

WHAT SHOULD FATHERS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN?

Proverbs 3:1-12

Wise fathers raise mature children by teaching them how to relate to God and others.

My father was an aerospace engineer. During a downturn in the aerospace industry he went back to school and got his teaching credential. For a brief stint he taught college math including calculus. He studied calculus as part of his undergraduate program, but he told me years later that it wasn't until he taught it that he really came to understand it.

I never understood it. I had to take calculus in college and from opening bell to final exam I was absolutely and completely lost. I passed. To this day I do not know how. Here I had a father who taught calculus, but he didn't prepare me or help me in the least. In this case his failure to teach and prepare me for calculus did little harm to either the math world or me.

But he did prepare me and my sisters to live life. And for this I am eternally grateful.

Brothers, if you are a father, stepfather or grandfather raising your grandchildren, you have an incredibly important role to play in raising your children to maturity. We must not fail to teach our children and bring them to maturity. At the heart of maturity is knowing how to properly relate to God and others. This wisdom that Solomon passed on to his son is the same wisdom we need to pass on to our children.

On this Fathers Day, Proverbs 3:1-12 is an encouragement that wise fathers can raise mature children by teaching them how to relate to God and others.

PROVERBS 3:1-12 (ESV)

¹ *My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,*

² *for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.*

³ *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

⁴ *So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.*

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

⁶ *In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

⁷ *Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.*

⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;*

¹⁰ *then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

- ¹¹ *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,*
¹² *for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.*

WISE FATHERS CAN RAISE MATURE CHILDREN (3:1-2).

Dads, if we want to raise mature children we need to teach them. That's the first thing we see in verses 1-2 of Proverbs 3; Solomon took seriously his responsibility to teach his children.

- ¹ *My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,*
² *for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.*

Solomon urged his son to take his teachings to heart and apply them for they will bring long life and maturity. The Hebrew word translated *peace* is *shalom*. In this context it means to be *complete*. By listening to his father's teaching, Solomon's son will become a mature man.

Brothers, if you have children or grandchildren, you need to understand you play an important part in their maturity. You need to be teaching them. Your teaching directly affects the maturity of your children and grandchildren. Your teaching is helping your child become fully formed spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. You play a critical role in the maturity of your children and the quality of life they will live.

Listen to the huge impact you have on your children from some of the latest research.¹

- **Children With Fathers Do Better in School**

A 2001 study by the Department of Education showed that students whose fathers were highly involved at school were 43% more likely to receive A's. A concern that many educators have about boys is that they don't enjoy reading. But dads can help here too. One study reports that when fathers read recreationally, their sons read more and scored higher than did boys whose fathers did little or no recreational reading.

- **Children Without Fathers Are More Likely to Do Jail Time**

The Department of Justice surveyed 7,000 inmates in 2002 and found that 39% of them lived in a mother-only household before being locked-up. In a similar study that surveyed nearly 14,000 female inmates, more than half grew up in a single-mother household.

- **Children With Fathers Are Less Likely to Abuse Drugs and Alcohol**

- **Children Without Fathers Are More Likely to Be Sexually Active as Teenagers**

A recent study showed that involved dads have twice the influence as moms on reducing teen sex. Another study... found that children without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant as adolescents.

- **Children Without Fathers Are More Likely to Be Obese**

- **Children With Fathers Get More Roughhousing**

Cross-cultural studies have found that the one thing fathers across the world have in common is that they roughhouse with their kids more than moms. Roughhousing makes kids resilient, smart, moral, and socially adept.

- **Children With Fathers Are More Likely to Have a Larger Vocabulary**

- **Children With Fathers Are More Likely to Be Encouraged to Take Healthy Risks**

¹ <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2015/06/19/the-importance-of-fathers-according-to-science/>

While mothers tend to focus on their child's safety and well-being, dads are more likely to encourage risk and independent thinking in their children which will benefit them well into adulthood. Researchers have found that dads are more likely than moms to encourage their kids to talk to strangers, take on challenges, and to think for themselves.

- Children With Fathers Gain Many Additional Benefits to Health and Happiness

The longest longitudinal study ever done on the lives of men, found that a man's father influenced his life in many ways exclusive to his relationship with his mother. Loving fathers imparted to their sons:

- enhanced capacity to play
- more enjoyment of vacations
- greater likelihood of being able to use humor as a healthy coping mechanism
- better adjustment to, and contentment with, life after retirement
- less anxiety and fewer physical and mental symptoms under stress in young adulthood

In the negative column, it "was not the men with poor mothering but the ones with poor fathering who were significantly more likely to have poor marriages over their lifetimes." Men who lacked a positive relationship with their fathers were also "much more likely to call themselves pessimists and to report having trouble letting others get close."

Fathers, we play an essential role in raising mature children.

So what should we be teaching our children?

We need to teach our children how to relate to God and how to relate to others.

WE NEED TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN HOW TO RELATE TO GOD AND OTHERS (3:3-12).

In verses 3-12 Solomon teaches his son four principles concerning how to relate to God and others.

The first principle is *keep your commitments*.

Keep your commitments and you'll gain a good reputation (3:3-4).

³ *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

⁴ *So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.*

Dads, we need to teach our children to keep their commitments.

Solomon encourages his son to cultivate the virtues of *steadfast love* and *faithfulness*. The phrase *steadfast love* is the Hebrew word *chesed*. It often times describes God's loyal love for His covenant people, the Jews. In this context it describes a believer's loyal love for God. Solomon is encouraging his son to keep his commitment to God. The second virtue, faithfulness, means *to be dependable*. Solomon is encouraging his son to keep his commitments to others.

