men and women, especially teenagers and young adults, have this choice to make – to receive the instruction of their parents, or to rebel, to go their own way, to listen to other voices that want to lead them. And if they do, it will be source of shame for the parents and eventually, a source of pain and sorrow for the youth.

So, **parents have an obligation to use discipline to guide their children.** Now, mom and dad, you're not always going to feel like it. It's not always going to be easy. But the fact of the matter is, the most loving thing you can do is: define boundaries for your kids, hold them, and reinforce them with discipline as necessary. Listen to:

Pro 29:17 Correct your son, and he will give you rest;
Yes, he will give delight to your soul.

Pro 19:18 Chasten your son while there is hope,
And do not set your heart on his destruction.

It is easy to just let things go as a parent. To say, it's not worth it, I'm tired, whatever, to just ignore the behavior and hope it goes away or, in your worst moments, to hope that the child will just go away. But that is not godly parenting, and that's the not the parent you really want to be in your better moments. That's not the attitude of a parent who really loves their son or daughter.

Mom and dad, if your kids are going to grow up and thrive you must establish boundaries, limits, and expectations, *and* you must enforce them.

If you let the kids go their own way it's just going to eat away at you and fill you with regret. Providing discipline and instruction will not be easy. It will be frustrating and tiring at times, but you *must* do it, for their good.

And that brings me to some controversial verses in Proverbs that some people have a hard time with today, verses about spanking. So let's read what they say and then talk about what they mean:

Pro 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Pro 23:13 Don't withhold discipline from a youth;
if you punish him with a rod, he will not die. (CSB)

Now, depending on your theories of child development, we might disagree on the pros and cons of spanking but we don't have time to go into that here. Instead, what I want to do is redirect your attention to the heart of the matter – these verses are not simply about how, when, or whether to spank a child. At their heart, they are about the value of discipline *in any form*. Again, you may disagree with the concept of spanking, but I simply want you to see the REASON these verses commend discipline to us. And that is: for the benefit of the child.

Discipline, in some form, is a necessary part of the parent child relationship but it should *always* be motivated by love, not anger, and its ultimate aim should *always* be the long-term good of the child.

Listen to the way this comes across in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul writes this instruction to Christians in Ephesus:

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 *“Honor your father and mother,”* which is the first commandment with promise: 3 *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*
4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Children have an obligation to obey their parents, but parents, and especially fathers as the ultimate disciplinarian in the home, have an obligation not to provoke their children.

Establish solid, clear, rules, boundaries and expectations and then keep them. Enforce them. Don't be unpredictable in what you will allow and not allow. That frustrates kids, they don't know what to expect because it all depends on what kind of mood mom or dad are in, or how tired they are, or who else is around.

And when you need to discipline, whatever form that takes, do it promptly, with the goal of improving your child, not simply venting your anger and frustration.

Parents, let me ask: is there a line of discipline that you've been wavering on and you need to hold? And, is your discipline of the correct tone, frequency, and severity?

You might need to go and have a conversation with your kids about discipline. You might need to ask forgiveness for being unpredictable, or being overly harsh, impulsive and reactionary. And, as your kids grow, you need to be open to having a conversation about when it's appropriate to shift and modify some of their boundaries.

Certain lines should move as they get older, but that's going to require thought and wisdom. Are you having conflict because it's time to shift, or do you need to hold the line? The answer depends on things like: what's the issue we're talking about, how old is the child, and what else is going on in your life and relationship.

But kids, and especially teens, let me ask you: are there areas where you are disobeying your parents? Are there areas where you need to repent? And, are there areas, where maybe you feel like you're right, but you're going about things the wrong way?

Are you honoring your mother and father? You might be right, it may be time, in some areas, to begin treating you more like an adult, to make some changes to the rules, but be patient with mom and dad as they come around to that realization.

Growing up is not a smooth transition, it's bumpy and turbulent, but let me encourage you with this: it's also irresistible. No matter how much they tell you to stop growing, you can't. You're becoming more and more and more of an adult each day. Your freedoms, your opportunities, and, don't forget, your responsibilities are coming – don't damage your relationships by reaching for them too forcefully, too frequently, or too early. Demonstrate your growing maturity by engaging mom and dad respectfully and patiently and sooner or later [it will go well for you](#).

