

LIFE LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

BY ANNE ELLIOTT

<http://www.AnneElliott.com>

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LIFE LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

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Introduction

Welcome to our Bible study on the book of Proverbs.

Before we begin, may I suggest an excellent homework assignment?

- Please read a chapter a day of the book of Proverbs, beginning with Proverbs 1 on October 1, etc.
- During the month, take a yellow pencil or marker and mark each verse that lists a benefit of following God's wisdom.

For instance, in my Bible I've marked the following verses:

- "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Proverbs 1:33).
- "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).

You'll find MANY, MANY more than just these two examples! Have fun!

Now, before we officially begin, what is a proverb?

Author Jay Adams says,

"A proverb (the word means a comparison or likeness) is a crisply stated principle of living."¹

¹ from [Competent to Counsel](#), by Jay E. Adams, p. 98

The book of Proverbs uses a form of Hebrew poetry that is unfamiliar to us because it doesn't rhyme. Instead, many proverbs are **comparisons** that basically state the same thing twice...

*"Whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm" (Proverbs 1:33).*

Other Proverbs **contrast** two things...

*"A poor man pleads for mercy,
but a rich man answers harshly" (Prov. 18:23).*

To study these verses, I simply used a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. This is a handy, big-huge reference book that lists every word of the Bible in alphabetical order.

- Next to each word, you'll see a fragment of how the word is used in a verse plus a number.
- You can then look up the number in the back of the concordance for a more thorough definition of the word in the original Hebrew, plus a listing of all the ways this word is used in the Bible. It's really helpful!

If you don't own a *Strong's Concordance*, don't worry! It's much easier, actually, to use online versions, such as the study tools available at <http://www.blueletterbible.org>. However, I first learned how to use a concordance with a "real," book version, rather than the virtual versions.

Why Study Proverbs

Today we're going to look at Proverbs 1:1-7:

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

*for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.*

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

What are the benefits we'll gain from studying and applying the book of Proverbs? I see four benefits in verses 2-3:

*"...for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair..."*

1) We will know wisdom (verse 2).

"...for attaining wisdom and discipline"

- The word "know" ([Strong's #3045](#)) means to know using a great variety of our senses. It's interesting to me that this is the same word used to describe the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in [Genesis 2:9 and 17](#).

- This word is the opposite of taking something by sight or at face value. ("By sight" is how the word is used in [Numbers 15:24](#) and [Ruth 2:10](#).)
- It's the difference between saying we know someone because we recognize her long, brown hair and her familiar nose, and saying we know our husbands!
- God wants us to KNOW His wisdom!

2) We will know discipline (verse 2).

- You could substitute the word "spanking" or "chastisement" here ([Strong's #4148](#)). It is a warning or a reproof.
- Why is this a good thing!? Because it's comforting to know God loves us enough to not let us get away with sin. It's also nice to know that we can "learn our lessons" by reading and applying the wisdom in the book of Proverbs instead of having to always learn everything the hard way. In this fabulous book, God allows us to have a glimpse into the bad choices that others have made, so we can learn from them -- and avoid making those terrible errors ourselves!

3) We will understand words of insight (verse 2).

- We will understand or perceive ([Strong's #995](#)), which means to separate mentally or to distinguish -- to be able to choose the best from all the options, so to speak.
- Unbelievably, "insight" is [Strong's #998](#) and is a derivative of [#995](#). So God is going to teach us how to "distinguish the words of distinguishment."
- In contrast, Satan tries to lie to us and make things very unclear. How good God is!

4) We will receive a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair.

- Instruction here is the same as "discipline" above, meaning "chastisement."

- Prudent (#7919) means intelligence and looking in all directions for the best choice. As my husband so aptly said, we will receive "common sense." (Wouldn't that be nice?)
- We also learn how to do what is right, just and fair -- traits sorely needed in wives and mothers, don't you agree?

So who needs to read this book? (I think we're all waving our hands and shouting, "We do! We do!")

*"for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance..." (Proverbs 4:4-5).*

- 1) **The simple** (verse 4). A simple person is silly and easily seduced (#6612). However, God promises to give the simple person "prudence" (#6195), which means trickery -- or in a good sense, discretion. In other words, the silly and easily fooled person will learn to make wise choices and avoid being tricked! Wow! Psalm 19:7 says, "The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple."
- 2) **The young man** (verse 4). This is helpful for us parents to keep in mind -- and even for ourselves, on those days we feel quite young ourselves! The young man will gain the knowledge spoken of above, and he'll also receive discretion (#4209). Discretion is having a good plan! What young person doesn't need these things?
- 3) **The wise** (verse 5). The wise man will listen and will increase his learning. In other words, those who are already wise from daily meditation on God's Word and years of study will CONTINUE to increase their wisdom. There is no one who cannot continue to grow and improve!

- 4) **The discerning** (verse 5). Again, those who are able to distinguish between the better and the best will find wise counsel and guidance. How many times have we all needed a personal counselor? God promises to guide us with His very own wisdom in this special book. This is one of the reasons I suggest that you read a chapter every day, so that the Holy Spirit can point out certain verses to you and be your "wonderful counselor" (Isaiah 9:6).

