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Proverbs: Parent-Child



Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of parenting in shaping a child's values and beliefs. He draws on biblical passages to explain the significance of leaving a positive legacy and the role of correction in child-rearing. Gregg highlights the value of training children according to their temperaments and aptitudes and emphasizes that parents have an obligation to their children, which extends beyond peer approval and dependency. He argues that imparting values and nurturing future generations is a source of joy and blessing for parents.

Transcript

In our studies in Proverbs, we're coming to an entirely new set of topics, probably those which are the most common, most frequently repeated in the book of Proverbs, with the possible exception of the general topic of wisdom, which is, of course, repeated a great deal. And that is the whole realm of human relationships, which, as we know, is at least half of God's concern about people. The first half would be our relationship with Him, and that was actually covered earlier when we were looking at the God-conscious living, which is certainly a major theme in the book of Proverbs.

It's a lot easier to fake a relationship with God, though, than a relationship with people, because people are visible. And that's why James 1, verse 1, says, or John said, if we can't love our brother whom we've seen, how can we love God whom we've not seen? That is, if we don't demonstrably love our brothers, how could we possibly prove that we love God? Because our love for God is rather invisible, except for its expression in love for other people. And Jesus said that there are two great commandments in all the law, all the prophets, in other words, everything God has ever required of people, fall under these two general headings.

Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then love your neighbor as you love yourself. Now, your neighbor is who? It's everybody. Everybody you come into contact with is your neighbor.

They share the same planet with you. And Jesus made that clear when a scribe asked

him, well, who is my neighbor? The Bible says he was trying to justify himself by asking that question, because he knew the law said he must love his neighbor. But he didn't want to love everybody.

So he was trying to limit the definition of neighbor as narrowly as he could. And he said, well, then who is my neighbor? And Jesus, telling the story of what we call the Good Samaritan, pointed out that the man who was neighborly to the Jewish man who fell among thieves was not of the same race, not of the same religion, not of the same country. And actually was, in all those respects, persons who had a history of being hostile toward the Jews.

So, in a sense, his enemies and foreigner, someone from another country, he says, now that's illustrating who your neighbor is. Of course, after Jesus told that story, said, now, which of the men was a neighbor to the one who fell among thieves? And, of course, the answer is the one who was the least likely to be defined as a neighbor of the bunch, different race, different religion, different country, sentiments that were hostile generally between the two groups. Yet they were neighbors.

And he showed love for his neighbor. So it illustrates that there's really nobody who falls outside the realm of our neighbor. And when God does love your neighbors, you love yourself.

That means everybody we come into contact with. But relationships with people differ from one another in terms of what's expected of them. There's different degrees of commitment required.

Obviously, a husband wife relationship is different than just neighbors or friends. Parent child relationship is a special kind of relationship that has its own set of rules. We could say, for example, you can and must control your children.

But you can't and must not try to control your neighbors and your lots of other people in the same way. You can't even control your spouse the same way you can control your children and must control your children. So there are different expectations, different sets of duties that attach to different relationships.

And so Solomon has a lot of different kinds of relationships that he addresses in the Proverbs. And the first we're going to look at is the parent child relationship. There's also, as you can look at your notes, we'll be talking not today, but in future talks about the husband wife relationship, the servant master relationship, the relationship of rulers and subjects.

Of friends and brothers, of enemies and neighbors. All of those things are different kinds of relationships where different rules apply. Because there are different definitions of those relationships.

Now, parent child relationship is no doubt the most universal of all relationships because everybody had parents. Not everybody has children, but everybody had parents at least. It may be that some people don't know their real parents, but they either have known their real parents or they've known some surrogate, some foster parent or somebody because nobody survives infancy without somebody parenting them.

And therefore, there are people that we have obligation to. We're indebted to because they served as parents in our lives. And while not everybody has children, everybody lives in a world of children and everybody bears a bit of responsibility or at least can be involved in a responsible way in the modeling of children's lives, even if it's only by avoiding being a bad example.

To them, if you are a bad example and you don't have children of your own, but you're bad example to other children, then you've had an impact on the next generation, maybe a very small one, but it's not a good one. So the idea of parent and children relationships is that there is intended to be a transmission of culture, transmission of faith, a transmission of values and so forth from one generation to the next. And the primary way that God has ordained for that take place is from parent to child.

And if not parent to child, then some other kind of adult to child. In our own society, we've gotten away from that a tremendous amount in the past generation or two, especially in the past three or four generations when there's been mandatory public schooling. The idea that parents should be shaping the culture of their children has been replaced with the idea that the peer group shapes the culture of the children.

Because whoever the children spend most of their time with are going to be the people that they care most about pleasing. In other words, the people who have the most influence upon you are the people that you have to spend time with the most. Because obviously, you're going to be at peace, you're going to have a trouble-free life, you're going to be accepted.

And so peer approval dependency is going to be greater the more young children at a younger age are forced to spend time, the lion's share of their time with other young children their age. True, in school and so forth, there are teachers, but teachers never have so much influence over the children's culture as their fellow peers do. At least I have never observed it to be so, that a teacher had more influence over me than the kid I was in school with as far as who I wanted to be popular with, for example, who I wanted to please and impress.

And that's, I think, natural. Again, because when you're taken out of your parents' home and put into an artificial environment where your primary peers, your primary social group are your peers for the lion's share of your waking hours, then their approval is going to matter much more to you and going to shape your opinions and values and so forth. That's not how God designed things to be.

