

May 8, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Mothers' Day
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Proverbs 1:8.

1. What is Torah?
2. List the three ways the root to torah (yahrah) is used in the Old Testament.
3. Describe how a mother's (or any person's) life-governing principles can be drawn from the Bible.
4. Should a mother expect her children to listen to and observe her teaching?
5. If Mom doesn't teach her law to her children, who will teach them and what will they teach?

LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER
Proverbs 1:8b

Paul began his first letter to the Christians in Corinth with a sound contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world. It is true that the thinkers and doers of the world have shaped the lifestyle of cultures. American culture is the result of human wisdom taught and practiced especially over the past two generations. Human wisdom can be good. It can be helpful and useful in solving practical problems of life. But human wisdom that rejects the wisdom of God is spiritually deadly.

God in His infinite wisdom has laid down certain rules or principles for women in general and mothers in particular. A quick review of some of these life-governing principles causes human wisdom to draw back in shock and disgust. For example, at the very outset when Adam and Eve brought sin into God's perfect creation, God laid down two difficult rules for the mother. *To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16)*. First, God promised every mother that bearing children will be a painful experience. That is certainly the case from what I have observed. Second, God promised that the wife will desire to have her husband's position as the head of the house, but the husband will rule over the wife. That has to be a difficult requirement in light of the deficiencies we husbands bring to the table.

Then there is God's rule that the wife/mother is supposed to be productive in her home. *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table (Psalm 128:3)*. That sounds a bit old-fashioned, doesn't it?

God requires the mother to build her home with wisdom (Proverbs 14:12), and then He gave this long list of what wisdom looks like as it is practiced by the excellent wife and mother (Proverbs 31:10-21).

At least three times in the New Testament, God requires the mother and wife to be submissive to the husband who He has placed as the head of the household (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-7). God expects wives and mothers to learn how to love their husbands, love their children, and learn to be sensible, pure, workers at home (Titus 2:4-5). God even expects mothers not to argue with their husbands, but to quietly correct the husband's errant ways through submissive respect (1 Peter 3:1-2).

In human wisdom the world has reacted to these rules to say the least. What I have just briefly described to you from God's set of life-governing principles is held in derision by modern humanism. The women of the world howl with laughter when a meek and mild, God-fearing woman is brave enough to explain that these rules govern her way of life. "No one believes or practices such backward, neanderthal kind of rules in this modern day," they say. They marvel that

someone could be so foolish as to actually believe that the Bible is trustworthy and useful as a guide for determining lifestyle.

Therefore, because God's Word has proven useless to these modern thinkers, they have gone about to establish their own guiding principles based on twisted, sinful human wisdom. They have concluded that all women and men are equal (which by the way God also teaches). But their idea of equality is that women ought to be allowed to do whatever men do. In fact, the modern way is for a woman to try in every way possible to become a man. According to the modern opinion, at the very least, mothers should compete with men in the world of business, sports, military, and religion. According to their wisdom, mothers should farm their children out to specialists who will teach them how to get along in a world governed by Satan, while they burn themselves out in a career that will be as satisfying to them as if they were men.

It doesn't take a Philadelphia lawyer to collect the evidence that proves how well this philosophy has worked out. Since these views that conflict with Scripture were popularized (from 1945 to the present), our society has plummeted to such a low moral and spiritual abyss that many people fear it will never recover. We have committed societal suicide by adopting the principles of human wisdom over the principles of God's Word.

I will never forget the video of mother Toya Graham in Baltimore last year who gave her son "what for" because he was trying to be part of a riot. She was at home when she saw news footage of her son throwing rocks at the police. Well, being a mother who understood her responsibility for her children, she marched right down to the riot, found her teenaged son, and right on national television, reminded him that she was in charge and he was supposed to listen to her teaching. That was probably one lesson he will never forget.

The world found Toya Graham's response either encouraging or frightening. In many ways, her response to her rebel son looked a lot like God's plan. *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord (Colossians 3:20)*. And our text: *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching (Proverbs 1:8)*. We will focus on the last part of that statement: "*Forsake not your mother's teaching.*"

Mother Needs a Law.

All mothers, but especially mothers who profess to know God, need to establish life-governing principles. Wisdom is the best qualifier for these principles. Notice how the context sets the stage for the command of our text.

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth – Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:1-7).

A good and useful set of guiding principles will flow out of wisdom. Most thinking people would agree with that conclusion. Wisdom is the ability to think clearly. Wisdom is able to apply the facts of amassed knowledge to the circumstances at hand. Maybe wisdom is best observed in a process called critical thinking. We hear much about this in the current culture, but see little of it practiced.

Here is a definition of critical thinking as defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, 1987, articulated by Michael Scriven and Richard Paul: "Critical thinking can be seen as having two components: 1) a set of information and belief generating and processing skills, and 2) the habit, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behavior. It is thus to be contrasted with: 1) the mere acquisition and retention of information alone, because it involves a particular way in which information is sought and treated; 2) the mere possession of a set of skills, because it involves the continual use of them; and 3) the mere use of those skills ("as an exercise") without acceptance of their results."