So where do we start if we want God's wisdom? Verse 7 says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Fear here means "reverence" (#3374).

Elizabeth Elliot, in her book [*The Shaping of the Christian Family*](#), says,

"Although the Bible has much to say about the fear of the Lord, Christian teaching on it is rare today. Objections are raised as soon as it is mentioned. Isn't fear a base motive? Why should we fear Him who loves us as He does? If He is our Shepherd, Savior, and Friend, how can we be afraid of Him? 'He is not a tame lion,' as C.S. Lewis says... A child's fear of physical punishment leads him to obedience, but so does his natural desire to please the people he loves. It is the beginning of respect. Until we love perfectly, which will not happen on this fallen planet, we must fear. Until perfect love casts it out, fear is a salutary thing. Fear saves us."²

We'll talk more about this fear next lesson, since verse 7 says this is where we should begin.

Finally, let's conclude with the warning given in verse 7.

"Fools despise wisdom and instruction."

What is a fool? A fool (#191) is a stronger version of a simple man, and he's described as being perverse and silly. Other meanings for the word "fool" in the Old Testament are "stupid" (see Proverbs 1:22, KJV) and "vile" and "perverse" (see Psalm 53:1).

² From [*The Shaping of the Christian Family*](#), by Elizabeth Elliot, pp. 125-126.

We sometimes see our children despising the wisdom we give them, or even despising our "chastisement" of them when they do something wrong. Proverbs calls them a fool -- and it calls us adults a fool if we read the book of Proverbs yet despise the wisdom we find there. We'll talk in the lessons ahead about the horrible outcome of the foolish and how we don't want ourselves or our kids labeled a fool!

In conclusion, let's hop over to two of my favorite verses in Proverbs. I'm sure you've heard these verses before as well.

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

These verses sum up all that God wants to do for us through our study of Proverbs.

They also describe our responsibility -- to trust with all our hearts, and not to lean on our own understanding.

(May I recommend reading the book [*Assumptions That Affect Our Lives*](#), by Christian Overman?)

The Fear of the LORD

It's time for another study in the incredible book of Proverbs. The more I study this book, the more overwhelmed I feel at even attempting to cover all the truths it discusses. Where do I even begin?

Thankfully, Proverbs tells us where to begin:

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).

Last lesson, we briefly discussed what the fear of the Lord is. I think I can best illustrate it by telling you about my kids. My children are fairly obedient. Probably eight times out of ten, if I ask them to do something, they'll do it. But nothing frustrates me faster than to have one or more of them disobey or even obey with a bad attitude, over and over, all day long. Even worse is when they repeatedly disobey me, but when DADDY walks in the door, they immediately do as he says. It's not fair!

Then again, I remember when I first met my husband. You see, he's three times my size! When he sits in a roomful of people, he sits a whole head taller than anyone else. He has a booming voice. He even coughs loudly! And he's soooooo strong. I don't even seem to notice his size anymore. But I used to! I know he's a big teddy bear, but my children, several feet shorter than he is, are very wise to listen and obey when Daddy speaks!

Are they afraid of him? Well, when they've done wrong, sure they are! They're afraid in a good way. Their fear makes them listen, makes them obey, and makes them realize the consequences if they don't pay attention. (Of course, I guess they all know that Mommy is wimpy compared to Daddy, so that's why it takes a little more for me to catch their attention. Not even the dog listens as well to me....)

God wants us to fear Him. We don't hear much about fearing God, do we? It seems to fly in the face of what we know about God. How can we fear a God who loves us, who is merciful and gracious, who is patient?

Here's how -- in the same way my children, who wrestle with their daddy and give him bear hugs and smooches and cry if he's gone too long and they miss him, FEAR him when they have done wrong.

(See Proverbs 15:33 where it says that the fear of the Lord is the instruction [#4148, chastisement, reproof, warning] of wisdom.)

Proverbs goes into quite a bit of detail about the fear of the Lord, describing what the fear of the Lord is, comparing it to things we can easily understand, and telling of its wonderful benefits. Let's look together at some of these.

First of all, Proverbs 2:4-5 says that we can only truly understand the fear of the Lord if we seek (#1245, search or strive) for wisdom as we would for precious silver, or search for it as we would hidden treasure. This implies a search after God and His wisdom that entails all our resources, all our time, all our energy.

This reminds me of the great command that Jesus taught: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). God wants all of me.

Notice also that if we fear the Lord, there are certain things we'll hate. Proverbs 8:13 gives us a list: We'll hate evil, pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech.

Pride (#1344) and arrogance (#1347) describe someone that mounts up, rises up and tries to be majestic. Doesn't this remind you of Satan, also called Lucifer, in Isaiah 14:12-14, where he said in his heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High"? Such pride is from the pit of hell, and Proverbs warns us that if we fear God, we will hate pride.

Perverse speech (#8419) comes from a Hebrew word (#2015) that means to turn something over, evidently to hide it from others' eyes. If

we fear God, we'll be honestly ourselves in His eyes and in others'. We won't pretend or fake or make ourselves out to be something better than we really are, especially in our speech. We'll be humble, admitting our faults and asking for forgiveness.

We all realize that we're born sinful and that sometimes we continue to sin even when we don't want to (Romans 7:15-25). However, God seems to think that sin is a choice that we willfully make.