And since the Bible says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, then you can be quite sure that you're immersing your child in an environment of fools to shape their culture if they are simply left to disciple one another or to civilize one another. And ever since there's been mandatory public schooling, there's been some kind of a generation gap, some kind of a counterculture every 15 or 20 years or so, which has been caused by the youth disconnecting from their parents in some way. Not every last youth, but to a large degree, the youth culture questioning, overthrowing a lot of the values of their parents and trying to reinvent the wheel, reinvent culture for themselves.

On occasion, that can lead to some improvements, but generally speaking, when culture is invented by inexperienced fools, it's not going to be quite as wholesome and desirable as culture that's shaped by the ancients. Now, of course, the psalmist said, I know more than the ancients because I've made your word my meditation. And it's true.

If the ancients have been ungodly and the young people are godly, there's a good chance that the young people can make improvements on the culture. But it's more often the case that the drift is the other direction and children lose touch with the godly influences of their ancestors unless they are consciously and deliberately transmitted by the parents. Of course, this is one reason why so many parents have chosen to homeschool because they don't like what they see.

They may not like even what they experience as students in school among ungodly peers. And so they don't want their children to be victimized by that kind of child abuse. That is separation from their parents put into an environment where fools shape their minds.

That's a form of child abuse in the eyes of some of us. And we believe God didn't design it that way. God didn't design for children to be raised by their peers and educated and civilized by their peers.

But rather, that's supposed to be transmitted from parent to child. That's made very clear, for example, in Deuteronomy chapter 6. This is taught, of course, in many places in scripture, but some places say it so directly, it makes it absolutely unmistakable. In Deuteronomy 6, beginning at verse 6, God said, And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

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. Now, what this is saying is your children need to have these things reinforced many times through the day in the normal activities of life. You see, if you take your kids to Sunday school or even have family devotions in the mornings with your family, which many Christian families do not, but if they do, but the children are all day long involved in activities that do not in any sense reinforce those things, then whatever values are reinforced in their daily activities are those that are even more real to them.

If the parents are trying to inculcate some kind of godly values, but the children spend most of their day among people who have no concept of God, no interest in God, many other values and pursuits, then in a way the child's training at home, the religious training at church or whatever is just going to seem unreal. I mean, they may not rebel against it outright or they might. They might tend to embrace it, but it will still have this sense of unrealness about it because in real life, which is outside of the church, in real life outside of family, out where they really spend their time and interact with people, none of these values are affirmed.

So, they think in terms of there's the real world out there and then there's the world of religion that their parents have or that someone's trying to put on them. And even if they stay in the church, even if they continue to even sort of believe what their parents believe, a lot of times it'll just seem like not a real world, the religious world. And so, what God is saying, be involved in your children's lives and reinforce these laws, not just legalism, but the words of God, the truths of God, what God has revealed.

Reinforce those through the day when you're rising up, when you're walking in the way, when you're lying down. In other words, just about at all the different times during the day, there should be reinforcement of the truth in the minds of children because otherwise they're going to pick up something else because they will pick up something all day long. If they're not deliberately trained in the right way, then they're going to pick up something by default.

And the default is not usually something that is really what you want them to pick up. In Ephesians 6, verse 4, it says, You fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. It's obvious that God intends to have parents transmit to the children, transmit to the next generation, the truths that parents have become aware of from God.

And not assume that the children just pick them up out of the air as they breathe and walk around. This transmission is something that will be lost. There will be breaks in that transmission if there are breaks in relationship between parents and children.

If parents leave it to somebody else to raise the children and to disciple the children and so forth. So that is our starting point from as we look at what Proverbs has to say. First of all, look at Proverbs 13 in verse 22.

It says, A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. Now, a good man is leaving something to his children. Some kind of heritage when he dies.

Some kind of inheritance that they pick up from the parent. Now, if the parent is negligent, if the parent is abusive, if the parent is aloof, the child is picking something up. Unfortunately, the child probably pick up some of those patterns of relating when

that child has children to raise.

It's not inevitable, but it's the natural course of events. And so that parent is leaving something, some spiritual influence, some cultural pattern that the child is likely to follow. And many times, I was telling somebody just recently that I had at one time growing up, thought I don't want to be like my father.

My father was a good man, but he wasn't the man I wanted to be like. Not to say anything negative about him. There's nothing wrong with his life.

It's just I had other interests in being a different kind of person. Not a bad person or even a better person, just different. But notwithstanding that conscious desire on my part, I became very much like him just from being raised by him.

And I don't have any complaints about it. I think he's a good man. I'm not saying it was a bad effect.

I'm just saying I was surprised to see how much I picked up of his temperament and of his ways of relating and so forth just by being in the home with him. Even though that was something I was thinking I wasn't necessarily wanting to do. And so, my father has left a heritage to me and even to grandchildren.

If a person is godly, then often it transmits to the children and maybe sometimes more so to the grandchildren. My father, for example, became a Christian when he was a child through the influence of his grandfather. His own father was a believer, no doubt, but not particularly one who pursued hard after God.

But his grandfather, his dad's dad, was a very godly man and led my dad to order when he was a kid. And so, kids need to have godly grandparents too. A lot of times parents do drop the ball.

