

The Relational Basis of a Rational Life

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- [0 : 0 0] The reading today is Proverbs chapter 10, and we'll be reading the first five verses. The Proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.
- Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death. The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
- A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.
- Father, we thank you for this privilege to come before you and call you our Father. And because of how we relate to you, we have a vision in life and in future.
- May you help us as we read and think about your words from Proverbs 10, that we might indeed be wise. Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.
- [1 : 1 0] So the title of the sermon is The Relational Basis of a Rational Life. Sorry, it's quite a long title. I just want us to remember relational and rational.
- I mean, we don't need to be rational. We can live anyhow we like. But if you want to have a rational life, usually it means that we need to relate to someone.
- Someone who is wiser or someone who cares for us and about to kill us. I believe that many children who are here this morning, if their parents allow them to stay home and watch leg flats, they might choose to stay home until coming here.
- But because your parents told you and wanted you to come, so you came. You may not know why you need to come Sunday by Sunday.
- But your parents know and they've gone through it and they know that it's good for you in the future. Yet we naturally choose to do things or spend time on things that give us most pleasure.
- [2 : 2 4] But it may not be the best for us in times to come. And it takes efforts. If you want to do something that is not pressurable, like cleaning up your bedroom, it takes a lot of effort.
- But it's a good habit. And then that would help children as they mature into adults to have good habits to live a rational life.
- So today from this Proverbs, we would consider about how a person has a rational life.
- A life that is with meaning, with hope, with achievement, a sense of achievement as well. Before I go into the verses, I would like to share with you the story of Ji Ping.
- Ji Ping is a man in Malaysia. I first met him about eight years ago. But I just tell you that he died two months ago.
- [3 : 3 3] So he was about my age. I met him when I went to the church that he was attending. I was preaching there. And after the service, I noted that he was sitting by himself.
- And that's why I approached him and started talking to him. And finally, he was single. And it was not common to have a single older man in a church in Malaysia.

Either they don't come to church at all if they're single, or they would have come with their wives. And he told me that he became a Christian just a few years ago in a Christian rehabilitation center for drug addicts.

He became addicted to drugs in his teenage years. And for the next 30 years, his life became irrational.

He lived only for drugs. And he was willing to do anything just to get drugs. And he sold drugs so that he can get money. He also borrowed money from loan sharks.

[4 : 42] Loan sharks are those people who lend you money, but charge you a lot of interest for you to repay. And when you can repay those loans, those loan sharks will go to his parents or his family to get money from them.

And so, and then he also, Ziping was in and out of jail for selling drugs and other crimes.

So finally, or eventually his parents disowned him. He was just kicked out of the house. And he needed to find places to live.

So he lived either in jails, in prisons, or in a rehab center. And he'd gone through rehabilitation again and again.

But he just couldn't get out of this drug habit. One day, in one of the centers run by Christians, he heard the gospel and he understood it. And suddenly, he just was free from this drug habit.

[5 : 45] And he saw somehow something change him. And he started working for that same rehab center for a few years.

And at the same time, he learned and studied from the Bible. And I'm amazed that he studied well. Even though he didn't have much education, when I talked to him, he understood the gospel very well, better than many people that I talked with in Malaysia.

Even though he only got a few years of learning. However, he came to that church because eventually, he couldn't relate too well with some people in the rehab center.

And he left. And he went to a small village. It's a, lived by a lot of Chinese. And it's a village full of idols. I've been there before.

Everywhere you can see idols in that village. He could be the only Christian there. He rented a small house. And he sold stationeries and snacks to students, especially primary students who, after school, who dropped by his place.

[6 : 56] And he had a Sunday school or Bible class for those students as well. And then he was in the church. He helped out in the adult Bible study group.

And he led the adult Bible study group too. He would be the least educated person in that church. But he was the keenest one to have the Bible study.

So every time I went to that church, I would spend some time with him. But when we, when the last year, in February, that was the last time before COVID hit, he didn't attend Sunday service.

I found that he was sick. And by February this year, that's two months ago, Leigh's brother told us that he passed away. He passed away with liver disease.