First of all, Proverbs 1:29 says that some people do not choose to fear the Lord. The word "choose" here (#977) means to try something. Proverbs 3:7 says that we are to fear the Lord and shun evil. The word "shun" (#5493) means to turn off.

To me, turning off means an action on someone's part, like when the kids are told to turn off the bathwater because the tub is getting too full. They can CHOOSE to turn it on or off (but they might not like the consequences if they CHOOSE to disobey). We also must either CHOOSE to depart from evil or choose to be wise (#2450, intelligent, skillful) in our own eyes. We must consciously choose who is smarter -- us or God!

Proverbs 16:6 again says that by the fear of the Lord, men avoids (same word, #5493, choose not to do) evil.

And again, Proverbs 14:27 says that the fear of the Lord is a fountain (#4726, source) of life, turning us (same word) from the snares of death. By actively choosing to fear the Lord, we choose life instead of death. (Some of us pro-lifers should put our "choose life" bumper stickers INSIDE our houses, where WE'LL be reminded to choose life personally by obeying God's commands.)

So, in summary, I think that the fear of the Lord means to choose to obey His commands, with an awareness of the consequences if we don't.

There are almost too many benefits to fearing the Lord for me to list them all.

- Briefly, Proverbs 10:27 says that the fear of the Lord adds length to our life.

- Proverbs 15:16 compares the blessings of having only few possessions with the fear of the Lord to having great treasure but a lot of turmoil (#4103, confusion, great agitation and uproar).
- Proverbs 19:23 says that he who has the fear of the Lord will rest content (#7649, satiated, filled to satisfaction). He will be touched by trouble.
- Proverbs 22:4 says that by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.

My favorite benefit is found in Proverbs 14:26, which says, "He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge." It reminds me that obedience to God gives me a refuge, security, and assurance when times are scary. Happily, my obedience extends to my children, who will have a shelter where they can scurry when bad times come. As a mom, this gives me great peace in a world filled with terror and evil.

Let's close this discussion with a practical application for each one of us. Proverbs 23:17 says, "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD."

One evening, my children asked if they could play in our front yard. Because of traffic, I warned them to stay within the protection of our fence. A neighbor boy came riding by in his cool toy 4x4 truck. All my kids pressed their noses through the chain-link fence, ooh-ing and ah-ing over his truck. However, only a moment later, the little boy steered it wrong and had a minor crash. (Note: He wasn't doing anything wrong -- he had permission to be out there -- so maybe this is a poor comparison.) But because my children "feared" me and stayed within the protection of the yard the whole time they were outside, they were spared from getting hurt.

God wants us to fear Him "all the day long" (KJV). The word "day" here (#3117, literally from sunrise to sunset) implies that we are to live as conscious of God's presence from the moment we get up, through all our activities of the day, and until we go to sleep at night.

I can only conclude that if we want to have the fear of the Lord, we must "renew our minds" (Romans 12:1-2) by studying His Word daily and

CHOOSING to obey it, moment by moment, no matter the activities in which we're involved. This is yet another reason I'm going to continue to nag you to be reading from Proverbs every morning. I can think of no better way to begin renewing your mind. As David says in Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Again, in Psalm 119:97, he says, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."

One of my biggest worries is that I'll make the book of Proverbs look too difficult to study and too hard for you to understand. I want you to realize that this wasn't hard to study at all! You can do this!!! First of all, I looked up the word "fear" in my Strong's Concordance. I wrote down every time "fear of the Lord" was used in the book of Proverbs. Then, next to the references, I wrote a brief summary of what the verse said. Then I looked up the meanings of specific words in those verses, using the Strong's reference numbers and looking up those numbers in the Hebrew dictionary in the back of my Strong's Concordance. (Note: I originally used the King James Version for this study.)

That's it! It's easy to do (although rather time consuming), and I want you all to know that YOU can do it, too!

Goal - You can do this!
 Ex. - Kraig and kids

Fear of the Lord (fear # 3374) fear or to fear; mor. reverence.
 fem. of 3373 from 3372 (to cause to frighten)

= Prov. 1:7 is = beginning of knowledge

end 1:29 a choice - choose # 977 to try or select

1st 2:5 can be understood only after 2:4 - Seek for wisdom as silver, search as for hid
 #5493 to turn off (choice) (16:16) #1245 - search or strive #2044 - treasure

comp. 3:7 fear the LORD, depart from evil - opposite of being wise in own eyes
 #1344* #1347* #2450* #8419*

= 8:13 it = to hate evil (God hates pride, arrogance, evil way, froward mouth)
 #8462 - opening, commencement

= 9:10 is = beginning of wisdom

ben. 10:27 ~~prolongeth~~ #3254* #317 - literal days
 #4009 - refuge - security, assurance from 982* from 2620*
 #4726 - source note: vis #4268 - shelter

ben. 14:26 In f. of L. is strong confidence (children shall have place of refuge)
 #5493 (above) #4170*

= 14:27 is = fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death
 #4103*

comp. 15:16 Better is little w/ f. of L. than great treasure & trouble therewith.
 #4148 - chastisement, reproof warning