Well, for one thing, when you're raising kids, it's the busy time of your life. You're busy with the kids, but you're also busy making a living. If you're a man in business, you're busy building your business, but at the same time you're building your family.

It's a shame you can't build your business before the kids are there. But of course, by the time your business is built, you're too old to start having kids and raising kids. I mean, it's just the way life is set up.

Parents are very busy at the time when they need to be available to their kids the most. And so, sometimes grandparents, who are at the less busy stage of their life, are the ones that God uses even more than the parents. But the parents have a responsibility to raise their children properly.

And a good man will have an impact on his children and his grandchildren. Now, of

course, leaves in inheritance may, in Solomon's mind, mean leaves money or leaves an estate to his children and grandchildren. Because in the Old Testament, the understanding that God blessed his people financially, if they're godly, would be probably in Solomon's mind.

Because he had a lot of money and he believed that if a man was faithful and not slothful, diligent, that he'd prosper. And then when he left, it would help the circumstances of both his children and even it would have a trickle-down effect to his grandchildren. In the New Testament, of course, the blessings of the New Testament spirituality are more in the area of spiritual blessings in heavenly places rather than financial.

There may be financial blessings, too, but that's not so much a guarantee in the New Testament. So, the inheritance that a man leaves to his children, if he's godly, is a godly inheritance. The memory of a godly example and of a godly influence.

And that should be something that a man would expect and a woman would expect to leave to not only their children but their grandchildren. But as long as there's this disconnect between generations, it doesn't happen as readily. Because kids are not being raised as much by their parents as they used to be.

I mean, not only do parents put away their kids in school when they get old enough to learn things, they put them off in preschool and daycare and so forth almost as soon as they can in many cases so that the kids have the minimal amount of exposure to their parents. And maybe the parents who do that, it's a good thing they do that, because maybe they are not the kind of parents that would have a good influence on their children. If they're not devoted to their children, then it would not be necessarily that their influence would be good.

But it does seem like a real father and a real mother's influence on their children would be better than a surrogate in most cases. And that certainly is the norm that God has designed for families. In chapter 17 of Proverbs, in verse 6, it says, Children's children, meaning grandchildren, are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father.

Apparently this means that while children are more likely to be proud of their father than of some old grandfather, yet the grandfather's glory is not just in his children but in the way his grandchildren turn out. I have a friend who teaches seminars on family life, and he says, You can't tell how successful a father has been by looking at his children alone, but when you look at his grandchildren. Because in his fathering, his parenting, he has to not only raise his children to be good citizens, but raise his children to be good parents who know how to raise their children to be good citizens.

So that it's not just one generation, you know, the faith survives, but the transmission of

the faith is taught to the children in such a way that they know how to teach it to their children. So that when a man's grandchildren are godly, that's the glory of an old man, his grandchildren, how they turned out. And so again, the idea here is not just the nuclear family like we have in our society where it's parents and children, and that's pretty much all.

And basically, we think of the duty is to make sure our kids are fed and clothed and, you know, get an education that will get them a good career and then launched in that way. And if we're Christians, we want them also to leave with the Christian faith intact. Although most people who aren't Christians, all they really care about, I think, is that their children succeed in life and are not hungry and not poor, not suffering.

I mean, I shouldn't overgeneralize. I'm sure there's a lot of non-Christians who want their kids to be good citizens, too. But, you know, it's an interesting thing about child rearing, human child rearing, because other animals have babies, and some of those babies are independent of their parents instantly.

Almost all reptiles, as soon as they hatch from their shell, their parents are gone. They don't even see their parents. They're just miniatures of the adults, and they just go off, and they instinctively know how to live.

Even higher mammals, as we might call them, train their children, their offspring, for a much shorter time than we do. You know, a deer keeps her fawn with her for, what, a year or less. And then, of course, the fawn can get up and walk the moment it's born, but whatever it has to learn, it can learn in a year's time.

A human child, though the most intelligent of all animals, is not really ready to be independent for at least 10 or 12 or 15 or 20 years. And that's because humans, unlike animals, children need to be, their souls need to be trained, as well as their bodies. See, the animals only have to reach physical maturity so they can feed themselves and reproduce.

That doesn't take all that long. But God made humans so that they can't do that until they're 13 years old or more. And, of course, most of them are not really independent until they're much older than that.

Why did God make children dependent on their parents so long compared to other animals? Because children need to be trained other than simply how to reproduce and how to eat and how to survive. They need to have their souls shaped, and that takes more time than the animals have with their children. So, the shaping of souls, the training of children, the transmission of the culture from one generation to the next, parents need to see their children as their glory, and their grandchildren as their glory.

The glory of old men is their grandchildren. Now, see, in biblical times, people didn't

know about life after death. I'm sure they all had their theories about it, because people throughout all time and all cultures have had theories about life after death.

I'm sure the Jews did, too. But there was not really any authoritative information given to them about life after death. The Old Testament just doesn't describe it.

It doesn't even speak very plainly about it in any place. And so the idea of perpetuating one's life, which everyone instinctively wants to do, was mostly seen as perpetuating through your offspring. After all, your children are partly you.

Half of their genetic information that makes them who they are is yours. You're perpetuating yourself in your offspring and your grandchildren. And that's why in the Old Testament it's such a tragedy for a person to die childless, because their life was ending when they died.

