

Principles from Proverbs: The Family—Part 7

Focus on the Responsibility of Parents

The Book of Proverbs contains inspired directives especially suitable to the young. A significant portion of the Proverbs addresses issues faced by parents. Children should not be subjected to disciplinary experimentation and societal whims. Therefore, Proverbs presents time-tested and God-blessed principles for rearing Godly children.

I. Duties Incumbent upon Parents

A. Train your children.

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

1. In other passages, the Hebrew word for “train” is translated “dedicate.” It comes from an ancient Hebrew root word meaning “to make narrow.”
2. Training means to direct and restrict the path children are to follow. Direction shows children what is right; restriction withholds children from what is wrong.
3. Training is an ongoing process and it requires consistency and solid knowledge of Biblical values, verses, and principles.
4. Proper training always eventually takes hold. This verse does not promise perfection in a child; but it does promise that the right kind of training will have a positive influence, even if it delayed to “when he is old.”

B. Teach your children.

→**Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father...for I give you good doctrine....” (Proverbs 4:1, 2)**

1. A child’s education is primarily the responsibility of the parents. While schools may be called in to help, the parent is ultimately responsible before God for the child’s education.
2. Parents must instruct in matters of “doctrine.” The basics of the Bible should be learned at home as well as at church. Sunday School is not enough!

C. Lead your children.

→**The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. (Proverbs 20:7)**

1. Children learn most effectively from example. A man of integrity has an exterior “walk” that reflects his inner character.
2. Character and integrity comprise the most significant inheritance parents can give children. One’s integrity lives on long after he is gone in the lives of his children.

D. Discipline your children.

→**He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. (Proverbs 13:24)**

1. Parents must use reasonable corporal punishment in the discipline of their children.
 - a. Reasonable corporal punishment is not abuse.
 - b. Reasonable corporal punishment causes pain without injury.
 - c. Reasonable corporal punishment can only be administered with the parent is emotionally in control.
2. Failure to use reasonable corporal punishment indicates hatred for one's children.
 - a. Reasonable corporal punishment requires strong parental love because it costs the parent as well as the child.
 - b. Carelessness and neglect is not love. Overlooking behavior that should be punished is not love.
3. Consistent, reasonable corporate punishment manifests a parent's love.

→**The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. (Proverbs 29:15)**

1. Reasonable corporal punishment brings wisdom as well as pain.
2. Children must learn that there are consequences for their actions. Physical pain early in life is preferable to emotional and mental pain later.
3. Children left to rear themselves end up as shameful failures. Parents are in large part responsible for their children's success.
4. Note the two different disciplinary prescriptions found in this verse: the rod and reproof. The rod speaks of physical punishment while reproof speaks of verbal admonition. Both are appropriate. Parents must carefully determine when to administer each.

→**Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. (Proverbs 23:13, 14)**

1. Do not be tempted to "go easy" on your children. Corporal punishment, properly administered, will not cause permanent damage.
2. Proper punishment will serve to reinforce spiritual messages. A consistent view of sin, punishment, and justice prepares the heart for receiving the Gospel.