

VII. Parenting in Biblical Perspective  
*Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary*  
“The Four-Fold Paradigm of Parental Practice—#1: Wisdom”

Luke 2: 39, 52

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Prayer:

Father, guide us and direct us in this Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus who is wisdom for the Word has become flesh and in Him is all wisdom. The very mysteries we may never know we can know and will know in Him and we can give that wisdom away to others, most assuredly and most intentionally to our children. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

As I take on this challenge of talking about parenting in a way that communicates wisdom to our children, I was doing a little bit of thinking about it. Normally I would just lay something out and then give you some best practices at the end of the study but parents who I think take seriously this matter of giving wisdom to their children have best practices. Best practice number one is they get engaged in the lives of their children. Best practice number two is they make sure their children are exposed to Godly preaching and teaching. Best practice number three they will insist on family worship, in a regular time, in a regular way and in a way that these fathers and mothers can communicate wisdom to their children from God's Word. They will expose their children to good and glorious music, most assuredly the psalms and hymns of the faith to be sung plus those spiritually good songs that come out of every generation because it's amazing how much theology we learn by melody and harmony. They will also make sure their children are reading good literature along with their Bible. Best practices would also be reading together as a family, perhaps in the evening and work your way through a good book perhaps reading at least one chapter a night. Another best practice is that you take your children with you into your life and you constantly share with them why you are doing what you are doing the way you are doing it. Also explain the desires for what you want to accomplish in what you are doing so that you are teaching your children in the context of life. Those are just some best practices.

Here is the problem. Most of us today, except for our fascination with sports in the lives of our children, are not engaged in the life of our children in those methods and best practices I just went through. This past week I read one of the most disappointing things I've ever read but not surprising. This past week I was doing some research because of what one of my friends said on his audio statements and I went to look at the official journal of the association of American Pediatrics. They had commissioned an in-depth study of the effect of mobile devices upon parenting. I am just going to give you one observation that they made. Ninety plus percent of the time when parents are with their children and with their mobile device, the mobile device will get the unfettered attention of the parents to the exclusion of the child. The parent's attention will be to their smartphone ahead of their child's questions or any conversation.

Now I'm not a legalist who says “if you want to be a good Christian then don't buy a mobile phone.” Mobile phones are fine because you could do this with a lot of other things but this interesting because of the addictive nature of what happens with technology usually and this is being exacerbated. When a family goes out to dinner here is what they noticed. Nine out of ten times the parents will be fascinated and engaged with the mobile device to the exclusion of a

conversation with the child. The number one remedy to the interruptions of the child with the parent's engagement with the mobile device is "I will buy you one" so that you can be addicted to that and not even want to have conversation with me. That will babysit you while I do what has become more important to me. It is absolutely amazing how this has gotten a hold of us in our day and time.

My recommendation isn't to go and sell your mobile device but my recommendation is to love your child more than the mobile device. The most precious thing you have are these years where you can converse with them and they are actually there asking you that ever present question that opens up unbelievable doors to unlocked treasures for them. It is that wonderful question that they were born with from their mother's womb, "Why?" I admit to you that there are moments in life where the answer is "because I told you so" but the vast majority of the time that question then opens up a great coaching moment toward wisdom in the life of your child. So here is this wonderful moment for wisdom and we'll see this out of the life of Jesus.

We have been looking at what Biblical parenting is, the foundational issue of being engaged in the church and the church engaged in the home, the need for the parent to have a robust personal relationship with Christ, Biblical parenting focuses on evangelism and discipleship while giving your child a Christ-centered life view and we looked at motherhood and fatherhood. We kept illustrating these from the sufficient material, but not a lot of material, to see this in the life of Mary and Joseph as they raised Jesus.

Now I want to take you back to two moments in the parenting of Jesus in which we are given a small snap shot into His childhood and the function of His parents in His childhood. Let's first look at Luke 2:39. We have looked at this text a couple of times but there are multiple reasons to come to this text. Luke 2:39-40 says [39] *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.* (Here is a snapshot of their parenting of Jesus up to His adolescence.) [40] *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.* The child grew.