But if they weren't childless, their life didn't end when they died. Their life continued, because they had launched a part of themselves into the world to carry on for another generation. And if they lived to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren, that's what gave them the sense of perpetuity of their own life and influence.

That's how they extended their life into eternity, because they didn't know what we know about eternal life beyond this life. So the idea that everyone has a desire to feel like they're going to have significance beyond just their lifetime, and they're going to have an impact beyond their lifetime, because the lifetime really ends up seeming very short when you get to the end of it. And having children and grandchildren, and knowing you're dying and seeing these grandchildren that are carrying on your family line and, in most cases, your culture and your religious ideas, that's the joy that an old man is supposed to have, or an old woman, is seeing those grandchildren and more, if you're lucky enough to see more than that.

Realize that you are continuing to have an impact on the world. When you have children, when you decide to have children, you are sowing seeds into the next generation, because there will be one, unless Jesus comes back. One of the saddest things about the apocalyptic expectation that so dominates religion in certain ages, where people just think, oh, Jesus is going to come right away, is that there's no vision for the future.

There's no vision for another generation. When I entered the ministry in 1970, it was during very much an apocalyptic fervor. That was the same year that Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth* was published, and it sold tens of millions of copies.

It had a tremendous impact. A lot of the revival that we were in was focused on the imminent coming of Christ. A lot of people at that time thought, well, I don't want to get married, or I don't want to have children.

A lot of people who got married didn't want to have children, myself included. When I got

married, I didn't want to have children, because I thought, well, Jesus is coming to us tonight. Why get tied down raising an infant and a toddler for a few years and then get raptured when you could keep those years free and be able to do more and accomplish more for God? What's the point of starting a project you're not going to be able to finish? Very many people thought that way, because they really believed Jesus was coming so quickly.

There was actually no vision at all for another generation. When my first daughter was born 38 years ago, the one that I wouldn't have time to raise, the one that wouldn't have time to grow up, the one who's 40 years old now almost, when she was born, I loved her, but I thought, well, she's not going to be able to grow up. What's the point of God bringing a child into the world at this particular time? I didn't really have any vision for the world she'd inherit as an adult, because I didn't think there would be a world here that she would inherit as an adult.

I didn't think she'd become an adult. I took my responsibility seriously, especially when she was a year old. I became a single dad, and I raised her alone.

That was something I did just out of my Christian love for her and my fatherly love for her, but I really didn't have a real vision for her adult life or anything like that. It probably shows in her life now. Parents need to have a vision for their children's future.

We certainly have no guarantees that Jesus is going to come back in our lifetime, in our children's or our grandchildren's lifetime. There are no guarantees of that. What God has put in us is not only the desire, but the responsibility to sow seeds, godly seeds, into the next generation.

Let me show you something in Malachi. The last book of the Old Testament actually has a statement that tells why God created marriage. Most Christian teaching these days says God created marriage so that man wouldn't be lonely.

It was not good for man to be alone, so God made marriage for companionship. Well, no doubt that is certainly part of the reason that marriage exists, but that's not the main reason. When Malachi in chapter 2 was rebuking Jewish men who were divorcing their wives and telling them what an evil thing that was for them to do, he says about married couples in verse 15, Malachi 2.15, But did he, that is, did not God, make them one? That is, didn't God make the husband and wife one flesh? Isn't that God's arrangement? Isn't that God's ordained relationship with one flesh? It says, Yet did he not make them one, having the remnant of the spirit? And why one? That is, why did God take two people, a man and a woman, and make them one in the Garden of Eden? And why does he do it now? He seeks godly offspring, it says.

The reason God created marriage is he was seeking godly offspring. When Adam was alone, and God said, it's not good that man should be alone. Why wasn't it good?

Because he was lonely? How could he be lonely? The woman was made the same day he was.

He had God, he had been named animals, I don't know how he'd have time to get lonely. I'm not even sure how he had time to get all that work done that day. Adam had no reason to be lonely, but it wasn't good for him to be alone.

See, we always think being alone, I don't want to be alone because I'd be lonely. That's not what it's about. He had a task to perform that can't be done alone.

What was that? To bring forth godly offspring. That's why God didn't make Adam a male partner, which would have solved the loneliness problem, if that was the issue. Men love to get together with other men.

Men, frankly, when it comes to companionship, men understand other men a lot better than they understand women. They have a lot more points of comparison they can relate on. Men and men get along a lot better than men and women, generally speaking.

There are certain reasons that men are attracted to women other than to other men. But when it comes to just friendship and companionship, nothing beats man on man or woman on woman friendship. Women like to get around women and talk about things, too.

They can't talk to their husbands about it because women and men don't understand each other that much. I mean, they have to learn. They automatically understand each other of the same gender, but they don't understand the opposite gender until that's learned behavior.

God, if he was concerned that Adam was just lonely, could have just made another man or a community of men. A monastery. But it wasn't good for man to be alone.

And the remedy was not to make another man or even a Labrador retriever, which is a good thing, too, if you're lonely. Or even a parrot. But what God made to remedy what was not good was another human being that was not just like him, but different in certain ways.

And what ways? Not in the number of eyeballs and ears and nose. The woman was just like the man in most respects, except a few. And the only ways that she was different were in ways that had to do with reproduction.

The woman's body anatomy is essentially like the man's, except for those features that have to do with one function. And that is having and nurturing babies. When God said it's not good for man to be alone, it's because he can't bring forth godly offspring alone.

