

# Proverbs for Parents

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TEXT - *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6 AV)*

## Introduction

Please allow me to make two observations by way of introduction this morning. Anytime we examine the subject of child rearing, it is wise to remember these two observations:

1. Children are a gift of God. Although sometimes it may not feel that way, they are one of His greatest blessings.

*Lo, children [are] an heritage of the LORD: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward. (Psalms 127:3 AV)*

No matter whether our experiences with children are good or bad, may we never look at them as anything but a gift.

2. There is no doubt that rearing children in today's society is exceedingly difficult. Children today face a much more sinful world than when we were young.

ILLUS - Researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were: 1) Animals, 2) Being in a dark room, 3) High places, 4) Strangers, 5) Loud noises. Today, kids are afraid of the following: 1) Divorce, 2) Nuclear war, 3) Cancer, 4) Pollution, 5) Being mugged. (Back to the Bible Today, Summer, 1990, p. 5)

We, as parents, have a great responsibility to help our children in a very difficult world.

3. There are very few experts on this subject.

Most people who claim to be experts have babies, and know very little about the subject, and most of those who are, in fact, experts, are too humbled by the experiences of raising children to feel that they have anything to share. As Sam Levinson said, "Insanity is hereditary, you can get it from your children."

In general, only those who have completed the child rearing phase of their life with success can claim to know how to raise children. The rest of us should remember one of the wisest verses in the Bible:

*And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell [him], Let not him that girdeth on [his harness] boast himself as he that putteth it off. (1 Kings 20:11 AV)*

QUESTION - This lesson is a result of comments from our September survey. Several of you expressed concern about the matter of rearing children in today's society. Why is that a concern to some Christians? What problems exist for those trying to raise children today?

QUESTION - If you were asked to describe the Christian method(s) of child rearing, how would you respond?

Let's turn to a place where we are given principles that are as sound and without variation as can be found anywhere - the wisdom of Solomon, written down in Proverbs. Solomon provides several principles that may help us in this matter of child rearing.

## The Principle of Spirituality

This is key. Every other principle of child rearing builds upon this one. If you decide to ignore this one, there is no point in even considering any others.

The state of your personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the factor that is most important in determining the success or failure of your child rearing efforts.

BIBLE STUDY (For each of the following verses, ask "What does this tell us about how our walk with Christ affects our children?")

*Proverbs 14:26* - Principle: Our fear of God protects our children.

*Proverbs 20:7; cf. Psalm 112:2* - Principle: Our right living influences the life-style of our children.

Practicing what we preach is more important in the home than anywhere else. The following true story should demonstrate this:

ILLUS - Many years ago a small Jewish boy asked his father, "Why must we surrender our Jewish faith and start to attend Lutheran services here in Germany? The father replied, "Son, we must abandon our faith so that people will accept us and support our business adventures!" The young lad never got over his disappointment and bitterness. His faith in his father and in his religion were crushed. When the lad left Germany he went to England to study at the British Museum where he formed his philosophies for life. From those intensive investigations he wrote a book that changed the world called, "The Communist Manifesto. From that book one-third of the world fell under the spell of Marxist-Lenist ideology. The name of that little boy was Karl Marx. He influenced billions into a stream that for 70 years ruined, imprisoned and confused many lives. Today, that system of thinking is crumbling, but only after people got a good look at its tragic consequences. The influence of this father's hypocrisy multiplied in infamy. Without godly faith, all of us are subject to distortions in our perspectives. (found on Bible.org Sermon Illustrations)

## The Principle of Training

Our text is the key verse regarding this principle. We are told to TRAIN our children.

QUESTION - What does this mean to you? When you read *Proverbs 22:6*, what do you learn?

QUESTION - Is this verse a promise, or a guarantee?

Several observations from this verse:

1. YOU (the parent) are the one responsible. The onus is on us!

YOU are not told to train your children IF they are responding to that training. You are told to train them... PERIOD. No matter how they respond, we are to train them.

This is a great contrast to society's current view that we should never push our beliefs or morals on anybody, including our own children. Many today teach that children should not be molded or influenced, but simply encouraged to find their own way.

QUESTION - What do you think of that?