We need to teach our kids to keep their commitment to God and to keep their commitment to others. If they will become people who keep their commitments they will enjoy the blessing of a good reputation with God and with others. That's what it means to *find favor and good success in the sight of God and man*.

Dads, we need to teach our kids to keep their commitment to God. They need to see us in God's Word. They need to see us living out God's Word in our relationship to their mother, to them and to the church family. We need to bring our children to church and emphasize the importance of being part of the church family. They need to see us serving in the church or in a community ministry. They know what's really important to us by observing where we put our time and energy.

Some of my earliest memories are being in church. I remember being in a room full of school supplies because my father was serving as Sunday School superintendent. As I reflect, my father always served somewhere in the church family: AWANA Director, Deacon, bus driver, financial secretary. He kept his commitment to God and taught us children to do the same.

We also need to teach our kids to keep their commitments to others. *Your word is your bond.* If you agree to do something you do it. The practical benefit is a good reputation with people.

I see this particularly in my daughters. They have never had trouble finding work; in fact, they have been sought out and I believe it is in large part because they are dependable. They show up on time. They work hard with a good attitude. Employers appreciate this and reward this. We all appreciate and value people we can count on.

So Dad's, if you want to help your kids become mature, teach them to keep their commitment to God and to others.

We also need to teach our children that if they will follow God, (not their hearts), their lives will be easier and healthier.

Follow God (not "your heart") and your life will be easier and healthier (3:5-8).

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

⁶ *In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

⁷ *Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.*

We need to be Psalm 1 men and teach our children to obey the commands of God's Word. The world tells us to *follow our hearts* which is a recipe for disaster. The Bible tells us:

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick;

Obedying the Lord makes life so much easier and healthier. Which is easier to navigate – a straight or crooked path?

What happens when we don't trust and obey God and we lie? Now we have to manage that lie; we have to remember what we said and who we said it to. Lies are like rabbits; they have lots of babies. Stress mounts, blood pressure increases, sleep suffers. Relationships are affected. Then the fallout when the lie is discovered and trust is destroyed.

It is far better to obey God and tell the truth even if it's hard. Life is so much easier and healthier in the long run when we trust God and tell the truth.

What happens when we don't trust and obey God and have sex outside of marriage? Now we have to deal with venereal diseases, unexpected pregnancies that may lead to an abortion or a child being raised in a single parent home without the help and support of its father. Sex outside of marriage has serious affects on healthy bonding, trust and particularly self-worth for women.

It is far better to obey God and experience sex within the marriage covenant. Life is so much easier and healthier when we trust God and follow His design for our sexuality. And we could and should illustrate this truth in so many other ways with our children such as it applies to alcohol and drugs, greed, gossip etc.

As wise fathers we need to teach our children to follow God (not their hearts) with the blessing that their lives will be easier and healthier.

A third subject we need to address with our children is God and money. We need to teach them that God owns everything; He is our provider and they need to honor God by giving Him a portion of what He gives them. The blessing is that He'll keep them well supplied.

Honor God by giving Him a portion of what He gives you and He'll keep you well supplied (3:9-10).

⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

Solomon taught his son to honor God by bringing the firstfruits of his crops to Jerusalem at the times of the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks. God promised abundance for those who kept covenant with Him.

In the same way, we need to teach our children to honor God by giving Him a portion of what He gives them. God promises to keep supplied those who give generously to the work of the ministry.

² Corinthians 9:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* ⁹ *As it is written,*

*"He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."*

¹⁰ *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

The fourth area of life we fathers need to help our children navigate is trials. As we all know, trials are inevitable; we all fall into trials of various kinds. The wise father helps his children understand that trials are an opportunity for spiritual growth. Trials are a means God uses to transform our lives to become more like Jesus, perfect and complete. Therefore, we fathers need to teach our children to accept the trials God allows as opportunities to grow.

Accept the trials God allows as opportunities to grow (3:11-12).

¹¹ *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Trials are to our character what weightlifting is to our muscles. At the time they are very painful and stressful, but in the end they build strength. We need to prepare our children that God will allow us to fall into trials of various kinds. We may get sick with a long term illness. We may lose our job. Someone we love may die unexpectedly. We may get hit with a flood or a wildfire or an earthquake. If God allows us to go through a trial He does so for our good, not our harm. Share with your children a trial God allowed you to experience and how He used it in your life for good, for growth.

We need to prepare our children for the reality of trials lest they harbor unrealistic expectations of the Christian life. Some have fallen away from the faith because they were lead to believe becoming a Christian would end all their troubles. God is honest and tells us to expect both trials and persecution in this life. Our faith is in the fact that He is with us and has the power to bring good from our trials and persecution.

James 1:2-4 (ESV)

² *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

A wise father teaches his children about trials – that God loves them and uses trials to help us grow.

So what should we fathers be teaching our children?

Keep your commitments and you'll gain a good reputation.

Follow God (not “your heart”) and your life will be easier and healthier.

Honor God by giving Him a portion of what He gives you and He'll keep you well supplied.

Accept the trials God allows as opportunities to grow.

On this Father's Day, I hope you're encouraged and inspired by the privilege and responsibility God has given you to raise mature children. We will help them greatly down the road of maturity if we teach them how to relate to God and others.