In laymen's terms what they said was, "Thinking critically is habitually applying acquired knowledge through a set of beliefs to answer questions and solve problems." For 200 years, each

successive generation in America was taught how to do that. Today, lessons in critical thinking are almost completely missing from homes and educational institutions. What is important today is feeling good about yourself to the point that schools establish “safe zones” where everyone is forbidden to think critically.

In contrast to what is popular today, good mothers have acquired useful knowledge and know how to make that knowledge work in answering questions and solving problems. To a point, any member of the worldwide community can draw on human wisdom to accomplish that task. Our mothers need a higher standard.

The Bible is the best source for providing these principles. We need to remember that Solomon’s introduction to wisdom applied to the wisdom he laid down through the collection of proverbs primarily, and through the knowledge of the entire Word of God secondarily. The first step in knowing true wisdom is knowing God. Solomon also taught, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10)*.

The foundational knowledge a mother needs to gather in order to establish profitable life-governing principles is knowledge of the Holy. That means that salvation from sin is the first step in gaining wisdom. After salvation, reading, studying, meditating on, memorizing, knowing the Bible builds on that foundation. In short, “Mom, if your not right with God, get right with God.” His law is the right law. It is where all of us must begin to lay our foundation principles for guiding our lives.

Once Mom has established those life-governing principles for herself, she needs to teach them to her children. As a general rule, church-going people are familiar with the term *torah*. It’s not a word connected with Japanese kamikaze pilots or the attack on Pearl Harbor. That is spelled *tora*. We use the Hebrew word *torah* to refer to the first five books of the Bible. To that end, most of the time we think of the *torah* as a very useful, valuable collection of principles. It is. But the word contains more than that.

The word teaches us that good principles are worthy of teaching. The root for the word *torah* is *yarah*. The verbal form of *yarah* is used essentially three ways in the Old Testament. It describes shooting arrows. The archer did not shape and mold his

arrows, he did not pick out and string his bow just to be able to say that he has a bow and arrows. The whole intent of the bow and arrows is that the archer will shoot them. He intends to pull the arrow back on the bow string and let it fly to the target.

That is what the godly mother does with the wisdom she has gained from the Bible. She directs that wisdom at circumstances, at questions, at problems. She directs that wisdom at her children. Sometimes when she hits the mark it stings a bit.

Second, the verb is used to describe throwing stones. Much like the archer with his arrows, the idea was not to just randomly chuck stones like my grandchildren do in the yard. The idea was to throw a stone with an intended target in mind. It is what David had in mind when he whipped that stone around in the sling and then let it fly with the full intent that it would hit Goliath in a vital spot. If he failed to direct the stone, we never would have heard about him.

So godly mothers do with the wisdom they have gained from the Bible. And no doubt their teenaged children feel like Mom is stoning them at times. But as we shall consider in a moment, hitting the target with teaching is valuable gain.

Third, this verb is used in the Old Testament to mean teach. This meaning of the verb *yarah* gives us the common understanding of *torah*. The book of the law is teaching that God desires for His people to learn so that we might know Him. Mother’s teaching is the sharing or conveying of the wisdom she has gained from God’s Word. Now, let’s consider some very practical conclusions about Mom’s teaching.

What is the mother’s goal in teaching? One important goal is for Mom to teach her daughters how to be godly women. She needs to realize that our children come to us as unlearned and ignorant sinners. Someone is going to teach them how to live. Because they have a natural bent toward sinning, the stuff sinners teach is naturally attractive to them.

Mother’s responsibility, therefore, is to teach the daughters how to apply the wisdom of God’s Word. That means, teach her how to be a good wife by sharing with her and explaining to her God’s standard of the good wife. Teach her by showing her what a good wife looks like – that is in your relationship with your husband. Teach your daughter why we should love God and be dedicated to Him in what

we say and do. Teach your daughter how to read the Bible and pray. A very important set of lessons is rooted in teaching your daughters how to get dressed. That doesn't mean how to tie her shoe, though that is important. Rather, teach your daughters the four principles for choosing a modest appearance that God gave us in 2 Timothy 2:8-10. And by all means, teach your daughter how to act and how not to act around boys.

Along with that, it is also Mom's responsibility to teach her sons how to be godly men by teaching them her life-governing principles. Again, sons come to us with the same propensity to sin. Therefore, Mom is going to need to teach him how to respect women. She will need to teach him how to discern a chaste and sincere girl from a loose and flirty girl. Teach him the important traits of godliness he should look for in a girl. Teach him how to communicate with his future wife. Teach him how to be a good husband. Teach him to love God supremely.

A mother cannot teach any of that by simply sharing what the world practices. The practices of the world tend more toward the sinful nature. Mother's teaching needs to counteract that natural bent.

Children Need to Pay Attention.

