

Sermon: Some Questions about the Family

Text: Proverbs; Colossians 2:2-3

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May 10, 2009 (Mother's Day)

Introduction: The whole concept of “family” is certainly being redefined by the State, most recently the state of Maine. Every day, more and more legislation is passed to blur the boundaries of human sexuality and how one understands “family.”

Where does a person go for dependable and time-tested advice? One source, and the best source, is the Bible and more specifically what has been called “wisdom literature” in the Old Testament.

From a study of the book of Proverbs one can quickly learn how to both select and be a good spouse. Many times when we say the word “family” children also come to mind. Children are likely to be a component of “family.” This may come through natural means or adoption and even human or scientific surrogates may be involved. Even remarriage may create additional family members. This is sometimes called a blended family. In any of these situations - there is a call for wisdom.

Proverbs 11:29 (NIV) ²⁹ He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.

Life is short; children grow up quickly. Wouldn't it be great if we had practical, time-tested advice that is *always* sound?

Sometimes to gain wisdom, questions need to be asked:

I. What Should I Provide for My Family?

Proverbs 22:4 (NIV) ⁴ Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

A. What is the most important resource I can give my family?

Some people act as if money can buy happiness. It is statistically true you may live longer and be healthier, but does that equate with happiness?

Joke: A lawyer opened the door of his BMW, when suddenly, out of nowhere, a car came along and hit the door, ripping it off completely.

When the police arrived on the scene, the lawyer was complaining bitterly about the damage to his precious BMW. “Officer, look what they've done to my Beeeemer,!!! he whined.

“You lawyers are so materialistic, you make me sick,!!!” retorted the officer. You’re so worried about your stupid BMW that you didn’t even notice that your entire left arm was ripped off!!!”

“Ooooooh nnnooooooo...,” replied the lawyer, as he finally noticed his bloody shoulder where his arm used to be. “Where’s my Rolex???”

Almost all parents try to provide their families with the necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter. Many feel obligated to try and give their children more than what they had as a child. They want them to have a better education so they can earn more money to buy more things they think they need.

I think the most important commodity we can give our children is a godly example. Our children need to see how much we love our spouses and them. Most importantly they need to see us love God!

B. Where should the emphasis be?

The emphasis should be on a spiritual legacy. If you are a “first-generation Christian,” you have a more difficult task ahead. You’ve had no real model. If you were reared in a Christian family, you may need to fight the attitude of familiarity that can breed contempt, or taking your heritage for granted.

What is it we should be providing for our families? More than an appreciation for material things, we should be showing a respect, reverence, and fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord provides:

- 1. The beginning of knowledge.**

Proverbs 1:7 (NIV) ⁷The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

- 2. A means to prolong life.**

Proverbs 10:27 (NIV) ²⁷The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.

- 3. The key to avoid sin.**

Proverbs 16:6 (NIV) ⁶Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.

- 4. The key to true riches.**

Proverbs 22:4 (NIV) ⁴Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

What can be give our children? We ought to give our children, LOVE!

Proverbs 15:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred.

Providing an environment where love reigns is more important than anything.

Troubled children come, many times, from homes where “love” is lacking, not finances!

Illus. Often when there is a divorce and children are involved, there are games played to see who can spend the most money on the children. What the children really need is love, and money is no substitute for love.

We can provide a peaceful family life.

Proverbs 17:1 (NIV) ¹ Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

You understand there is generally nothing wrong with eating well. These proverbs are not an indictment on eating well. They *are* an attempt to get us to understand the worth of love compared to lasagne.

Where there is peace and tranquility in a family, material things matter little.

If we are always fighting over what wealth can provide, what good is it?
(Comment about inheritances.)

There is no more important issue than to pass on what spiritual blessings we have received from God to our family.

C. What about material needs?

I do not mean to make light of material things, but we certainly should not worry about them. Jesus said in the *Sermon on the Mount* if God takes care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, how much more will he provide for his children.

Illus. I personally have never been at more peace about material things than when I had no furniture, and another time when I had no car. God always provides!