ILLUS - British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge once had a discussion with a man who firmly believed that children should not be given formal religious instruction, but should be free to choose their own religious faith when they reached maturity. Coleridge did not disagree, but later invited the man into his somewhat neglected garden. "Do you call this a garden?" the visitor exclaimed. "There are nothing but weeds here!" "Well, you see," Coleridge replied, "I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden in any way. I was just giving the garden a chance to express itself." (Daily Walk, March 28, 1992)

2. There is NO SILVER BULLET. Each child must be trained according to his or her own way.

QUOTE (Charles Ryrie) "... in the way he should go. Lit., according to his way; i.e. the child's habits and interests. The instruction must take into account his individuality and inclinations, and be in keeping with his degree of physical and mental development."

3. They will not always respond properly. We cannot deny the many examples of godly parents who seemingly followed this verse well, but whose children are away from God. This verse is a proverb, or a principle that generally holds true. It is not, however, a promise, and we can all think of examples to demonstrate that.

ILLUS - Cable television mogul Ted Turner criticized fundamentalist Christianity and said Jesus probably would "be sick at his stomach" over the way his ideas have been "twisted," the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. Turner made his remarks Friday evening at a banquet in Orlando, Fla., where he was given an award by the American Humanist Association for his work on behalf of the environment and world peace. Turner said he had a strict Christian upbringing and at one time considered becoming a missionary. "I was saved seven or eight times," the newspaper quoted him as saying. But he said he became disenchanted with Christianity after his sister died, despite his prayers. Turner said the more he strayed from his faith, "the better I felt." (Spokesman-Review, May 1, 1990)

QUESTION - What does *Proverbs 22:6* offer to the parents of somebody like Ted? What hope do we have when, in spite of our best efforts, and relentless prayer for our children, they turn out like Ted Turner?

## The Principle of Discipline

QUESTION - What does the world say about disciplining children?

QUESTION - Before we look at scripture, share your knowledge of what the Bible teaches about disciplining children?

QUESTION - Do you agree or disagree with this statement - "If you don't spank your children, you hate them?" Why or why not?

ANSWER - cf. *Proverbs 13:24* *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*

Clearly, the matter of discipline is a big subject, and one that is taught boldly in scripture.

BIBLE STUDY - What do each of the following verses teach us about the importance of discipline in child rearing? Do they teach us anything about the method or severity of discipline?

*Proverbs 13:24*  
*Proverbs 19:18*  
*Proverbs 22:15*  
*Proverbs 23:13-14*  
*Proverbs 29:15,17*

## The Principle of Trusting

Whether *Proverbs* 22:6 is a principle or a promise, it provides encouragement to today's parents. If we will just obey the principles set forth in Scripture for child rearing, and trust God with the outcome, we can have peace in spite of the ups and downs of rearing children. Some thoughts:

1. Worry is never God's will for you.

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (Philippians 4:6 AV)*

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7 AV)*

2. DO YOUR PART, as outlined in scripture, and then give your children to God for Him to do His part.

*ILLUS - Hannah - cf. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. (1 Samuel 1:11 AV)*

## Conclusion

The Bible has many other things to say on the subject of child rearing. Here are a few for your personal study:

- Parents must teach God's truth (*Deuteronomy* 4:9; 32:46).
- Parents must lovingly discipline children because they are immature and need guidance (*Proverbs* 22:15; 29:15).
- Parents should not exasperate their children (*Ephesians* 6:4).
- Parents' wise decisions bring blessing to their children (*Deuteronomy* 30:19-20).
- Parents who are godly teach their children to obey (*Ephesians* 6:1; *1 Timothy* 3:4).

Perhaps the prayer that Amy Carmichael shared is a good way to end this lesson:

Father, hear us, we are praying.  
Hear the words our hearts are saying.  
We are praying for our children.  
Keep them from the powers of evil,  
From the secret, hidden peril.

Father, hear us for our children.  
From the worldling's hollow gladness,  
From the sting of faithless sadness,  
Father, Father, keep our children.

Through life's troubled waters steer them.  
Through life's bitter battles cheer them.  
Father, Father, be thou near them.  
And wherever they may bide,  
Lead them home at eventide.

-- Amy Carmichael



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