

# Wisdom For Life And Ministry

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.  
(Proverbs 1:7 ESV)*

*Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray. (Proverbs 10:17  
ESV)*

*'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'  
(Job 28:28 ESV)*

*The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from  
the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.  
(Matthew 12:42 ESV)*

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

## **Train Up A Child**

**July 21, 2019**

**Proverbs 22:6**

**Pastor Jody Cross**

### Introduction

Thanks team ... Good morning Redeemer. It's great to be with you this morning...

We are continuing on in our Wisdom for Life and Ministry Series. I would like you to open your Bibles to the book of Proverbs.

Today I want to talk with you about parenting. Whether they are still at home, or have moved away, or whether you have influence in a child's life, this message is for you.

They are cute, make us laugh and at their kindergarten graduation, they make us cry. They are filled curiosity and potential and bring us pride and joy. They are complicated and bring us to our knees and to tears. They are gifts from God. They are God's inheritance, and we are their caregivers.

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.  
(Psalm 127:1-3 ESV)

One day you find yourself entrusted with a child. Into your hands from the hand of God has been given a life. It is a tiny life. It is a precious life. It is an eternal life. It is a life fashioned by his hand, bearing his image. God created and purposed this life with a plan and entrusts this boy or girl TO YOU TO PARENT THEM. Wow. That is NO SMALL RESPONSIBILITY!

By God's good grace, Alex and I have been married for almost 31 years. Together we have been at this parenting thing for 26 years. We felt quite unprepared for the task. We need to learn a lot by trial and error.

I was raised by a single mom; I was saved out of a dysfunctional childhood. God has been merciful to me and to us. God has blessed us with 4 wonderful, unique bundles of joy. They came in at different weights, looking different and by God's grace we've been privileged to be their parents now for over 2 decades. We have not been perfect parents, not by a long-shot. When they were little, with 4 under 6 years of age, we were busy. Now they are young adults we are prayer-ful.

We'd all agree being a parent is hard work. It's tiring. It's difficult. It is costly. But it is one of the MOST IMPORTANT THING you will ever do. Children require the highest care and utmost diligence given to their upbringing. You are leading a child to know, love and serve Jesus. You are leading them to be with him forever.

Parents, grandmas and grandpas, church family, we need to take this task of leading and feeding these little lambs seriously. You have a HIGH CALLING to influence another for Christ. Parenting is a life-shaping opportunity that has an enduring and eternal impact.

Who this morning feels adequate for the task? Maybe I should ask, who feels overwhelmed with the task? Thankfully, we have God's Word, it is His instruction manual for living and Proverbs is wisdom from God, for parents to help children to grow up in the ways of God.

Please turn to Proverbs 22:6. Hear now the Lord of the Lord, this very familiar verse,

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

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

This morning we are going to focus on this one verse from the book of Proverbs and let it give us wisdom as to how we should train up children.

I want to make 3 observations from the text.

Here's the first one; God calls us to,

### 1. **Parent with Focused Purpose**

Train up a child...(Proverbs 22:6a ESV)

Note, first, this is an imperative. Take this seriously. It is God's command to us. "Do your duty. Fulfill your responsibility."

The word used in Proverbs 22:6 is an interesting word. It literally means "UP". Up a child in the way he should go – that's what it says. The "train" part is assumed and added in the English so that the sentence makes sense, but it literally just says "UP a child" in the way he should go.

So what does it mean to *train up*? Jason DeRouchie is helpful here,

It is, "an intentional, sustained, God-dependent shepherding of our children's hearts as they grow into adulthood — one in which the children themselves are aware of the parents' trajectory-setting intentions. This is not a passive calling for dads and moms."

Jason DeRouchie

Parenting is not passive. It is hands on. Training up a child is intentional, sustained and God-dependent. It is the shepherding of a child's heart. The Bible says that it all flow from our hearts. It is the source of all we are and do.

In seeking to train up a child we are dedicating them to a course of action. We are actively devoting our children to the ways of God. We are steering them toward Jesus, toward salvation, toward godliness, and getting them ready for a fruit-bearing, kingdom impacting life. We want them to one day hear from the Lord one day, "well done, good and faithful servant!"

Good parenting isn't like driving into a car wash, putting it in park, and watching it all happen. Good parenting isn't something we stumble into. We have to work at it. We are actively, intentionally focused on God's purpose for children.

Parenting is not always done well. We are sinful people raising sinful children. We struggle. We lose our patience. We can be too harsh, or too lenient. The Bible doesn't cover up parental failures. The Bible gives examples of God's leaders who neglected to train their children and suffered the consequences.