= 15:33 is = the instruction of wisdom

Comp. 16:6 By f. of L. men depart from evil

ben. 19:23 f. of L. tendeth to life; he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall
 #6118* #6038 - modesty not be visited with evil.
 #3885* #7649*

ben. 22:9 By humility & f. of L. are riches & honour & life
 #3117 - literal day

end 23:17 be in the f. of L. all day long

~~3372~~ 24:21 fear the Lord and the king

* 2450 - intelligent
 skillful, artful
 arrogance
 1344 - from 1342 (to mount up, to rise, to be majestic)
 1347 - also from 1342 - arrogance, majesty, ornament
 2419 - perversity or fraud, from 2015 (to turn over)
 3254 - to add or augment
 982 - to hide (not as quickly as 2620)
 2620 - to flee
 4170 - a noose (for catching animals), from 3369 (to ensnare)
 4103 - confusion or uproar, from 1949 (to agitate greatly)
 3885 - to spend the night or stay permanently
 7649 - to satiate, from 7646 (to fill to satisfaction)
 6118 - the result, on account of

Mothers and Fathers and Sons

Let's talk for a few minutes about child TRAINING. I've been looking forward to this, but I have to admit, after studying it in Proverbs, I'm feeling a lot more "sober" about this whole issue. God takes parenting VERY seriously, and we should, too!

We first looked at Proverbs 1:1-6 and the purpose of this book. Last lesson we looked at Prov. 1:7 and the fear of the Lord. Today and next lesson, we're going to look at Proverbs 1:8-9 and the topic of sons and fathers and mothers.

*"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck."*

I began my personal study by getting out my *Strong's Concordance* and looking up all the usages of the words "mother" and "father" in Proverbs (in the King James Version). I found "mother" used 14 times and "father" used 18 times. I discovered that there are foolish children and righteous children. I also found that there are wonderful blessings for righteous children (and their parents), but there are also severe consequences for foolish families. Let's look at some verses together.

What does a foolish child look like?

- Let's look at Proverbs 19:26, which says, "He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace."
- Proverbs 28:24 says, "He who robs his father or mother and says, "It's not wrong" — he is partner to him who destroys."
- Proverbs 30:11 says, "There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers."

As always when we look at Scripture, we shouldn't point fingers at OTHER people's children. Rather, let's look inward at how WE acted

while growing up; then, if we have children, we need to check for these evil behaviors in our own homes.

However, think of this: where was the parent when his child was stealing from him? Why didn't this parent teach his child that stealing is a sin? Why did the parent LET this child chase him or curse him? Who is the adult here anyway? (Ever wonder these things?)

My question is an age-old one. Who reaps the consequences for foolish children -- the parents or the children? For instance, I know parents whose children are grown but do not live for God. Often, their parents will say, "Well, we did our best. We just have to leave them to the Lord now." I've also heard of grown children who have come back to God only to say, "It's all my parents' fault that I turned out the way I did! If they had only done such and such, I wouldn't have had all these bad things happen to me!"

Well, first, what are the consequences for foolish behavior for the children, whether small or grown?

- Proverbs 20:20 says, "If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness."
- Proverbs 30:17 says, "The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures."

The descriptive language used here makes my heart get cold! How many moms and dads say that their child's happiness is their number one goal? Yet without discipline, Scripture warns that happiness is the LAST thing our children will have! I know that dreadful things happening to one of my children is the stuff of nightmares, yet a disobedient child is inviting the curse of God.

What about the parents? What misery will they have to live with if they have foolish, disobedient, mocking, and cursing children? Unfortunately, Proverbs has MUCH to say about this!

- Proverbs 10:1 says that "a foolish son [brings] grief to his mother."

- Proverbs 15:20 says that " a foolish man despises his mother." I know that, as a mom, I do NOT want to be despised by my children!
- We already read Proverbs 19:26, which says, " He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace." This shame is brought upon the child himself, but it's also brought on the parents, the family and the community.
- Of course, it doesn't start when the child is grown, for Proverbs 29:15 says that "a child left to himself disgraces his mother."
- There's more! Proverbs 17:21 and 25 says, " To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool... A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him." This is a stern warning that giving birth to children does not necessarily bring blessing! RIGHTEOUS children are the goal!
- Also, Proverbs 19:13 says that " A foolish son is his father's ruin."
- Proverbs 28:7 says that "a companion of gluttons disgraces his father." Doesn't this sound like so many fathers we see, men whose lives are ruined financially or whose reputations are damaged without repair, simply because their sons got into trouble with the law or whatever?

So who bears the consequences? I think it's fair to say that BOTH do!

So what exactly is the responsibility of parents? First, let's read Proverbs 4:1-4:

*"Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.
I give you sound learning,
so do not forsake my teaching.
When I was a boy in my father's house,
still tender, and an only child of my mother,
he taught me and said,
"Lay hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands and you will live."*

Fathers are to "instruct" and give "sound learning." They are to give teaching ("torah") to their children. They are to start when their

children are young ("tender"). In fact, this was still an only child, too young to yet have siblings! Finally, fathers are to pass on the instruction that they learned from their own fathers.