Now fast forward to Luke 2:52 where now in His adolescence to being now ready for manhood. His childhood is through and we have the summation in Luke 2:40. Now adolescence is through and we get the summation in Luke 2:52 which says [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* So here is the four fold objective. Ultimately your objective as a parent is to win your child to Christ with the Gospel in Word and deed. Then you are to disciple your child under the rubric of discipling your children – teaching your children, communicating and guiding your children. You have a fourfold objective – wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. The first one is what we will look at in this study. It is the one that controls all of the rest of them. If you get this one wrong then forget the other three and that's wisdom. It is the commitment of parents to give away wisdom to the life of their children.

Jesus grew. Let me stop here. I don't have time to go further into this but you can check me out in Hebrews 2, 4 and 5 and Luke 1:79 to this passage here. Jesus was truly a human being, truly a man, a hundred percent man without sin. He was even born through the DNA process of a mother and He was born with a body bearing the effects of a post Genesis 3 world. He was not born in a Genesis 1 and 2 body but a Genesis 3 body, a body that was subject to sickness, frailties and weaknesses. When He was born He didn't come out of the womb declaring Aristotelian philosophy. He didn't come out understanding how to solve algebra problems. Jesus is a hundred percent God so in that baby is the omniscient Son of God in

perfect harmony with the knowledge limited humanity that He had. He had to be taught by His parents. If the flame is burning, don't put your hand there.

We as human beings are born in this world, made in the image of God and what it means to be human, by in large, is taught. There are very few things in life that we do that are intrinsically intuitive and reflexive. We have to learn them. We can walk and breathe at the same time. We were born with an instinct to draw nourishment from our mother. I think it is fair to say that we were born with certain insecurities such as you don't have to teach a baby to throw its arms out if you throw it up in the air. It just automatically does that. There are things that are in our lives automatically but they are never going to help you on a business or develop an employee. Those things that make you an image bearer that can subdue the creation, rule over the creation, be fruitful and multiply and give glory to God, has to be learned and Jesus was fully human. He had to learn His arithmetic, His spelling, His geography, how to navigate and He had to learn wisdom.

If He had to learn wisdom, what does that wisdom look like and who did He learn it from? The text is very clear that He learned it in the context of His relationship with Mary and Joseph, who knew the Word of God and were able to do all that the Law of the Lord required of them. That wasn't the only place He learned. When He grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man He had other learning experiences and we've already read it but let's go back to Luke 2:41 to see this.

Luke 2:41-52 says [41] *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. [42] And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. [43] And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, [44] but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, [45] and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. [46] After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. (Jesus was getting wisdom by sitting in the temple, listening and asking questions. I wonder where He learned to do that. He learned it from home.) [47] And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. [48] And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." [49] And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (He needed to be there not only because it was His Father's house but it was a place where wisdom was that had been initiated in His earthly father's house. Now it could be multiplied.) [50] And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. [51] And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. [52] And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*

I want to give you a brief statement about this matter of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to live with true knowledge permeated by understanding, manifested in the crucible of life which itself is necessary to gain knowledge, understanding and wisdom. I wanted to give you a definition you could work, think about and chew on. Wisdom is the ability not to hit 'google search,' not to read Wikipedia. Wisdom is the ability to live life, to live with true knowledge that is permeated by understanding. Why did I do that? Your Bible says a lot about wisdom. In fact there are wisdom books all over the Old Testament – Song of Solomon, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and I would suggest even Lamentations. Then it is all brought to a summation in the

book of James in the New Testament. Wisdom permeates the preaching of Jesus in general, particularly the Sermon on the Mount in specific.

Wisdom is all over the Bible. In the book of Proverbs you find proverbial law, proverbial wisdom. What is proverbial wisdom? When we read the book of Proverbs we keep trying to turn it into a promise book. Proverbs 22:6 says [6] *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* That is not a promise. It is divinely ordained common sense wisdom. What you put in a child, except for exceptions that prove the rule, eventually comes out of the child. That is what that verse is telling you. There are covenantal promises to us for our children but that is proverbial wisdom.