He would have got hepatitis C from the use of drug. And that eventually killed him. And he died quite miserably. Unfortunately, because of COVID restriction, people from the church couldn't visit him.

[8 : 08] Leigh's brother actually broke the law driving to his place. On his last day, he went there. He was already very, I mean, nobody cared for him for a few days.

So the brother sent him to a place to care, but he died the same night. But at least Leigh's brother was there just in time before he died. It's quite sad in a way, but also quite a joyful thing, seeing the mercy of God working in this man's life.

He would have died at least 10 years before that if he did not change, if he kept, I mean, if he kept on using drugs and not eating regularly, no fixed place of staying.

But do you think Ji Ping's life became easier or harder when he lived, he changed, he lived a new life? Do you think it became easier or harder? In a way, it could be easier for him to keep using drugs as numb himself and die off.

You don't need to worry anything else. That's how he used to live. And now that he's drug free, he needs to live a new life.

[9 : 26] So he needs to think about how he get money, how he support himself, his family didn't want to get him back, and how he starts to relate to people.

As I said, he was sitting by himself in the church. So it's not easy. When you are in your 40s, suddenly you want to get back to the society. Even in the church, it's not easy for him to persist on that.

So he will have struggles within himself as well about temptations and other things that he never needed to worry about in his old life. So it was amazing that he became a Christian, but it was even more amazing for him to persevere in his real life instead of going back to his drug habit and trying to make a living for himself and serve in the church while he copes with his illness and his loneliness.

I pray that none of the young people here will end up like Ji Ping in his former life. Ji Ping's life became irrational when he had a strong craving for drugs.

He sacrificed his education, his youth, his relationship with his parents, his friends, just for the transient pleasure of having drugs. The problem with craving is that even though there were times when Ji Ping regretted his lifestyle, he got no home, he got no hope.

[11 : 04] But it was too difficult for him to get out of it. That's how he knew how to live. And he don't know what else to do. Why did Ji Ping become addicted to drugs in his teenage years?

It was because he wanted to please his friends and to please himself instead of pleasing his parents. If he had listened to his parents, he would not have lost his youth to drugs.

Proverbs 10 starts with the contrast between a wise and a foolish son. A wise son is one who knows that he is not as wise as his parents. He learns from his parents and tries to understand his parents' concerns.

A foolish son is one who thinks that he is wiser than his parents. He pays no regard to the advice of his parents. So in verse 1, we read, A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

So the first question about these words, I suppose, is to, why only about sons? Sorry, in your bulletin, the heading is a bit different.

[12 : 15] So A should be, why only about sons? What about daughters? Don't daughters need to do the same thing as well? Yes, they do. But wise sons?

For three reasons. One, ultimately, Proverbs talks about the perfect relationship between Jesus the Son and God the Father.

So that is one of the reasons. Secondly, it is through Jesus' sonship with God that we relate to God. So, in God's sight, we are all sons in one way because we relate to him as our father through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that is why sonship. Three, sonship also implies more about privilege and responsibility, not about gender.

So it does not matter if you are a male or female, if you are a son or a child of this family, you are loved and cared for. At the same time, you are expected to respect and listen to your parents.

[13 : 22] That is the implication of a sonship. Second question is, why should we care about pleasing our parents?

So as we read verse 1 and verse 5 in particular, we have a sense that a son is wise when he aims to please his parents and bring honor to them. How does this apply to us in the Western culture in which we mostly live to please ourselves?

And how does this apply to those in the Eastern culture in which becoming a Christian can be considered as dishonoring to the family? So even in both cultures, there's difficulty in accepting this implication of pleasing our parents.

But then we read in the Old Testament in the fifth commandment, God said, honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

So this is the only commandment that can be promised result. If we do that, something else will happen to our life.

[14 : 35] So why, that we can consider, why is this important to honor our parents? I think in God's economy, in God's plan, the family units are God's design, that design building blocks of a society and a nation.

Stable families build a stable nation. And if we don't listen, or if all the children just do their own things, families are not stable, then we would not live in a stable society or a stable nation.