Proverbs doesn't stop there. Proverbs 29:15 says that "The rod of correction imparts wisdom." There is so much on the "rod" in Proverbs, I'd like to talk just about this next lesson! Keep in mind that Proverbs 3:12 says "the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." Discipline is a way of showing love to our children, regardless of what our culture may try to tell us!

Notice that many of these verses are directed to the father. I think it is a firm principle of Scripture that the father needs to be taking an active leadership role in the training of his children, even though in the majority of homes, I see moms doing most of the child training. Of course, Proverbs doesn't let mothers off the hook. For instance, Proverbs 31:1 says that King Lemuel was taught specific spiritual truths by his mother.

Parents, teach your children to listen and obey your instruction!

Of course, children have some responsibility in this as well.

- Proverbs 1:8 says, "LISTEN, my son, to your father's instruction and DO NOT FORSAKE your mother's teaching"
- Proverbs 4:1 says, "LISTEN, my sons, to a father's instruction; PAY ATTENTION and gain understanding."
- Proverbs 28:7 says, "He who KEEPS the law is a discerning son."

I firmly believe that one of my first jobs as a parent, when I'm holding a young baby and a barely-beginning-to-toddle child is to teach him to HEAR me and LISTEN and PAY ATTENTION. I make my very little ones (nine months old, or even younger) look at me in the eye when I speak. I require first-time obedience at a very young age so that my children learn to listen from the beginning. I don't want to have to retrain on this very essential skill!

Ahhh... the good part is coming! Just as God sternly warns us parents in

Proverbs, He also promises great blessing to those parents who have a "quiver full" of righteous children (see Psalm 127 and 128).

First, what can the parent expect?

- Proverbs 10:1 says, "A wise son brings joy to his father."
- Proverbs 15:20 says the exact same thing again!
- Proverbs 29:3 promises that "a man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father." Dads can look forward with joy to those teen years, not with dread!
- I especially love the words of Proverbs 23:22-25 that say,

*"Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
Buy the truth and do not sell it;
get wisdom, discipline and understanding.
The father of a righteous man has great joy;
he who has a wise son delights in him.
May your father and mother be glad;
may she who gave you birth rejoice!"*

- Proverbs 6:20-23 says,

*"My son, keep your father's commands
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
Bind them upon your heart forever;
fasten them around your neck.
When you walk, they will guide you;
when you sleep, they will watch over you;
when you awake, they will speak to you.
For these commands are a lamp,
this teaching is a light,
and the corrections of discipline
are the way to life."*

- Proverbs 22:6, a controversial verse in Proverbs, says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn

from it." However, after looking at so many other verses in Proverbs, I don't see how there can be any controversy. I also firmly believe that the opposite of this verse is true: "DO NOT train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he WILL turn from it."

Next lesson we'll discuss in greater detail exactly HOW Proverbs says we should train up our children.

The Rod of Correction

I remember being six or seven years old, sitting on a hard wooden pew in our old church building in Michigan, listening to my father preach on a Sunday morning. The sun would filter through the ancient stained-glass window, and my mind would be carried away like the little dust particles floating in the sunshine.

Then I'd hear him quote a verse from Proverbs, like this one:

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Proverbs 23:13, KJV).

What!?! Yikes! I knew exactly what my dad was talking about! He meant that if I dared sneak off with my friend after the morning service, to get into some kind of forbidden (but oh, so fun) mischief, I would know exactly what to expect when we got home! I was sure he was preaching directly to me, and I'd sink down further into the seat cushion. 😊

But with all the trouble I got into when I was younger, and with all the "correction" I received, I'm now very thankful that my father (and mother) read and applied the book of Proverbs in our home.

What specifically does Proverbs have to say about HOW to correct our children? Lots! I don't think I'll tire you by listing every verse, but I've found four keys to the practical side of parenting, and I'd like to share them with you.

Key #1: Who Needs Correction?

Proverbs 10:13 (KJV) says that "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding." Understanding (Strong's #3820) means the feelings, the will, and the intellect.

So someone who is lacking in feelings (for others?), in a will to obey, or simply in intellect, or the knowledge of what needs to be done, needs correction.

When my little Kiersten was about 17 months old, she didn't yet know that the kitty litter box wasn't a good place to play. She also couldn't understand my reasoning if I were to stand there and say, "Now, Sweetie, isn't that yucky? Would you like to come and play with a doll instead of those little gray and brown rocks?" No, a swift smack to her bottom sent the perfect message -- YUCK! DANGEROUS! GET OUT!

Key #2: What Kind of Correction?

I found two types of correction in Proverbs.

The first kind is the "rod" (#7626), which simply means a branch. It's obviously a literal object used by a parent to correct a child. In Proverbs 23:13-14, the King James Version uses the word "beat." No, I don't like this word either. It brings up pictures of little children cruelly being abused. Even the Greek for the word means to strike, lightly or severely (#5221).

Proverbs 26:3 helps me understand the concept better: "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the fool's back" (NKJV).

Would a master beat a horse until the horse was lame? No, but he might use a whip to train young colt. (I've heard it's the noise of the cracking whip that a horse doesn't like.)

How about a donkey? If I were to ride a mule down the Grand Canyon's narrow pathways, I'd sure be holding onto that mule's bridle, directing it to STAY on the path! And so it is for the fool's backside.