When you go to the book of Proverbs what you begin to see is this unfolding of three phrases – knowledge, understanding and wisdom. There is knowledge that is accurate and understanding that is pervasive that leads to wisdom in life. Wisdom is manifested in responding to the issues of life. Let's look at Proverbs 1. We know this book comes from Solomon, king of Israel, son of David and the categories of this book are laid out for us in the opening verses. Proverbs 1:1-6 says [1] *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:* [2] *To know wisdom and instruction (knowledge), to understand words of insight, [3] to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; [4] to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— [5] Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, [6] to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.*

So he has collected all of these proverbs that you might have knowledge that leads to understanding to show in the wisdom of life. He goes on to say in Proverbs 1:7, [7] *The fear of the LORD is (wisdom because it's) the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.* Now look at what is said. Proverbs 1:8-9 says [8] *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, [9] for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.* The very command is for the son, (and clearly the daughter) to intentionally learn, be submissive, ask questions, listen, and hear the instruction of your father and the teaching of your mother.

So what is wisdom? Wisdom is the ability to live with true knowledge permeated by understanding, manifested in the crucible of life but here's the challenge. The crucible of life while it's not the only place you demonstrate true wisdom, it's also necessary in order to gain wisdom. I was listening to a report from the Atlantic Monthly and they had done an analysis of children. I don't put a lot of stock in this but I think there is some sense in this that most of our kids are born with one of three personality directions in life. I'm not into personality types that much but they kind of have a bent and maybe if you think back through your children you might see it. Some of our children are just born naturally aggressive. They haven't seen a building they won't jump off of or a creek they won't try and jump over. So what do they do in life? They charge. Some of our children are born into life and they are not aggressive. On the contrary they seem to have a bent in life that is one of anxiety. The aggressive children charge and the anxious children we have pull back. There is a third group called the analytical. This group doesn't charge or flee but they say 'I wonder what's going on here?' Those are kind of the three personality groups.

Here is the problem. There are times when aggressive children charge and they ought not to charge. They may have fun charging but they're going to get killed. Then there are those who are anxious whose tendency is to flee and they need to learn to charge. Then there are some who don't charge and don't flee who just sit there with the paralysis of analysis. You have to tell

them they can't get enough information to make a decision because there comes a time to charge or back up and you have to take your children into life to teach them that. So that the aggressive ones know that this isn't the time to charge and the anxious ones may not think they need to charge but they do need to charge. For the aggressive to know when to hold back and the anxious to know when to charge you have to give them wisdom in life. How many aggressive children have grown up and charged and lost the whole business, just because that's what they did? How many opportunities have been missed through the paralysis of analysis? How many enemies could have been destroyed if we hadn't retreated and we went on the attack instead of being anxious?

That kind of wisdom needs to be departed through knowledge and understanding and that means we need to take the time to do that in the lives of our children so for Mary and Joseph and with Proverbs 1 behind us, I want to give you seven things you can walk away with from this. The first one is that there are only two types of wisdom in life. There is wisdom from above and there is wisdom from below. I will be the first to admit that there are times that the two get mixed up or get thrown together but by in large there are only two types of wisdom – wisdom from above or wisdom from below. Let's look at James 3.

James 3:13-18 says *[13] Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (You see wisdom in life) [14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. [15] This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. [17] But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. [18] And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

So according to this passage the wisdom from below is demonic and it creates death. It is chaotic and it destroys. It poisons. It brings disorder. The wisdom from above is shown with courage yet meekness. It is shown by bringing peace, order, gentleness and understanding. Here are the two types of wisdom. There is one from below and one from above. We want to teach our children the wisdom from above that is revealed in God's Word and implanted by God's Spirit that is found in hearing the Word and is found in believing prayer and seeking the wisdom from above which God gives liberally.

The second thing is that children must learn wisdom at every stage of life. After you grow up you haven't quit learning. You are going to keep on learning but we have to teach our children wisdom that is appropriate to every stage of their life. So we have a snapshot of Jesus and His childhood. There is one as He is coming out of childhood into manhood. Every stage in life opens up new opportunities in life to help them learn how to make decisions in life.