And how a person treats his parents reveals his character. A son who dishonors his parents is not likely to relate to other people well. So that, again, will set up the society, how stable it is.

If we don't relate to our parents well, or we don't, if we dishonor our parents, then it's not likely that we will respect other people. And number three, parents have more experience in life than their children.

That's because they're older, for the fact that. So their views are usually wiser. These are some of the reasons I can think of why God told us to honor our parents.

[15 : 56] Obviously, God is our father. If we don't honor our parents, it's unlikely that we will honor God as our heavenly father. However, the commandment to honor parents was given in the context of the first commandment, that is to worship God alone.

So that is in the context. It's not only just honoring your parents, anyhow. God is still in the first place. But most of what we do to honor our parents would also honor God at the same time.

It is rare that we need to choose between honoring God or honoring parents. So there are two questions. Why only about sons?

Why should we care about pleasing our parents? The third question is about Jiping. Could Jiping have avoided getting into drugs just from these verses?

Jiping and I came from a similar family background. We were both teenagers in Malaysia in the 70s. We both grew up in non-Christian families. I could have easily got involved with drugs like Jiping did or other young men, young children did.

[17 : 12] What was holding me back from trying out drugs? I think one of the most important factors was my fear of bringing shame to my parents. The name of the family is most important in Eastern culture.

When I was growing up, whenever I went to friends' houses, the first thing their parents wanted to know was who my parents were. So this is us, whose child it is.

every time as I got this exposure, then I realized that my parents' name is very important for me as well, for my standing.

And so if I shame my parents, that means I bring shame on myself. And so because of that, I learned to listen to my parents and not to do things that would bring shame to them.

But I will add here that while honoring parents is important, if parents make this the only important thing, they would forfeit many other good things in the relationship with their children.

[18 : 26] Why did Jiping's family not accepting him back to their foe when he was no longer addicted to drugs? It was partly because of the pain and dishonor he brought them in the past.

It was also because he became a Christian. To many Chinese families, especially at that time, to have a son becoming a Christian was almost as shameful as him becoming a drug addict.

Because Jiping's parents took their honor to be the most important thing in life, they forfeited the blessing of having their son back. When I became a Christian, I did not tell my parents because I was doing something that would bring shame to my family.

I could imagine people in town would start talking if so-and-so's child has become a Christian. But I was thankful that after becoming a Christian, not long after, I left town and went to another city to study.

So that was the only time when I needed to choose whether to honor God or honor my parents.

[19 : 33] But that was the only issue. However, I learned to love my parents a lot more after becoming a Christian with the love of God that has been poured into my heart that made a big difference and such you could nearly understand by God's grace.

So a wise son makes the glad father. A wise son is one who treasures his relationship with his parents. Such a person is not easily led astray by others.

Okay, we're going to verse 2. Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death. We're talking about profitable and unprofitable treasures.

What was Ji-Pin's treasure before he became a Christian? He treasured the pleasure that he could derive from drugs. To gain his treasure, Ji-Pin disobeyed his parents.

He committed crimes. He ignored medical advice. He suppressed his own conscience. A wicked heart obeys only his own desires and rejects advice from others and from God.

[20 : 42] A wicked heart does not know how to relate to others properly. He knows only how to make use of others. Ji-Pin's treasure did not profit him much. His drug habit caused him his relationship with parents and family.

He caused him his education. He caused him his health. His treasure became his slave master. It was through God's grace that he was free to live again.

In his new life, Ji-Pin began to learn to relate to others and to God in a new way. In the past, he was thinking how to use others to get what he wanted.

Now he began to serve others. Ji-Pin was given a life that overflows to others. Through the righteousness of Jesus, though Ji-Pin is now dead, we know that he's still alive in Christ.

So, righteousness delivers from death. Verse 3, the Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he told the craving of the wicked.

[21 : 50] We're talking about hunger and craving in these words. What is the difference between hunger and craving? Hunger implies a desire that can be satisfied and is constructive.

In the scriptures, hunger also implies the desire for meaning, for love, for glory. Craving implies a desire that cannot be satisfied and is destructive.

It is often associated with the desire of worldly pleasure. Hunger for food is a constructive thing.