However, if you want to insure proper provision for your family, according to the Proverbs you can do two things:

1. Be righteous.

Proverbs 20:7 (NIV) ⁷ The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.

Children, if you want to be blessed, encourage your parents to be righteous. Parents who go through life failing to put God first, put their children at grave risk.

2. Concentrate on acquiring wisdom and knowledge, not wealth.

Proverbs 24:3-4 (NIV) ³By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; ⁴through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

In Matthew's gospel, along these lines, two questions are posed:

Matthew 16:26 (NIV) ²⁶What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Being a disciple (follower, learner) of Jesus Christ means we find another Treasure.

Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV) ²My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If Christ is not your Treasure, you are poor indeed!

To be wise another question should be:

II. How Should I Rear My Children?

Proverbs 15:10 (NIV) ¹⁰Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die.

A. How should I discipline my child?

There are many appropriate ways to correct your child - up to and including corporal punishment - by that I mean spanking. Used properly, physical punishment can be:

1. a demonstration of real love.

Proverbs 13:24 (NIV) ²⁴He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

2. proper discipline has appropriate objectives in mind.

a. to remove foolishness from the child

Proverbs 22:15 (NIV) ¹⁵Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Proper discipline is also meant:

b. to save the soul of the child.

Proverbs 23:13-14 (NIV) ¹³ Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.

c. to impart wisdom and to avoid shame.

Proverbs 29:15 (NIV) ¹⁵ The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.

A child cannot rear himself. He needs a parent's wise direction.

3. Proper discipline has its rewards.

Proverbs 29:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.

4. Parents need to be (are) responsible for their children's discipline.

Proverbs 19:18 (NIV) ¹⁸ Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.

a. Discipline needs to be timely, i.e. before it is too late.

b. Discipline should be used to correct and build up rather than tear down.

c. Do not discipline out of anger, but out of love. There is a difference between child abuse and spanking.

B. How should I train my child?

You should expose your child to every opportunity to experience God. The longer you wait to introduce your child to Jesus, the harder it will be for him/her to be saved. It is the same way with discipline.

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

Let's clear up some common misunderstandings:

1. Spiritual training does not guarantee your child will find God; some children rebel.

2. And a lack of spiritual training does not guarantee the opposite result.

What I *will* say is that if you do not introduce your child to God at an early age, and you do not start discipline of your child early, the odds are that your child will grow up to be an “undisciplined unbeliever.” And I believe God will hold us all accountable for that poor stewardship.

Conclusion: Family is probably the area of greatest pain and pleasure in our lives. It also can be one of the areas of greatest neglect. Children do not grow up by themselves any better than gardens grow without tending. Priorities need to be set so that our families get our full attention.

What makes a strong family? The Proverbs tell us that God’s wisdom makes us strong, but it needs to be practiced to see success. In a sea of advice, God’s is always the best.

Illus. Patrick Morley, in his book *Man in the Mirror*, tells about a group of fishermen who landed in a secluded bay in Alaska and had a great day fishing for salmon. But when they returned to the sea plane, it was aground because of the fluctuating tides. They had no option except to wait until the next morning till the tides came in. But when they took off, they only got a few feet off the ground and then crashed into the sea. Being aground the day before had punctured one of the pontoons, and it had filled up with water.

The sea plane slowly began to sink. There were three men and a 12-year-old son of one of the men on board. Mark prayed and then jumped into the icy waters to swim to shore. The water was cold, and the riptide was strong, but two of the men reached the shore exhausted. They looked back, and their companion, who was also a strong swimmer, did not swim to shore because his 12-year-old son wasn’t strong enough to make it. They saw the father, with his arms around his son, being swept out to sea. He chose to die with his son rather than to live without him.

There is a fact of life that most kids do not know. We love our children so much that we would die for them. - Robert Russell, *Preaching Today*

Jesus did something different. He died so we might live - and so we might live with him eternally.

* We thank our parents, especially mothers, on this special day for all of the love shown, and sacrifices made, on our behalf. If that has not been your experience, maybe you can be that type of person for others who need that kind of love and support.