The Bible is not telling us to abuse our children; rather, we are to use a literal rod (stick, branch, "spankin' stick" as it's called in our house) on our little one's backsides -- to train them and to help them learn to "follow our directions."

A second type of correction found in Proverbs is reproof. "The rod and reproof give wisdom..." (Proverbs 29:15, KJV). Reproof (#8433) means correction, refutation, proof (as used in a lawyer's defense), argument, and reasoning.

Obviously, it won't do much good to argue or reason with a two-year-old. She is "void of understanding" and needs a gentle rod to learn. However, is a teenager "void of understanding"? No, and I firmly believe that as a child grows in knowledge, we should begin to use "reproof" as our primary means of correction. I've heard it said that as our children approach adulthood, we become more like their coach, standing on the sidelines, cheering them on or warning of the opponent's tactics, as our children learn to tackle life's challenges on their own.

Key #3: When Should We Correct?

First, we should correct when we observe **foolishness** in our children. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound (tied) in the heart (feelings, will, and intellect) of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive (shove) it far from him" (KJV).

Secondly, we should train a "**child**." In all of these verses, the word child (#5288) means someone from the age of infancy to adolescence. Since I have seven young children, this reminds me that I can start when they are infants!

(There's never a better time! Remember the old Charmin commercial, where the little girl stuffed toilet paper in her pants because she knew her mother was coming to spank her? Little ones have built-in "padding" in the form of a diaper! I've found that many spankings at the ages of one and two mean only occasional spankings at the age of five. They also develop a child who is ready to listen and pay attention to me as I start to "coach" her with reasoning and reproof.)

Thirdly, we need to be training our children **often**. Oh, this was enlightening! Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him BETIMES" (KJV). I had to look up that word! How interesting it was to discover that "betimes" means to be up at dawn or up early. We need to be earnestly working at our task. We need to search, with painstaking, for times when our children are foolish and need correction. Wow! This is yet another reminder of the importance of consistency.

Key #4: Why Should We Correct?

Maybe this is already obvious, but I want to quote several verses that speak to the benefits. We just read in Proverbs 13:24 that chastening our son shows our love, but sparing (or refraining from the use of) the rod shows that we hate our children. What a foreign concept in our culture!

Proverbs 22:15 says, "The rod of correction shall drive [foolishness] far from him" (KJV). After reading in Proverbs and seeing the perils of foolishness and the benefits of wisdom, I'm sure that I don't want foolishness to have any part of my child! Proverbs says that it is the rod that can drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:14 says, "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (kjv) Why does the rod show our love? Because we are literally snatching away our children from the grasping hands of death!

Proverbs 29:15 says, "A child left to himself disgraces his mother." How many mothers we've seen who are ashamed of the deeds of their children! How many mothers are ruled by two-year-olds! How many mothers are brought to tears when their grown sons turn from God! I don't want to be one of them, do you?

Some days, my little one's tears make me want to turn in my resignation as a mother. What mother likes to see her little girl cry? Who likes to hear mournful wails from the bedroom? Maybe men do better at correction than we women do, but I know I struggle with being the "bad guy" all day long.

I want to close this lesson with the same verse my father used to quote from the pulpit, for it helps me a lot:

*"Do not withhold discipline from a child;
if you punish him with the rod, he will not die" (Proverbs 23:13,
NIV).*

And remember our verse from last lesson?

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

Recommended Book: [*Don't Make Me Count to Three*](#), by Ginger Plowman.

The Downfall of the Wicked

While this topic looks rather gloomy, I can assure you it's not. In fact, I am very excited to write to you today, because this topic is full of hope and rejoicing for the believer. However, I'm going to stray a bit from my normal format. I won't be listing the usual Strong's references, but I will be writing out a lot of verses for you to read, from Proverbs as well as other passages in the Bible. I hope you are greatly encouraged!

The next verses for us to look at are Proverbs 1:10-19, which say,

*"My son, if sinners entice you,
do not give in to them.
If they say, "Come along with us;
let's lie in wait for someone's blood,
let's waylay some harmless soul;
let's swallow them alive, like the grave,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
we will get all sorts of valuable things
and fill our houses with plunder;
throw in your lot with us,
and we will share a common purse"—
my son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;
for their feet rush into sin,
they are swift to shed blood.
How useless to spread a net
in full view of all the birds!
These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they waylay only themselves!
Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the lives of those who get it."*

I'm sure we've all heard gruesome tales of wicked people and their exploits against the innocent. Bombings, war, and terrorism are evidence of the evil in our world. Many times, even our own neighbors and friends turn against us, falsely accusing us or plotting to do us harm.

At one time, I slowly read through the Bible, about two chapters a day, from the "Living Bible." I enjoyed it because, even though I knew it is not a *literal* translation of the original Scriptures, I've learned so much from the man who paraphrased the Bible in a way his own sons could understand.

In the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, I read about the great adventures of David as he fled from King Saul and later from his own sons who tried to steal his throne. King David wrote many beautiful Psalms in which he poured out his grief about the wicked to God. He complained to God about their unfair treatment, and he begged God for justice.