Let me illustrate this. My sisters one time were talking with me about their children dating and courting. This was my comment to them. "Do you want them to learn how to spend time with someone of the opposite sex either in a group or individually before or after they leave your home?" If you don't teach them while they are at home then when they leave someone else will out there and you probably don't want to know what they're going to teach them. So how will you create situations in life where you can model for them in your relationship and you can expose that to them in an appropriate relationships? That requires wisdom from a parent to start giving away wisdom to a child so that at every stage of life you are opening up wisdom to them and how to grow in stature, favor with God and favor with man.

Thirdly, fathers and mothers are responsible to teach wisdom to their children. Mary and Joseph taught Jesus and He was submissive to them. Again Proverbs 1:8 says [8] *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching...* Fathers and mothers are responsible to teach God's wisdom to their children. God has designed the family to be a school but that's not all it is. When I say school you automatically think classroom. If we are thinking Biblically about school then you think teacher. The classroom was just wherever the teacher was when he taught his students. The classroom was always on the move. The classroom was wherever the student was with the teacher when the teacher is teaching them. So the home that is the family and not just the house but the family is the school and parents are responsible to teach their children. Fathers, teach your children when you rise up and walk by the wayside. So you and I have been called to teach our children.

It is like the book of Proverbs. Here it is. There's an ant. My son, what can we learn from the ant? Wait, I'm going to give you wisdom from above. Do you know who made that ant and do you know why we learn from the ant? We're not going to learn the pragmatism that if I'm busy I'll make a lot of money but we're going to learn from that about the principle of the dignity of work, the joy of work and what work brings. I want to teach you this with wisdom from above, not wisdom from below. I want to take every opportunity in life. As a father and as a mother we do this thing in their life. We have been designed to teach them and they are designed to learn from us but parents, you can't teach what you don't know. So if you are not a learner then you will not be a teacher. Teachers are not know-it-alls, teachers are those who want to know it all.

Fourthly, children must learn to learn from their parents and they need both their parents to truly learn. Proverbs said 'here is your father's instruction and here is your mother's teaching.' Did you know that there are two different ways that they do it? They did this examination and here is what they saw. For fathers there is a particular posture that they by default go to as a dad. When something happens and it's a learning moment, when the father talks to his children he stands face to face invariably. He will appropriately get in their face, eyeball to eyeball. By default the mother always comes alongside of their child, most often with an arm around them, right at that moment. A dad will get face to face and then Lord willing he'll reach out and say 'Love you man' but the mom will get right alongside them. That's the way they do it and your child needs both. Your child needs the instruction of a father and your child needs the teaching of a mother and the child needs to learn to give that to them.

The biggest hindrance to the child learning to learn from father and mother is that one they are born sinners and that's what gets in the way of learning. There is another problem. When you get your children home from the hospital there are three things you know when you take them home. One, your child is not an atheist but a theist. They are born with the image of God implanted upon them and in their conscience. The second is that you just took home a sinner. They are going to sin and they need a Savior. The third thing is you took home a covenant child and you have a promise from God – "I'll be a God to you and to your children after you."

Now how can your child learn to learn from you? This is very crucial. Your child will not learn to learn from you until you decide you want to be their father and mother more than you want to be their friend. You might think 'I want my children to like me' then don't be a parent. You can be a grandparent and that day is coming but you can't be a parent. If your child knows that you need their affirmation and approval then you just lost. You cannot teach your child if you have to have their friendship and you cannot teach your child if your children are

your idol, significance and security in life. You cannot teach your child if you need them to make you their idol in life. If you need them to make you their idol or you need them to be your idol to be significant and secure in life or you just need their affirmation and assurance then you will never be able to parent. You'll lose and they'll lose. That doesn't mean they're not going to get wisdom, it just means they will go somewhere else to get it but you have lost the opportunity to do what God has designed you to do.

Some of you are thinking 'what if I'm a single parent?' I have great news for you. Let's go to the next principle on this and it will give you the great news.

Fifthly, parents can and should make use of others to assist them in the teaching of their children. I paraphrased C.S. Lewis on this. He basically said if any man who makes himself his only teacher, is a teacher who just had a student that's a fool. If you don't bring other teachers into the life of your child, I believe you're guilty of child abuse. All the gifts that your child needs to learn is not found in you. Jesus was found in the temple. We are also told in Luke 4 that He was regularly in the synagogue and Mary and Joseph were not threatened by that. You can and should make use of other teachers but be careful who you select because when all is said and done pupils become like their teachers. Your child needs more than you.