He needs a partner that is capable of, along with him, doing those things. God made

marriage because he sought godly offspring. Why? Because he wanted godliness to be perpetuated beyond one generation.

And so that's God's purpose. When he made man and woman, what did he command them to do? Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The purpose of marriage very clearly is reproduction.

Now, that doesn't mean that every marriage has to produce children. Because, frankly, because of the fall, some marriages don't. Some marriages can't.

But it does mean that when people try to divorce in their minds the idea of marriage from the idea of having children. And they say, we want to be married, but we don't want to have children. They're not thinking the way God was thinking about marriage.

And, of course, what are they thinking about? They're generally not thinking about the future. They're thinking about right now. I want to get married because of my immediate need for gratification.

Whereas, when you get married and have children, you're kind of putting aside some gratification. You're delaying it because you're going to be working so hard raising the kids that it's not going to be until they're grown up and have turned out well that you're going to really get the full gratification. Of course, you enjoy kids.

If you love kids, you enjoy raising them. Even when they're little, they're delightful. But still, you work hard.

And the real payoff is when you've got children and grandchildren who've turned out right. And that's the glory of old men is their children's children. And it's what God had in mind when he created couples, according to scripture here.

In Proverbs 20, verse 7, it says, The righteous man walks in his integrity. His children are blessed after him. Because the man is honest, there's a blessing on his children.

What is that blessing? Well, their dad doesn't end up in jail, for one thing. That's a blessing because he's honest. Another is that they learn, by example, honesty.

And that's one thing I will say about my dad. One thing I've always said of my dad, I cannot imagine ever him lying. I cannot imagine him ever deliberately being deceptive.

He's an honest man. He doesn't know everything. I couldn't trust anything he said in terms of his familiarity with the subject.

But I could always be sure that if he was talking about something of which he had personal knowledge, he would never lie. He always would believe. And I've always felt that that was extremely an important value.

And I very possibly picked that up from him. Or maybe just from being a Christian. But, of course, that's something I picked up from him too, being a Christian.

So, a man who walks in his children, in his integrity, leaves a blessing to his children by being an honest man. Chapter 31 of Proverbs, which, of course, is talking about the virtuous woman. It says of her in verse 28, It says, Her children rise up and call her blessed.

Her husband also, and he praises her. The godly woman who has diligently raised her children, as we read about this woman doing, and taking care of her household as she did. Her children rise up and they praise her.

They honor their mother. That's got to be, I would assume to a mother, the ultimate satisfaction. Is to hear their children say, I owe everything that I became to my mother.

You know, what my mother was. So many people, when you hear their testimonies as adults, will say, I was raised in a Christian home, but I kind of wandered away in my teenage years, and for a few years I was not close to God. But it was my mother's prayers that brought me back.

I know that God drew me back because of my mother's prayers. And I'm sure that that's true. I mean, many people give credit to their mothers, their godly mothers, for the fact that they, after some time of wandering, returned to the Lord and said, it was my mother's prayers that brought me back.

And I've heard that testimony more times than I can remember. In fact, one guy was saying, how come they never say it was their father's prayers? Does it mean either that the fathers were not praying then, or is it that if the fathers are on the job praying for the kids, they don't wander and come back, they stay. Some people think that the reason children wander from the Lord is because their fathers were absentee.

But their mothers were still on the job, still praying for them. And so they wandered off in ways they wouldn't have had to had their fathers been diligent in discipling them. It's the fathers who are commanded to rear your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Almost all fathers leave most of that to the mother to do. But fathers are commanded to rear your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And if they do, then perhaps it's not so common for the children to wander off from the faith.

So we can see there's a blessing to the parents in having children, and a blessing to the children in having godly parents. And so again and again, Proverbs indicates this, that the parent-child relationship is something that God created for mutual blessing. Godly people of integrity who have children leave a blessing and heritage to their children that way.

And it's a blessing to them to have children. Most of us, when we think of this subject, probably think of Psalm 127, which may be the most quoted scripture that makes this point. Psalm 127, it begins, and this is one of the few psalms that Solomon apparently wrote, and most of them are written by his father.

But he said, Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Now, a house in the Hebrew scriptures, it's a double entendre. A house is a building, and Solomon was involved in building a house, his own house and also the house of the Lord.

Solomon was involved in construction projects. He built his own mansion, which took longer than building the temple. And he also built a temple.

And very expensive buildings, but he said, if the Lord isn't in it, it's not happening. But more importantly, the word house has the meaning of household or family. And it is often used in scripture kind of both ways.

For example, in 2 Samuel 7, when David wanted to build a house for the Lord, he wanted to build a temple. The Lord says, no, I didn't ask you to build a house for me, but I'll build you a house. And what he meant is a dynasty, a family.

I'm going to build you a household, the house of David, as it can be called. See, David wanted to build a physical structure, a house, and God said, no, I'll build you a house. And he's definitely using play on words, house and house.

One was a building and one was a family. The house of David is a dynasty, a legacy. The offspring of David is his house.

And Solomon writes, unless the Lord builds a house, they labor in vain that build it. Well, not just the building that one lives in, but the household that lives in it. God has to build that, or else it's going to be fruitless.

But then, when he gets down further on, in verse 3, he says, behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. So, that's a blessing from God, that God has given parents. The fruit of the womb is his reward, not his punishment.