Because I want us to see something else Proverbs makes very clear about the relationship between parents and children, and that is: (4) **they should be a blessing to one another**. Children benefit from the lives, the choices, decisions, and reputation of their parents. Look at:

Pr 17:6 Children's children *are* the crown of old men,
And the glory of children *is* their father.

Kids love to be able to brag about their parents and they get a sense of their own identity out of your reputation, accomplishments, and place in life. So mom and dad - be something to be proud of.

I'll never forget a retirement ceremony I was part of several years ago at the National Security Agency. The retiree was there with his wife and his teenage daughters, and another man got up to share some remarks. And he looked at the girls and he told them, 'I want to thank you girls for what you have done for our country because you gave up your dad so he could deploy to Iraq. I was with him on that trip. And I can't tell you exactly what we were doing; there are stories he'll never be able to share. But I want you to know this – it directly affected the security of the United States and the nation of Iraq. Girls, I'm telling you, your dad and I did some very, very, cool stuff.'

That has stuck with me for more than ten years because he honored their father and in the process he honored them, because he wanted the girls to understand they were daughters of someone who did important things. And the long term effect of that is, they see themselves differently. The glory of children is their father, or mother.

So let me ask: do your kids know their parent's highlight reel? Do they know things they can glory in?

Dad, have you told your kids all the great things their mom has done, when she was a little girl, or in her teens and twenties? Do they know the professional accomplishments she has achieved? Do they know about the acts of service and kindness she has done? Mom, have you told the kids all the reasons their dad is so great? Grandparents, have you told the grandkids all the things you are proud of their parent for?

And, how can you honor someone else to their children? Attending that promotion had a

profound affect on me. To this day, I will look for reasons to praise a parent to their kids. To say something like: “You know, your dad, or your mom, is really amazing at X.” Or, “your mom did an incredible job with_____.” Or, “do you know how cool the other adults think your dad is?” The glory of children is their father (and their mother); help kids see that.

But, children can also be a blessing to their parents. Look at:

Pro 23:24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who begets a wise *child* will delight in him.

Kids, you can bring incredible joy to your parents. When you excel, when you make good choices, when you live out the things they have tried so hard to teach you, they notice, they see, they remember, and they brag about you others.

Adults, do parents brag about the good things their kids have done? Do they **delight** in their kids? Do they **greatly rejoice**? Yes, of course they do. Kids, teens, young adults, you can be, and often are, a source of great pride and joy for your parents, *when* you choose wisdom and righteousness – which is not always easy.

The relationship between parents and kids is difficult, full of joy and sorrow. You make each other smile brighter and push buttons no one else knows exist. It’s an adventure and an agony. Parents have an obligation to teach, children often resist, and must be disciplined, but the goal is to be a blessing to one another – my friends, that’s not just a summary of parenting, it’s a summary of the gospel.

God, our Father, has an obligation to instruct us, and He does – He has given us His Word to teach and instruct us, He sent Jesus to show us and teach us how to live, but like rebellious and defiant children we resist at times, often insisting it’s because we know better or see things differently. And so, just like any parent, He is justified in disciplining us and that discipline can take many forms, but the most permanent is eternal punishment separated from Him in hell.

Yet, parents are supposed to be a blessing to their children, and God most certainly wants to be our greatest blessing, so He sent His Son Jesus to suffer the punishment we deserve on the cross. We did the wrong, but Jesus took the spanking. And now, for everyone who will receive it, forgiveness and reconciliation are available. And if you receive Christ, and live for Him, you become a source of joy and boasting for your Heavenly Father.

We’re going to celebrate all that Christ has done for us now by receiving communion. And as the men pass out the elements, I encourage you to take some time and reflect on the things we’ve shared. Where are the areas where you’ve blown it, where do you need to seek forgiveness, and what are the things you’re going to need to do differently? Ask God for guidance and for strength. But most of all, thank God for being such a great Father to us.

Let’s pray.