Who remembers what happened in King David's family? Here's a quick review; David's son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, and then David's other son Absalom, killed the rapist half-brother. David failed to execute justice on Absalom the murdered. Later, Absalom sought the death of his father David, in order that he might be King. Similarly, David's 4th son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne of David, and by a political coup take the place of the appointed heir to the throne, Solomon. What a gong show! What a needless tragedy.

Listen to the account in 1 Kings 1,

Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?"  
(1 Kings 1:5-6a ESV)

Did you hear that? I will read it again, "His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so."

David was a negligent parent. He was guilty of the sin of omission. He dropped the parenting ball. He failed to call them to account. He abdicated the responsibility to deliver consequences and justice and it came back to consume he and his family. Solomon later would write,

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. (Proverbs 29:15 ESV)

If you fail to parent your child NOW YOU AND YOUR CHILD will pay the price LATER. There are consequences to INACTION. The failure to properly train up your kids when they are young generally results in tremendous pain and heartache when you are old.

What therefore does it mean to be intentional about your parenting – to parent with a focused purpose? The end goal is not about raising up kids who will be successful in their careers and make lots of money. It is about raising up children who will be FAITHFUL AND COMMITTED FOLLOWERS of Jesus! Our goal is to point them to Jesus. The Gospel does not come pre-loaded. It has to be uploaded into your kids. You are the uploader!

Many of you grew up in a Christian home. If you did chances are you made a commitment when you were very young. Thank God for the "uploaders", those parents, grandparents, Sunday School teachers or VBS leader who

influenced many of you to put your trust in the Lord at an early age.

We still believe in the importance of “uploading”, of introducing children to Christ. We love children and we make them a priority. Last week at the Family Carnival we saw hundreds of children running around the field at RCC, and we seek that every one of them will come to know and love Jesus, amen? In 8 days we will open our doors to 200 children and our prayer is to introduce them to Jesus, and help them grow in a relationship with him.

As a parent, in your training UP, what are you to teach? According to Proverbs we are to teach them about the way of wisdom, and the way of wisdom is Jesus.

I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.  
(Proverbs 4:11 ESV)

We are to teach them about the reality of their sin and their need of a Saviour.

They need to know:

The Gospel - that for them he lived a sinless and perfectly obedient life, that he died on the cross sacrificially.

That Jesus rose from the dead and lives now in the presence of the God Almighty to make intercession for them.

Who God is – and who they are. They need to know that they are both FEARFULLY and WONDERFULLY MADE and also FUNDAMENTALLY and DAMNABLY FLAWED.

That they are CREATURES who RULE over creation, but Dependent CREATURES who live UNDER God's Word and Will. They are not autonomous. They cannot live and lead by their every whim and desire.

God's gives you the task to teach them these things. You pray and work to lead your children to put their trust in Christ and to follow him as an obedient disciple.

Hear the call to train up your child,

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

The Great Commission BEGINS at home.

Where does training up start? It starts with you and your relationship with Jesus. Moms and Dads you need to make Jesus the Lord of YOUR life. The greatest influence you will have on your children and grandchildren flows out of your own growing walk with Jesus.

Ray Ortlund Jr. writes,

You dedicate your child to Christ by dedicating yourself to Christ so enthusiastically that your child tastes how good it is and wants more. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.

Have you committed your life to Jesus Christ? Are you faithfully following Him? How can you lead a child on the path of righteousness if you're not on it? Train them up by being an example. Model what you are teaching. Live out what you are teaching. You have to have it to give it. Let them see it. Let them see you reading your Bible, praying as a family, and being excited about coming to Sunday worship.

You've made Jesus the Lord of your life, and make Him the Lord of your home. Establish a CHRISTIAN HOME. What does that mean? It means making Jesus and his Word the center of your home, hearts, and habits. The Lord instructs us,

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deut. 6:6-7 ESV)

We are to God's Word diligently to our children". God commands us to diligently teach our children love the Lord with all their hearts. How? The Word of God is on your heart and in your home and in your home you talk about Jesus, you talk to Jesus, you sing to Jesus. You train them up by teaching them God's Word. Read it. Talk about it. Apply it. Live it. Sing God's truth into their hearts. Play worship music in your home. Teach them Bible songs. Teach them hymns of the faith. Sing songs at mealtimes that they will sing in church. Pray with your children; pray about all things; celebrate God's answers, his provision, letting them see your faith in action.

Parents of young children, I know you are busy and running around 24/7 but why don't you pull aside for a bit and develop a plan for this; a plan for suppertime and bedtime. A plan for as we walk to school and as we drive time. We have resources for you to look at today and order. We've selected 2 books to assist you:

- Parenting – 14 Gospel Principles that can Radically Change Your Family
- Shepherding a Child's Heart

Parent with Focused Purpose because you God calls you to this and because you love them.