*"Why, O LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak,
who are caught in the schemes he devises.
He boasts of the cravings of his heart;
he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD .
In his pride the wicked does not seek him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God.
His ways are always prosperous;
he is haughty and your laws are far from him;
he sneers at all his enemies...*

*Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God.
Do not forget the helpless...*

*Break the arm of the wicked and evil man;
call him to account for his wickedness
that would not be found out...." (Psalm 10:1-5,12,15)*

But in another Psalm, David praises God before he even sees how God is going to answer:

*"How long, O LORD ? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?"*

*How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?*

*Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.*

*But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
for he has been good to me." (Psalm 13)*

You see, God IS going to bring justice someday. Let's look at some verses in Proverbs where God warns the wicked of their downfall.

*"The wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the unfaithful will be torn from it." (Prov. 2:22, NIV)*

*"Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being snared." (Prov. 3:25-26, NIV)*

*"But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what makes them stumble." (Prov. 4:19, NIV)*

*"But whoever fails to find me harms himself;
all who hate me love death." (Prov. 8:36, NIV)*

*"Ill-gotten treasures are of no value,
but righteousness delivers from death.
The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked." (Prov. 10:2-3, NIV)*

*"Blessings crown the head of the righteous,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.
The memory of the righteous will be a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot.
The wise in heart accept commands,
but a chattering fool comes to ruin.
The man of integrity walks securely,
but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.
He who winks maliciously causes grief,
and a chattering fool comes to ruin.
The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked." (Prov. 10:6-11,
NIV)*

*"What the wicked dreads will overtake him;
what the righteous desire will be granted.
When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone,
but the righteous stand firm forever.
The fear of the LORD adds length to life,
but the years of the wicked are cut short.
The prospect of the righteous is joy,
but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.
The way of the LORD is a refuge for the righteous,
but it is the ruin of those who do evil.
The righteous will never be uprooted,
but the wicked will not remain in the land." (Prov. 10:24-25,27-30,
NIV)*

*"The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them,
but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness." (Prov.
11:5, NIV)*

I could keep going and going, for there seems to be no end to verses like these. I don't think it would be right for us to gloat over the doom of the wicked. We need to follow Christ's example (and David's, too) by having a loving attitude toward them, praying for them and doing good to them. On the other hand, we shouldn't wring our hands when we see the

trouble they cause.

Way back in the garden of Eden, God promised the defeat of Satan and his followers. God said to Satan, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). From that moment on, mankind had hope that God would one day send a Savior.

I picture King David reading from the Law and seeing God's promise of a Savior, given first to Adam and reiterated to many generations after him. Then I read where God promised David that his kingdom would last for eternity, a promise that could only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ Himself.

Finally, I am encouraged by the words of the Apostle Paul, written over a thousand years after King David and his son Solomon wrote of the downfall of the wicked.

*"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

And Paul's next words apply to us today...

*"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.
Always give
yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your
labor
in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:55-58, NIV)*

So, I say to you, don't worry about the wicked. When it seems like they'll always win, remember that they won't. Turn to the Psalms for comfort

when life is hard. Remember that Jesus conquered death and sin when He rose from the grave. And He wants us to:

- Stand firm!
- Let nothing move us!
- Always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord!

God is watching. Our reward is coming. In the meantime, press on.

A Practical Way to Honor the LORD

Today we're studying about something near and dear to my heart -- priorities. [As you probably know, I've written a whole book on our priorities in life.](#) My book is specifically for women, but today's verses apply to everyone.

Our first priority in life is always to glorify God. Most of the time we think of having our devotions as a way to put God first in our life, or maybe marrying a Christian, or going to church, or sharing the gospel with the lost. Today's verses in Proverbs, though, put life in perspective and bring Christianity down "where the rubber meets the road."

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Proverbs 3:9-10, KJV)

The word "honour" used in verse 9 means "to be heavy" (Strongs #3513). What is the heaviest priority in my life, I ask myself? How do I know what means the most to me? I personally want God to be "heavy" in my life, and I want to walk in obedience to Him always.

According to these verses, one very important way to honor God is with my substance, or my wealth (Strongs #1952). I don't think we realize how important money is to us until we're asked to give it away. Ouch! Not only are we to honor God with our wealth, we are to honor Him with the FIRST-fruits of all our increase (income, Strongs #8393).

I once asked my 8-year-old son if he knew what "first fruits" are, and he said, "Well, those would be the first apples that grow on a tree." Giving God a FIRST portion of our income means that we have to trust Him to supply what we're going to need later. That's tough!

But if we give to God FIRST, trusting Him to work everything else out, doesn't that show He is "heavy" in our lives? After all, if we can trust God with our money, we have an easier time trusting Him with everything else.

Verse 10 gives some wonderful promises: our barns will be filled with plenty (Strong's #7647, meaning "copious" and "generous"), and our presses shall burst out with new wine. The picture here is of a thriving farm, where the harvest was good, the weather held, and now it's almost winter. The barn is full of hay for the cows, and its cellar shelves are packed with jars of produce to last this family a year. The farmer has worked hard to pick all the fruit, and he has plenty of healthful foods and beverages to give nutrition to his family. He and his family are not afraid of the coming snow.