He doesn't punish you by giving you children. He rewards you. It's something of value.

And although parents all have times when they feel that about their children, there's many who don't seem to live with that awareness every day, that my children are the most valuable thing that could possibly be given to me in this world. Human beings cannot build a child. God has to create a child.

Human beings can build robots and machines and all kinds of technological wonders, computers, but they can't build something like a child. I often think about that. I mean, just the parts of our body we just take totally for granted the things they can do without

wondering and marveling at them.

Like, if I want to reach into my key, I've got a key ring with several keys in my pocket. I can reach into my pocket, and there may be ten keys, and there's a particular key I want, my fingers can feel which one it is and pull out that key. Or if I have several coins in my pocket, I want to pull out a dime instead of a nickel or a penny, I can feel which one's a dime before I pull it out.

It's like I can see with my fingers. It's like I can discern between similar things just by the feel of them. I mean, so can you.

It's not so marvelous, it's so commonplace, but who could invent a machine that can do that? You know? And that's just one of the thousands of body parts that do amazing things. And every child has, at least every child that's in normal health and born in normal condition, has all that machinery working perfectly and the most complex arrangement of atoms in the universe inside their skull, the most amazing supercomputer far exceeding what human beings can create at this point. All of that, which if you were buying all of that from some technology manufacturer, if they could do it, it would cost you more than you could ever possibly earn.

But you get all that free every time you have a little baby. And then what's more than that, that baby is not only a machine that does amazing things, it's a human. It's in the image of God.

It's God's soul. It becomes somebody that you can talk to and relate with. I mean, these are just amazing things about human babies.

And somebody that you can impart your own soul and your own values to and know that when you die they're going to carry that on another generation and maybe another and another and another. That's what God designed should be the case. Obviously many of us have lost that connection with our kids because of somewhere dropping the ball.

Either we or our spouses or somebody. A lot of us have been married to people who are no longer in our lives and it affected our children negatively, which is a really awful thing. But still, the potential is there.

And it says, the fruit of the womb are God's reward that he gives you. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of those arrows.

They shall not be ashamed but shall speak with their enemies in the gate. That is, the father who's got a lot of stalwart sons, he's not ashamed. He can go talk to the enemies at the gate and he's got confidence, he's got his sons backing him up.

He's a man with some clout. He's not intimidated by his enemies. Ben Cartwright never

was intimidated.

And he only had three. It used to be understood that having a lot of good, well-raised children is a man's greatest wealth. There's a famous story about an English nobleman who came to visit a British minister.

And the minister had 12 sons. And they were all trained sons. And when this nobleman came to visit him, the 12 sons stood in order of their age politely to greet the man.

When the nobleman came in and saw those 12 sons he said to the father, These are they which make a rich man poor. And the father said, No, these are they that make a poor man rich. Because he said, I wouldn't trade any one of these for all your wealth.

And that's what the Bible teaches. Is that a human soul is worth more than all the wealth in the world. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? One soul is worth more than the whole world.

How many do you get for free when you have children? As many as you can get. You're lucky if you have a quiver full of them. And a lot of people assume that, you know, if they just let nature take its course in marriage, they'll have as many as they want.

It doesn't always happen that way. I mentioned that I was not quite, didn't quite have the vision I should have for my children when my first daughter was born. And I was raised, I was a single dad for several years.

And frankly, I mean, I found it difficult to my life to have a child. And I was in ministry and traveling and didn't have a wife and so forth. I mean, God took care of things.

And my daughter and I had a really good relationship during those years. And when I remarried, I didn't really think I wanted to have any more children. I thought, well, this one's well on the way to being raised.

And eventually she'll be raised. I'll be free again, you know, from this. And my wife and I were sitting in a church meeting in Santa Cruz once where someone else was preaching.

And this passage came up. And it was actually a Father's Day, so it was a Father's Day message. And he, the pastor used a lot of different scriptures, including this one.

And he read this scripture and made some kind of comment and went on and read some other scripture and so forth. But as I turned with him to all the passages he was using, and I looked at this, I don't know what passage he went to next because I didn't go with him. I was looking at this scripture and I felt God spoke to me and said, Steve, you and I don't agree, do we? I said, of course I agree.

I agree with everything in your word. What do you mean? He said, well, you don't think many children are a blessing. And I do.

You think that children are a hindrance. And I remember thinking, well, but I'm in the ministry. You know, I have to you know, I have to be able to go places and minister to people and, you know, having a family ties a person down in some respects.

It takes away from the ministry. Paul even said that. He said, I would spare you that.

He says, man who has a wife has to care about the things of the world. How many please his wife? Well, see, a lot of people want to have the wife, but not the children. But I guess that's where I was at.

You know, I didn't want to be alone. It wasn't good to be alone, but it wasn't all that good to be that much not alone. And what I felt the Lord spoke to me from this passage that day.

He said, you know, you see your life as that of a spiritual warfare. You're going out and you're taking on the powers of darkness. You're using the word of God.

You're a swordsman. He said, you can only use your sword in places where you come in contact with the enemy. But if you had arrows, you could damage enemies in the distance where you'll never go.

And he said, children are like arrows. I say you're lucky to have a lot of them. And you know, I thought about that.