Here's the second thing, parent with loving discipline.

## 2. Parent with Loving Discipline

We are to train them up...

...In the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6a ESV)

Ok, and which way is that? It's the Jesus way - we've covered that, but which way do they naturally want to go? We know that the heart of a child is not naturally inclined to godliness.

Proverbs speaks of the two paths we can travel, one is the way of life, the other is the way of death.

God's way – the way of wisdom → way of life

Devil's way – the way of foolishness → way of death

How do we grow our children from immaturity to maturity? From foolishness to wisdom? How do we get our children

off of one path and on to the other? That's a challenge for within their young hearts is self-centered sinfulness.

Original sin is the belief that all people – all children – are born already twisted because of the sin of our first parents. That's what the doctrine of original sin refers to. This inclination to sin is PART OF US, it is "baked into the human cake". We sin because we are sinners – we do WHAT WE ARE.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV)

The world thinks that babies come out of the womb as total innocents - as good and blank slates and that they only become deviant if and when exposed to damaging societal or familial influences. In other words, babies come out good and WE MAKE THEM BAD. The Bible says the opposite.

They are cute and cuddly and much loved for sure, but inside is greed, dishonesty, and selfishness waiting to be expressed. No parent has to teach a child to steal a cookie, to tell a lie, or to hit a sibling when mom isn't looking. Right? They come out BAD and it is up to us to point them in the direction of good. Your job is to teach her to be honest and generous. Your job is to teach him to be kind. As adorable as they are, there is FOLLY in your baby girl or boy, and the Bible says, but discipline drives it far away.

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

We discipline our children because they NEED it. Don't allow your children to grow up without guidance. Don't allow them to "go their own way". God calls us to parent with loving discipline.

What is discipline? The word means to teach and instruct. This is where we get our word, disciple, which literally means, "a learner". To discipline is to facilitate learning – it is to TEACH or instruct for life!

Likely that's not what many of you think when you hear the word discipline – you think of the hard actions of parenting that follow bad behaviour. Discipline is that, but not only that, it also constructive, instructive, establishing expectations, setting boundaries, and rewarding obedience. By daily instruction, brick by brick, day by day, event by event you need to build UP a biblical worldview in your child.

We discipline our children because they need it and also because we love them. Hear this, discipline is an ACT OF LOVE.

Train children, not in the way they would go, that of their corrupt hearts, but in the way they should go; in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Matthew Henry

Let's face it - it is difficult and no one enjoys it. We shrink back from discipline fearing the loss of the love of our child, and it IS DISRUPTIVE in the moment, but later will come the good fruit of godly character, and gratitude that you had the courage to do so.

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.  
(Proverbs 13:24 ESV)

God calls us to provide much needed, loving discipline to our children. This is for their good, because of our love, for God's glory. Just as God disciplines the children he loves, parents are to discipline the children we love.

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.  
(Proverbs 3:11-12 ESV)

We've talked about the constructive side of discipline. For a moment let's consider the firm side of discipline. Sometimes all it takes is a stare, or maybe a simple corrective conversation. At times all that is required is a stern warning. However, sometimes a firm and physical consequence is required. We've quoted a few Proverbs now that have the word "rod" in them. We think for example of Proverbs 13:24,

"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." (Proverbs 13:24 ESV)

The "rod" in the Bible is a common symbol for correction and chastisement. In living memory in this country tools and implements were used. Many of us are old enough to remember the strap in Public School and the wooden spoon at home. The laws in this country have changed now.

The current law says that you can spank with your hand but NOT with a tool or implement of any kind and you can't leave a mark and you can't do it in anger – those are the current laws in Canada – and they in NO WAY keep you from following what the Bible says here.

You can be firm – and if the occasion calls for it – you can be physical. You don't need a spoon or a strap to communicate to a child that they have crossed a significant line and they need to retreat rapidly. You can be firm without breaking the law. And you should be firm.

When you are firm with your kids you communicate that crossing lines – at home – and out in the world – comes at a cost. You want your kids to understand that if they cross a line that has been drawn – whether by mom and dad or by the government or by God – if they cross the line, they will pay a cost.

We want them to know that lines are there for a reason. Rules are meant to keep us safe and to point us in the direction of health, love, kindness and respect for God, ourselves and others.

So when required, with the means at your legal disposal – be FIRM and CONSISTENT in your discipline. Clearly communicate where the lines are and consistently enforce the consequences that have been agreed upon. That's good parenting and that's good preparation for life in every age and culture.

"Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." (Proverbs 29:17 ESV)

Why do you do lovingly discipline your children? Because you God calls you to this and because you love them.