Why does he have all this plenty? Because He gave to God FIRST, and God blessed him. He could have waited until November to give some of the harvest to God, to be sure that he would have enough for his family. He could have stayed up at night, filling out careful budgets to be sure that he had realistically portioned out what he needed before he decided how much to give to God -- and gotten an ulcer or two in the meantime. He could have at least waited until he knew that the insects wouldn't get into his harvest, or that a hailstorm wouldn't destroy the crops, or that his barns wouldn't burn down. But no, he gave to God first, trusting God to supply everything else.

We have much to be thankful for. We aren't "paid" once a year, like this farmer. We get paychecks once or even several times a month. Yet fear and love of money often rule our senses and show us what REALLY is top priority in our lives -- ourselves.

God calls us to be different. He wants us to honor him FIRST and allow Him to provide everything else we need.

Other verses in Proverbs that speak to money are:

- Riches and honour are with [wisdom]; yea, durable riches and righteousness. (Proverbs 8:18)
- The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious. (Proverbs 12:27)
- There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. (Proverbs 13:7)
- And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. (Proverbs 24:4)

Payday tomorrow? Honor the Lord...

The Benefit of Wisdom

Recently, I clicked onto <http://bible.gospelcom.net>, and guess what was the verse of the day?

"Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9, NIV).

Being filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding -- that is precisely why we are studying the book of Proverbs right now!

In this lesson, we're headed into chapter 2, and I'd also like to suggest that you read through these passages on your own later:

- Proverbs 3:1-26
- Proverbs 4:1-13
- Proverbs 8:1-9:12

Chapter 2 of Proverbs is divided into 3 sections:

- 1) If you will...
- 2) Then you will...
- 3) When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, then...

If you will...

- **Receive my words** (v. 1) -- receive means to take in (Strong's #3947). How can we take in God's Words? Only through His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

We need to schedule a daily time for "taking in" God's Words.

- **Hide my commandments with thee** (v. 1) -- hide (#6845) means to hoard.

This reminds me of the stories of Christian prisoners in Nazi war camps who would have to share one Bible among many hundreds of prisoners. They would tear pages out of the Bible and distribute one to each person, and each person would HOARD their personal page, reading it so many times that its words were memorized. Is God's Word so precious to us that we hoard it, or hide it in our minds, so that it can be recalled at any time?

- **Incline thine ear unto wisdom** (v. 2) -- incline (#7181) means "to prick up the ears."

My black lab has the BIGGEST ears, and on a windy day, if she is in the back yard, her big ears start flopping around in the breeze. It's hilarious! I've also noticed on a quiet night, when my husband happens to be away, that she'll lie next to me on the floor. Sometimes she'll lift her head and those monstrous ears will shoot out like sails on a ship. I didn't hear a sound, but those "inclined" ears don't miss anything. Are we as careful to listen to God?

- **Apply thine heart to understanding** (v. 2) -- apply (#5186); heart (#3820)

We've discussed before how heart is "used very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect; likewise for the center of anything." I like the book [*Ordering Your Private World*](#), by Gordon MacDonald, and his wonderful discussion of our hearts and what we need to do to protect them.

- **Cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding** (v. 3)

I can relate to this because my toddlers are very good at "crying after" something they want. For instance, yesterday our dog sat on Baby's favorite blanket. The dog weighs around 85 pounds, so

there was no way Baby was going to be able to convince Doggy to move off! So he sat next to Doggy and "lifted up his voice."

A verse I love says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5, NIV). As a wife and mom, I need wisdom ALL the time!

- **Seek for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures (v. 4)**

This reminds me of this story Jesus told: "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:8-10, NIV).

Then you will...

- understand the fear of the Lord (v. 5)
- find the knowledge of God (v. 5)
- understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, then...

- discretion shall preserve thee (v. 11)
- understanding shall keep thee (v. 11)
- to deliver thee from:
 - the way of the evil man (v. 12)
 - the man that speaketh froward things, etc. (v. 12-15)
 - the strange woman (v. 16-19)
- thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous (v. 20-22)

We have marked some of the benefits of wisdom. We found that God richly blesses those who seek after Him! God blesses our families, our

jobs, our health, our pocketbooks, our friendships. We gives us joy, peace, safety, and hope for the future.

These are just some of the temporary, earthly benefits, but I want to point them out to you. I know many Christians who have trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and are certain of spending eternity with God in heaven. However, they are living discouraged, defeated Christian lives now.

When I read through Proverbs and list the benefits of seeking after wisdom, I can't help but notice that these are blessings God gives to us now. God doesn't want us to live in defeat. He promises good success to those who follow wisdom.

I am not saying that we'll be rich and always happy and never sick a day in our lives. Yet I also can't ignore the promises of God that as I follow His wisdom, he will bless me.

I urge you to receive God's words, hide his commands in your heart, poke up your ears toward wisdom, apply your heart to understanding God's Word, cry after knowledge and seek for it as for hidden treasure. Don't ever let ignorance of God's Word be your excuse for why God can't bless you.

"GRACE and PEACE be MULTIPLIED to you in the KNOWLEDGE of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us ALL THINGS that pertain to life and godliness, through the KNOWLEDGE of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious PROMISES, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:2-4, NKJV, emphasis mine)



I'd love to hear how this book has been a blessing to you!

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~Anne

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