They need to learn from Mom. Listen to what Mom teaches. In Hebrew poetry, parallelism means that when two parallel statements occur, they both teach the same lesson. Therefore, the command to the children when we consider the verse in its entirety is "listen and keep." *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching (Proverbs 1:8).*

An important truth to discern is that listening is not the same as hearing. Maybe no previous generation has been more adept at multi-tasking than this one. How can they do homework, listen to music, and watch "You Tube" all at the same time? Okay, maybe homework isn't required or doesn't require much thinking these days. Hearing is often equivalent to the sounds going into the ear and quickly being dissolved in a sea of distraction in the mind.

God's plan is for children to pay close attention to what the parent is teaching. The word requires children to pay attention and gain. That is the truth found in Proverbs 4:1: *Hear, O sons, a father's*

instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight (Proverbs 4:1). The word translated *attentive* means to pay close attention and most of the time implies the result of obedience. We are all accustomed to hearing that annoying loud "BEEEEEP" followed by about six more annoying "beeps" on the radio or television. That is followed by an authoritative-sounding voice that says, "This has been a test of the emergency broadcasting system. If this had been an actual emergency, you would have been instructed where to go in your area for additional instructions." Now in the event that the annoying beeping were to be followed by more instruction, would you pay attention? Most likely.

What would you think of someone who responds in that setting, "Oh, but the beeping sound that arrests our attention is so annoying." Or "Oh no! Not more instruction!" "All you do is preach, preach, preach, nag, nag, nag!" You might conclude about such a person, "Okay, ignore the instruction and be swept away in a tornado. It's your choice." That is just like the child who refuses to pay attention to Mom. Fail to pay attention to Mom's teaching and you will also fail to gain insight. Mom's teaching is supposed to result in a greater ability to perceive. Perception is very valuable when it spells the difference between a life and family that honors God and a typical worldly life and family that is full of tragic fractures and heartache.

To hear is to receive Mom's words of instruction. Solomon taught, *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you (Proverbs 2:1).* To **receive** is to snatch up and carry away like so much booty. The treasure in this case is Mom's words of instruction. More than that, it is her commands. No child appreciates Mom's commands at the time, but hopefully because her life is rooted in God's Word, her commands will instill godliness if you snatch them up and carry them away.

Third, to hear is to incline your ear to understanding. Solomon wrote, *My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding (Proverbs 5:1).* The word translated *incline* means to bow down or to stretch out. It requires effort, and, depending on the value of the object reached for, great effort. Imagine that you have fallen overboard while on your much-awaited cruise. Someone yells, "Man overboard." The ship stops. They lower a rescue craft and the crew members in the rescue craft throw you a life ring attached to a

rope. Will you reach out for it? You will especially if the waves are rough and pushing you further away. You will reach out with all your might.

Stretch like that to grasp, to understand your mother's teaching. You will understand when you are able to discern. To discern is the same thing as thinking critically. Do this by asking questions. Discuss how these truths work in real life. Granted, that is not "cool" but it is a life saver in a sea of sin.

Another way (and maybe better way) of hearing or grasping the principles is to observe how Mom's law works in her life. One of the best ways to learn, to gain, to snatch up and carry away is to watch. Watch your mother read her Bible and pray. Watch your mother as she watches television. Watch what your mother reads. Watch how Mom responds to unfavorable circumstances. Watch how she interacts with your father, with neighbors, with church folks, and with strangers. Watch and learn. Hopefully learn what to do. But sometimes learn what not to do.

Having heard, children need to guard and practice what they have learned. We guard that which we perceive to be valuable. Solomon taught, *My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you (Proverbs 7:1)*. The key words in this command are *keep* and *treasure*. We watch over an object like a guard if we think it is valuable. Picture the Brinks armored truck outside a local bank. There are two guards. One hauls big bags in or out of the bank. The other guy stands guard with weapon near at hand. Frankly, I do not really know what is in those bags, but based on the care taken to guard them, the contents must be valuable.

We also treasure up things we think are valuable. We put the important stuff in a safe or in a safety deposit box at the bank. This is what Moses' parents did with him when they saw that he was a special, valuable child.

The object children are supposed to value and treasure up is Mom's commandments. The natural, sinful response to Mom's commands are to ignore or to mock or to intentionally break. That is the opposite of counting them valuable. If Mom's commands are rooted in the Word of God, they are essentially God's truths passed on through her. You cannot count godly commands from your mother

lightly and still claim to be a lover of God, a follower of Jesus, and a student of His Word.

It is also true that we will practice that which we perceive to be useful. Solomon requested that his son learn his teaching *for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching (Proverbs 4:2)*. The godly Mother gives good precepts. Precepts are things taught. But often, the emphasis of this word is on what is learned. Children need to pay attention to what Mom teaches. They need to learn. Having learned, they need to be careful not to reject or leave behind the lesson Mom teaches.

God's plan for the family is quite simple. Mom and Dad are supposed to be in love with Him, dedicated to His service, students of His Word, so they can pass the truths they learn to the children. The children are supposed to pay close attention to the rules and commands such mothers pass down and treasure them up as most valuable possessions. Does anyone think that our culture would be quite different than it is, if American mothers would have been doing this over the past couple of generations, and children would have been responding as God desires?