

Listen: Wisdom is calling!

KSBC Sept. 20, 2009

Family Wisdom - Parenting

Proverbs 23:12-28

Intro. You should have to take a class, become certified, before you have a child of your own! Parenting has to be one of the most powerful forces of influence and change on the planet. There is not a person in the room this morning that has not been profoundly shaped by your Father or Mother, either positively or negatively. It seems simple, if somehow we could just resource and equip parents in the ways of wisdom . . . poverty, violence, substance abuse, education issues, economy, health care, care for the elderly and weak, too much sugar . . . all of these problems and more are certainly within the perspective of wise parental influence and guidance. Parenting should require precertification.

The words of God in the wisdom writings agree. The influence of parenting is enormous according to Proverbs 22:6 . . .

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

A foolish person is actually defined by how he or she responded to parental instruction . . .

10:5 *He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*

15:20 *A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.*

Parenting is so critically strategic that God says that if a son or daughter will accept, store up, listen and apply the teachings of the God focused parent, then God will give that child wisdom and change his heart. God has written parenting into the operating procedures for changing lives. That's why parenting should have training classes come with it.

The book of Proverbs assumes that a significant part of parenting is training the next generation of parents. Let's read Proverbs 23:12-28 with the understanding that these are instructions from a wise parent to his son about being a wise person and a wise parent.

Proverbs 23:12-28 Seven sayings for the wise son about parenting.

This collection of seven sayings to help the wise son understand parenting teaches us both the objective and methodology of effective parenting from God's perspective. Amazingly enough, human parenting is simply a copy of divine parenting – God's fathering his children. Let's ask God to reshape our values and thinking as it relates to how he parents us and how he wants us to parent our children.

1. The objective of parenting. 12, 15-16

. . . is to direct your child into a subordinate relationship to the living God.

Note the several references to the son's heart in 12, 15, 17, 19 & 26. The goal of parenting is heart change – from foolishness to godly fear.

- Heart formation is when children own and teach the truth as theirs. 12, 15-16

Note inclusion of heart and ears (12) along with heart and lips (15-16).

Heart formation – developing godly discernment in the inner core.

Cmp. Deut. 8:1-5 – ‘to humble you . . . and to know what was in your heart.’

- Heart formation is challenging. 22:15

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. *

The roots of foolishness and selfishness go deep. Do not underestimate the task of doing battle with deeply rooted rebellion and self rule.

Children born morally, spiritually or ethically neutral do not need correction, they simply need direction. They do not need discipline, they need instruction.

Genesis 8:21 Jer. 17:9

Every child is ‘at risk’ because of the foolishness of their heart.

Heart formation is ignored with most current, popular parenting methods.

Note appeal of 23:26

2. The methodology of parenting. 12-28

. . . includes both teaching and discipline to shape the child’s heart for God.

Note the consistent interweaving of the wise parents teaching with the reality of discipline in these verses. This is a close parallel with the Apostle’s teaching recorded in Ephesians 6:4 – bring the children up in the ‘training and instruction of the Lord.’ The ways of shaping a child’s heart must include both consistent teaching and loving discipline.

A. Consistent Teaching 12

Two components of consistent parental teaching about God and his world are . . .

- Personal Appeal of affection and encouragement.

Note the parent’s pattern of teaching . . . escalation/advance of imperative appeals from v.12 ‘apply your heart’ to ‘my son’ v. 15; ‘listen my son’ v.19; ‘listen to . . . who gave you life’ v.22; ‘my son, give me your heart’ v.26.

Teaching in relationship with affection, urgency and genuine encouragement.

Note the encouragement, the blossoming of 15-16; 18

- Brand loyalty of warnings and expectations.

Note the clear calls to family loyalty . . . 17-18; 19-21; 26-28

Home is central, values are clear, heart change/protection is objective/mission.

Again, even the warnings are pitched in terms of hope, encouragement – 18

B. Loving Discipline 13-14

- 23:13-14 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.*
- 13:24 *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*
- 29:15 *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*
- 19:18 *Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*

Note the clarity and directness of the imperative in 23:13. 'Do not withhold' along with the safety explanation in 14 assures and comforts the concerned parent about spanking. There was apparently some concern about the appropriateness of using the rod. The assurance is clear; the child will not only survive the appropriate use of the rod but will survive because of it.

Illus – falling from slide

Proverbs teaches 3 necessary components to spanking or the use of the rod:

- Physical pain.

The use of pain to address foolishness is a theme of wisdom not just limited to parenting.

26:3 *A whip for the horse, a halter for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.*

29:15 – the rod of correction brings wisdom . . .

It provides an immediate demonstration of the foolishness of rebellion.

It humbles the heart.

It creates an atmosphere for instruction and compliance.

Heb. 12:11

- Clear Teaching.

The context of Proverbs 23 as well as all of the wise sayings calling for use of the rod are dominated by clear instruction. Teaching and repeated instructions are the foundation for use of physical correction. Use of the rod is only appropriate when clear teaching has been ignored or disobeyed. Before, during and after spanking, clear teaching regarding the truth that has been disobeyed should be taught with both an appeal to the conscience and a focus on redemption/forgiveness in Christ.

Appeal to conscience is exposing the disobedience clearly – dealing with God's perspective.

Focus on redemption is exposing the child's inability to do right without God's help and forgiveness in Jesus/cross.

- **Controlled Courage.**

The wise Dad's explanation to the hesitant son about the rod clearly implies a controlled courage on the part of the one administering the rod. There is never an appropriate use of hitting, uncontrolled anger, retribution, venting, hurting or abuse of any kind.

Rather than anger, frustration or vengeance, the wise use of the rod is controlled by . . .

Hope 19:18

Love 13:24

Faith 22:15

Compassion 29:15

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Take Aways

1. Repent and renew your commitment to advancing God's kingdom through parenting well.
2. Thank God for and submit to his parenting in your life.
3. Recommit to honoring God by honoring and obeying your parents.

Discussion Questions

1. What observations or questions do you have from the study of the ways of wisdom in parenting?
2. Share with the group how you have been influenced by your father or mother. Are you more like them or unlike them?
3. Read Proverbs 23:12-28 as a group. What are repeated terms, themes or phrases?
4. What are some of the most common misunderstandings of the purpose of parenting? In what ways is parenting connecting to the advance of the Kingdom and growth of the church?
5. What are the challenges that parents face when working toward heart transformation in children?
6. What are some other Bible passages that come to mind regarding teaching and discipline of children? What do these verses add to your understanding of the subject?
7. What are ways you believe most parents could grow or improve in consistently teaching their children in the way the Proverbs 23 Dad does? How can KSBC encourage and motivate parents to grow in this area?
8. Review the verses and the sub points of the section on loving discipline. Share your thoughts.
9. What is the role of pain in God's developing you into his son who looks and acts like Jesus? Review Hebrews 12:4-13. Is foolishness 'beatable' without pain (11)? How can you encourage a child going through discipline? How about a member of your small group?