That if I was a warrior in a real war and it was an old war when they used bows and arrows instead of guns. And you came to the, you know, the guy who's issuing your equipment. He said, how many arrows would you like to have? I mean, what would I say? If I was going to be out on the battlefield and success or failure depended on my weaponry.

I'd say, how many can I have? You know, how many can I fit into this quiver before they can't fit anymore in there? You know, if I really take the battle seriously, then I'm going to take the weapons seriously and say, I want as much of that as I can get, please, because I don't want to be out on the battlefield and run out, you know. And that's what Solomon says. That the man is blessed who has his quiver full of arrows like that.

And that's, it was that scripture on that day that gave me the, that changed my vision for children. I didn't see them as just a hindrance to the ministry. I saw them as an extension of the ministry.

And from that day on, I wanted as many as I could get. And frankly, my wife was of the same mind. We wanted, we hoped we could have 12, but we never did.

And it shows that God is sovereign over those things. God opens the womb, God closes the womb. We didn't, we never had to ever consider birth control, of course.

We never used it because we wanted as many children as we could get. We wanted more than we got. Together, my wife and I had four children in 20 years, trying to be, we wanted to have one every two years.

We wanted to, we wanted to have a child every two years, so we'd always have a toddler in the home, because we never wanted our home to be without a toddler. And we thought, once we've had 12, the older ones will be bringing home toddler grandchildren, so we'll have, we'll never have to be without a toddler around. But anyway, we, things didn't turn out for me as I wished, because of course, the marriage didn't survive either.

But nonetheless, I believe what, I believe this is God's vision for children. And the man who trains a lot of godly children is launching arrows into the world against the enemy. And that's what we want to do.

Now, we're almost out of time here. Let's look at Proverbs 13 24. He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Now, there's a lot of verses in Proverbs on this very same subject. We could look at quite a few of them, but they're all going to say essentially the same thing, and that is that the parents role in training the children requires occasionally the rod. Now, many people don't believe this requires a literal rod, but just discipline in general.

And that may be true. It may be that not all children respond well to the same kind of discipline. But we should not think that the use of a rod is an abusive thing in itself.

It can be. Obviously, abuse is abusive. But we're not talking about abuse.

We're talking about training. And training with a rod is not only authorized, but Solomon thought it was pretty necessary. He said a person who doesn't use a rod on his child is not really loving his child.

And that's where you get that saying, spare the rod, spoil the child. That expression is not really found in the Bible. Many people think the Bible says spare the rod, spoil the child.

Well, not exactly. That's based really on this verse. It says that he that spares the rod hates his son.

It's a similar idea, certainly. That he's not really doing well for his son. And notice it's the father's responsibility, not the mother's, to do the discipline.

He, the father is supposed to rear them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It's the father's responsibility if his children don't turn out right. And I've always felt that.

And I feel that even about myself. My children are thankful they've heard some good reports lately. I think things are going better.

But they've gone through a spell where they weren't doing what I was hoping they'd be doing. And they're not out of the woods yet. But I take responsibility for that.

I frankly have to. I do lay some of that on my wife's behavior too. But somehow I feel like no matter what came my way, I should have been so on top of it that I could steer the kids right through it and stuff like that.

I think when my divorce took place and we had four kids still at home that were abandoned along with me being abandoned, I was so I was probably so emotional, emotionally a basket case that I was not really as much there for my kids as I intended to be. I knew I had to be and I intended to be, but I was licking my own wounds I suppose so much that some of my responsibility probably fell through the cracks. And so I have to take responsibility before God for that.

And I do. But we didn't spare the rod. I mean, we just sent our children, and our children were very well behaved.

Everyone thought our children were model children. When I'm on an airplane and there's a screaming baby, I think why don't they do something about that? Our kids traveled 14-hour plane trips to Australia and Japan and places like that, and we never let them behave like that. They behaved on the plane.

They were in church with us, but we didn't let them make noise in church. You don't do that. You don't let your kids be hated by everybody.

If you love your children, you don't want people to hate your children. You know? You want your children to be a blessing. And I've told people this before.

There were two or three times, specifically, that our family was on the road, and we'd be eating at a restaurant and we'd go up to pay afterwards and the lady would say, Oh, someone else paid for your food. Because they were so impressed with your children. And we just had a model family.

It's not that way right now, but it's not over yet. And I'm actually thankfully seeing some positive things happening that I've been praying for for at least 10 years. So, I'm not going to quit now.

In chapter 19 and verse 18, it says, Chase in your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction. The NIV in that second line, the NIV says, Do not be a willing party to his death. If you don't discipline your child, you may be letting him go the way that will lead to his death.

It's not a loving way. To let a child go his own way is not to let him go the right way. Because a child's own way is not going to be the right way.

Chapter 22 and verse 6, well-known verse, Train up a child in the way he should go. And when he is old, he will not depart from it. And teachers have given a lot of different interpretations of that.

When they say the way he should go, a lot of people say that means in the way that the particular way that his temperament is designed that God has in mind for him. You have to train each child very specially according to their aptitudes and their temperaments and so forth. That may be true.

A lot of people have said that this means that if you do everything right, and I've said this myself when I was younger, when I was more naive, that if you do everything right, your kids are guaranteed to turn out good. And then I saw families that did everything pretty much right. One family I know has ten children.

Nine of them turned out excellent. And one just decided to go the wrong way. There is such a thing as free will.