Parent with loving discipline. Here's the third truth,

### **3. Parent With Prayerful Expectation**

...even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6b)

This is one the most well known, and loved, yet misunderstood verses on parenting. It has no doubt caused grief to many who don't understand the function of a Proverb. It is helpful to remember again that proverbs are principles

not promises. They are general truths. They are principles that communicate a LIKELY outcome.

Parenting is not like a Pepsi machine; put in coin, push button, out comes perfect child. If only it were that simple. Do A-B-C, repeat for 18 years, and voila, perfection. Give me the steps and I will produce the model child.

Parenting is a fearful thing. Look around. We have good reason to be concerned as parents. Look at culture, at life in our education system, at the threats coming at our kids from every side. We wonder what will become of our children who now are only 9, but we are fearful of what might happen when they are 19.

We feel the burden of our prodigals. Some of our children have been taught the Bible, been to VBS, been baptized, and are struggling spiritually or have altogether made their decision to turn away from their faith.

Some of you this morning hear this message with a heavy heart. You have a wayward son or daughter who knew the truth yet wandered away. My heart grieves with you. Sometimes children make bad choices despite having received good and godly parenting. We can do many right and good things as parents and still not receive the outcome we long for. We can only encourage the choice to obey, they must choose. They are not ROBOTS and WE ARE NOT GOD.

Maybe you feel the weight of responsibility for having neglected to point your children to Jesus or to discipline them. Maybe you came to faith later in life...You have seen the consequences. My heart grieves with you. Don't lose heart today. God wants you to pray and trust in His grace. God can redeem our past parental failures. He is faithful even when we are not. He promises to answer our heart cries, so come to Him, and continue to pour out your earnest petitions for the things that matter.

Parenting, grand parenting, being a Sunday School teacher or VBS or youth leader is a fearful thing. We will never do it ALL right. The great news is that our children are in his hands. No one loves our children more than the Lord. No one has a greater investment in his or her future than the Lord.

Don't overestimate your power – God is the One who changes hearts. Only God can reveal the glory and grace of Jesus to your children. Only He can give them a new heart.

But likewise don't underestimate God's power in and through you as a mom or dad.

Parents are called to prayerful expectation. I love this verse. Here's what we hope for,

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.  
(3 John 4 ESV)

Did you hear that? No greater joy! There is a joy of joys. When we sit back and watch them go, and watch them pursue Christ, and watch them involved in ministry, and listen to them pray...no greater joy.

Illustration: The baton...This is something we give to the interns at the end of their time with us. We love them, we walk with them, train them, provide helpful, loving correction, and place the baton in their hands, cheering them on as they go forward with God. Isn't that just like parenting?

We parent with focused purpose to lead them to Jesus. We parent with loving discipline to teach them to talk the path of wisdom and life. We parent with a prayerful expectation of what by God's grace they will become:

- For their own earthly and eternal good.
- For the good of their impact on society
- For our joy as we watch them flourish
- For the glory of God as they shine as bright and bold lights for Him.

Should we work hard? Should we sow the good seed of God's Word into their lives? Do we need to be patient, persistent and prayerful? Yes, yes, yes. Should we trust in our own efforts work. No. We are not in charge of the outcomes. We are responsible to be faithful. Trust in God's power and ability, by His Spirit to change their hearts and lives.

We have prayer resources for you, in your bulletin is a prayer card, 7 Days of Prayer For Your Child, and a book, A Mom's Prayer For Her Son.

Parents, don't stop praying – for yourself as a parent, as a grandparent, as an influencer. No one can teach us to parent like the Lord so plead with him to help you and to give you wisdom.

Whether you have little ones, or teenagers running around your house, or if they are gone and on their own - pray for your children. In a spirit of trust and dependence, daily ask for wisdom, ask for strength to do what you need to do, and wait on God to do what only he can do.

Believe in his Word that as you sow good seed into good soil that God prepares, and as you prayer fervently, you will see a good result.

Work, pray and then rest in the power and love of God.

## Conclusion

Parents - take the long view. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint. It is the day by day, persistent investment into the next generation, for the glory of God.

As the gospel continues its transforming work **your** lives, it will advance **through** your lives to impact your children.

To train up a child in the way he or she should go requires a focused purpose, loving discipline, and a prayerful expectation.

Don't stop training them up.  
 Don't stop instructing them with loving discipline  
 Don't stop praying with expectation.  
 Don't give up hope.

Trust God to help you influence lives for Christ.  
 Trust God to touch your children and change their hearts.  
 Trust God to save and sanctify them and keep them in his care in this world, and bring them safely home, for his glory.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.