

The Gospel & Your Family  
**Parenting for the Future**

Proverbs 23:26, 1:8-9, 6:20-22

God promises to keep covenant and mercy to a thousand generations, but He calls parents to act right now in light of what is coming soon (Deut. 7:9). Much of the book of Proverbs is written to Solomon's grown child to equip him to face all kinds of temptation (e.g. 1:10-13; 2:16ff.). God gives us a life-long vision of parenting.

### **The Heart of Your Child**

Christian parents are not after external conformity to the standard. The wise father pleads with his son to "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Prov. 26:23). He wants his son not just to obey, but to obey from the heart because he has invested himself in the truth. The truth is personal; Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). The biblical father asks, "My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26). He doesn't ask for his son's heart in only an emotional way, and he doesn't say, "Just do what's right irrespective of how you might feel about me." He wants the trust and obedience of his son because he has trusts and loves God the Father, and invites his son to look and see what it's like. This makes a parent completely vulnerable with no room to hide "precious" sins. It orients a parent to use every opportunity to teach and bless. Let's say a son is caught stealing from a store. A parent who cares about conformity and himself will be angry because of his reputation, what it will cost him in time and money to deal with the authorities, the pain from his son's rejection of "all I have done for you", and the headache of trying to control the kid in the future. A parent who has God and his son first in his heart will be most concerned about the root issue—what was his son thinking about? How did he forget the generosity and sovereignty of his Maker? The father will still be disappointed, but it will be used to convict, correct and restore his son, guiding him to take responsibility and make restitution. He will want to see his son stand on the rock of grace and grow from it. In the first instance the kid will regret getting caught and resent the humiliation and attack he feels he from his dad. He'll want to avoid contact. In the second situation, the son will process the healthy guilt and shame he feels, but he will be motivated by the respect and honor bestowed by the correction and obligation of restitution. He'll want more opportunities to earn trust, and will be thankful he was caught and for the opportunity to address any secret sins that have been dragging him down. The constant in this situation is love for God and love for the child. It's a love that demonstrates loyalty and courage and therefore compels loyalty and courage.

### **Process**

This kind of relationship is not completed in a moment, as if a child can say, "Sure, I'll give you my heart", and a parent respond, "We're good then." Parents demonstrate sacrificial love for their children and train them in prompt and cheerful obedience. Training is not the same as commanding. You can command someone all day long

NOTES:

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without ever showing them how to obey. Training means spelling how to do it, and then helping them do it. Like all instruction, it's easier and faster to do it yourself but that's not the goal. The goal is make people that know how to do it, gladly following God by heeding His instruction. The biggest obstacle to training children is your own bad attitude. If you want them to follow you cheerfully, show them how you obey God cheerfully as you correct them. If no one ever listens to you in your house, that's your responsibility before God to change. You'll have to repent of your temptation, if not habit, to get fed up and quit on the child rather than teach and train. You might need to teach less and train more in order to gain momentum. You want to pick your battles carefully, be sure to win them, and be patient in the meantime. Childrearing years go really fast, but there are also many opportunities for us to take and make every day. If you look back and think of habitual sins neglecting to do this, confess it and take action now. In Proverbs 1:8-9, the son is exhorted to hear the instruction of his father and not forsake the law of his mother. Instruction is always applicable and the law never expires. These are like a graceful garland on the head and chains of precious stones about your neck. Parents adorn their children with these, which feels different than being smacked with them. Children carry the instruction and wisdom like honors and precious stones. This flies in the face of what our culture teaches about parents, which is that you should follow your heart instead of listen to your clueless parents. Parents show them how by delighting in what God has given them to wear.

## Looking to Later Years

You teach your kids in order for them to be prepared when you aren't around. The commands of a father and law of a mother are there to guide a son when he roams, protect him when he sleeps, and instruct him when he acts (Prov. 6:20-22). Children have increased freedom as they get older, so parents should be diligent and intentional. Teachers instruct *in loco parentis*, so choose carefully who instructs your children. This is especially important in the teenage years when teenagers are choosing whom they want to be like. Parents should also remember they're still parents of eighteen to twenty-two-year-olds, and consider where the faith of their son or daughter will thrive during those years. Even when his children are grown, Job offers sacrifices for his children in case they sin (Job 1:5). So our job is not done when they're out of the house. They need wisdom, assurance and encouragement to establish themselves and walk with God all of their days, to raise your children's children (Ps. 128:6).