They raise their children all in the same home with the same values and the same discipline and love. So it's not absolutely guaranteed. The proverbs, of course, are, as I've said earlier, not promises of God.

They're not prophecies or predictions. They are wisdom. They're wise counsel.

You want your children to go the right way, then you better train them the right way because they're not likely to if you don't. The best bet is if you want your children to go well, train them up in the way they should go. And then more often than not, more likely than not, they'll stick with that way because children do tend to shape their patterns early in life and stick pretty close to them most of the time.

In chapter 22, verse 15, it says, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him. So corporal discipline can actually impart wisdom to a child. And children are not born wise.

So don't count on letting them go their own way as the modern philosophy is. You've got to let them just give them a lot of room to just find themselves. What they'll find is a fool.

In chapter 23, verses 13 and 14, do not withhold correction from the child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. Now beat sounds pretty severe, and a rod sounds severe. And we live in a much kinder, gentler society when it comes to ideas about child discipline.

We want to give them time out. Well, I don't know if that works for all children. I think some children need a good, you know, some stripes.

Although the trouble today is if you follow the Bible, you're going to have a social worker

coming over in many cases. And then someone else will be raising your kids who won't give them stripes. So we are living in an oppressive, anti-Christian society because, of course, there has been abuse.

There are parents who do abuse their children. I imagine maybe as many as one parent in 50 may abuse their children. Maybe it's a little more than that.

I don't know. Most parents love their children. And even if they're not really wise parents, we're all experimental parents.

We're all learning how it's done while we're raising our kids. We know how it's done once we're done, and we're not doing it anymore. Maybe that's why grandparents are so valuable.

But while we're raising kids, we're all experimental. That is, unless we're following the culture our parents passed down, then they were the experimenters. And we get to learn from their learning.

But the point is children need to be trained. They're not to be left to themselves because they will not go the right way on their own. In chapter 29, verses 15 and 17, it says, "...The rod and reproof give wisdom." This is the same as foolishness is bound up, but the rod will drive it from the other side of it.

The rod, as well as reproof, which means verbal correction, will give wisdom. Now, Solomon actually saw this in his own home. Actually, he saw the lack of it.

Because there was a son in the home, David. David had many sons, and one of them, Adonijah. It says in 1 Kings chapter 1 that Adonijah had never been rebuked by his father.

His father never so much as said, why are you doing what you're doing? David was just a disattached father. And Adonijah ended up dying by his own foolishness. As a result of his own foolishness.

And so, Solomon knew. Solomon saw this in his own home. Foolishness, you need to have reproof.

You need to have the rod involved in giving wisdom to a child. "...But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." And in verse 17, "...Correct your son, and he will give you rest, yet he will give delight to your soul." Many people cannot say that their adult children are giving them rest or delight. Partly because of the deficiency in the amount of correction that they gave.

You raise children properly, and they end up righteous and responsible. There's nothing, I imagine, that could be more satisfying to a parent than that. Many of us who are older

are not going to have any more children, probably.

We all are in the lives of children who are either our grandchildren, our own children, our neighbor's children, the children of other people in the church, the children all around. And what children are in need of and greatly lack often are adults. Who are committed to seeing them turn out as they should, for God.

And so, even people who are done raising their own children, maybe they are the ones who should feel themselves most having an interest in knowing how to raise children, because they have the time on their hands. They have the time to actually get involved in the lives of other children. And if you didn't have a lot of arrows in your quiver, maybe you could borrow somebody else's and shape them.

And launch them. If somebody else doesn't want to do it to their own children. And there's going to be a lot of people who a lot of parents end up, a lot of grandparents end up raising their own grandchildren these days.

Because they've got irresponsible kids who have kids and don't want to raise them, so the grandparents raise them. But there's also a lot of people who just want to farm out their kids to others, or just let the kids run free so that they're not in their hair. And those who are older, people who have already raised children, can have a variety of different ways of influencing younger children.

So, to read about parent and child, it doesn't become an obsolete lesson or an obsolete subject when people have reached the end of raising their own children. Because there's always a new batch of children in the world needing shaping, needing launching, needing direction. And so, we need to have God's vision about that.

And seeing children as a blessing rather than an intrusion. Having a mind to train them, realizing they're not going to train themselves well. They need to be trained by outside influence.

And they will be. It will either be their peers or their school teachers who may not have any interest in teaching them the right way. In fact, in most cases now, the public schools are, in so far as school teachers are not Christians, they're probably not going to be teaching godly models of life and family and so forth.

So, it puts the responsibility on those of us who may have any impact on any children to have a vision for that child's future. And I'm sure some of you already think this way. I know I do and some others have told me this.

Whenever you see a family that you don't even know, you know, in the supermarket or something, these little kids and stuff, you ever look at them and think, what's that poor kid going to be like when he's 19, you know? What kind of a world is that child going to inherit? What kind of training is that parent giving that child? Adorable little child, you

wish you could just cuddle him and take him home with you, but you can't. You think, this wonderful little child, what's he going to be like 15 years from now? You know, because you just wonder, are these parents going to train this child? So many of them don't or they train them wrongly. But that vision that you have for the future of the child, a vision for the future generation is what God has also, and that's what Solomon is trying to say, you know, there's children and grandchildren are where your vision is supposed to be extended out that far, generations into the future.

And sowing, energetically sowing seed into that generation of righteousness, because God is seeking godly offspring.