Al Moller said something that really helped me in this. He got a call from someone and I happened to listen in on his answer to them. The person has asked him "Would you name for me the people who have had the most influence on your life? Just name the preachers and theologians in your life." He said "That's simple" and he named his childhood pastor. I'm just trying to use this as an illustration. The most important pastor or theologian one has is the one they sit under every Sunday. So who else besides you are your children sitting under? Choose them well. It is not the government's job, Birmingham's job, the counties job or Briarwood's job to educate your child. It is your job to educate your child and it is now your job to reach out? Is there a tutor you want to secure? Is there a school you want to employ? Is there a Sunday school teacher, a Youth pastor or a pastor that you want to get into the life of your child? Get your child into those situations so that they are getting also that same thing from other maybe with a different wordsmithing or different personality but with the same intention that is now coming into the life of your child and you're making those selections with wisdom.

God has given you the gifts to teach them but He has also given you the gives to look out. You don't even have to stop there. Look into your immediate family and extended family – uncles, aunts. The books you give your child to read become teachers to them. I think when you make those kinds of decisions in life to give your child good teaching, you have to be secure enough in the Lord to do that, you have to be wise enough to choose the teachers, and you don't choose the teachers just on the basis of cost because one of the greatest investments you'll make in your child's life is their education. You want their education to be in concert with your home and in concert with your church. Those things need to be united together. Gratefully we live in a community where you have all kinds of options in this regard but you are going to answer for the teaching and for the teachers you bring into their life or for the lack of teachers you bring into their life. So parents can and should make use of them.

Single parents, we as a church need to stand available to provide the help you need and assist in all kinds of ways of teaching your child. If you're a single mom the church will provide other male voices in the life of your child. If you're a single dad the church will provide some female voices in the life of your child. All that has to be done carefully and with prudence but those things can and should be available.

Number six is the three other necessary objectives in parenting are dependent upon the sex of the child. We will cover how you teach your child that their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You grow in stature, in favor with God and in favor with man. Those other three are directly related to our ability to embrace this first objective.

Number seven, do not lose evangelism in the process or focus of parental teaching and never avoid speaking to the heart of your child. You are not just trying to make them able to go on television and win Jeopardy. If they are successful at Jeopardy that's fine but you're trying to give them wisdom for life so bring their heart to Christ and speak to their heart for life.

I particularly want to say something to you who are mothers. Perhaps you're thinking you had that kind of husband with you and perhaps there has been a divorce, death or whatever it is and dads I want to say the same thing to you. Who is one of the greatest figures in the New Testament? His name is Timothy. Paul told him in II Timothy 3:14-15, *[14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* You find out in II Timothy 1:5 who taught Timothy in his childhood. It was his mother (Eunice) and his grandmother (Lois). His mother was married to a Greek who I guess didn't want any part of it and I don't know who his grandmother was married to but there they were in his life. Also they weren't threatened to make use of Paul to disciple their son. Here is another teacher I can make use of in the life of my son. Paul kept pointing Timothy back to his mom. So we need to make use of that in life.

Lastly, remember the question is not will your children learn wisdom but the question is what wisdom will they learn – from above or from below – and from whom will they learn it? True wisdom is only gained in a saving relationship with Christ, seen in a life that is motivated by the love of God and permeated by the fear of God, in which the smile of God is our most treasured joy and the frown of God is our most dreaded sight. We don't have to please God to be saved but we love for our heavenly Father to smile upon our life that is propelled by the love of Christ and that exists under the canopy of the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Give your children a majestic God for that's how they are led to a regal life. It is through that God who saves them and loves them so the love of God will constrain them and the fear of the Lord will permeate them. A paraphrase of John Owen is this; The smile of God is their greatest joy and the frown of God is their most dreaded sight. That leads to a life of wisdom. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus who is our Wisdom. Thank You that in Him there is the glorious privilege to lead the next generation to the wisdom of salvation and the wisdom of a saved life for the Savior. Father, thank You that You use sinners saved by grace, like us, as parents. We will give You the praise, in Jesus' Name, Amen.