Our body needs food to survive. Craving for food is a destructive thing. Too much food eventually destroys our body. We crave for something when we think that we will not be happy unless we get this thing.

and God will not let anyone get real happiness through things. Matthew 5, 6 says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[22 : 57] When we hunger to be right with God, we shall be satisfied and we will find real happiness. It was God's mercy that he did not let J.P. in craving for drugs to enslave him forever.

When J.P. J.P. J.P. eyes were opened to see Jesus Christ, he could let go of his craving for drugs because he now had hunger for something far greater in Christ.

When he had the proper relationship with God, his life also changed from being irrational to one that was rational. Verse 4, A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the delusion makes rich.

In this verse, we are considered enjoying and enduring. Why do I choose enjoying and enduring for this verse? Because laziness or stagnant does not usually mean doing nothing.

Laziness means doing only things which are easy and enjoyable. J.P. was trying hard. He was actually quite hard working. He was trying hard to get more drugs all the time.

[24 : 07] A child can be very dedicated in playing electronic games, but that is not diligence. Diligence implies a willingness to do things which are difficult. We are only willing to endure because either we have a greater goal in mind or because we have been obedient to our parents.

When we are young, we may not understand why we need to spend time learning difficult lessons. If we relate to our parents properly, we will trust and obey their instructions.

Many patients or younger patients who come to see me because they never learned to tackle difficult matters since young, they now rely on drugs or social welfare to cope with life.

They are poor not only in terms of monetary income, but they are also poor because they cannot appreciate much deeper beauty, truth, and generosity in life because since young, they have never learned to handle problems by themselves.

Their parents did everything for them and they treat their parents like their servants who are there to fulfill their wishes. So when they grow up, they do not know how to solve their own problems, not to mention knowing how to help other people to solve their problems.

[25 : 33] Ji-Ping could have kept using drugs to cope with life, but God changed him. In his 40s, he began to earn a living for himself and began to serve. Did Ji-Ping become rich?

Yes, he did. Anyone who is willing to serve other people are rich. I hope that there are more rich people in the church, people who can cheerfully give themselves for the good of others.

And for the glory of God. Verse 5, He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.

For these words, we think about summer and winter. It is natural to see bees and ants gathering their food during summers. Animals know they need to make good use of summers to survive their winters.

However, humans are a bit more complicated. there are beaches and crickets during summer. While the ultimate waste of summer is to sleep it away.

[26 : 38] While the ultimate waste of summer is to sleep it away, because sleeping is best done in winter, so those who sleep in summer is very foolish to do so.

but there are other ways for us to waste our summer. I am not saying that we should not do what is enjoyable during summer, but I am saying that we should not forfeit our future for the sake of transient enjoyment.

Jipin spent his youth in drugs. It was so difficult for him to establish a normal life when he became free from drugs in his 40s. So summer can mean a season in a year, or it can mean a season in your life, or a season that is a season for maturing and growing.

It can also mean your life on earth. Our whole life on earth is a season of summer to prepare for eternity. Jipin forfeited many summers of his years.

He forfeited the summer of his youth. By God's grace, he did not forfeit the summer of life. In Christ, he became a son of God and started to have hunger for the truth. So in these five verses, we have considered the mark of a wise child.

[27 : 57] He is one who honors the parents and treasures his parents. Because of this, he had the joy to obey his parents when he was told to turn off the TV and do his homework, and he will grow up into maturity, into adults.

he will be able to learn, earn a living for himself and serve others. What about parents who are self-centered and foolish? I mean, no parent is perfect.

Respecting your parents may not necessarily help you to mature, but disrespecting your parents will certainly be harmful to your maturity. So we respect our parents.

Your parents are not wise themselves. It may not be much help to us. But in any case, if we disrespect our parents, it would definitely be harmful for us for our maturity.

In Luke, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 11, verse 13, Jesus said to the parents, if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

[29 : 17] Jesus said that despite our fallen nature, parents naturally want to do good to their children. Ji-Ping forsook his relationship with his parents in his younger days and ended up living a chaotic life.

When he repented, his parents did not accept him back, but Ji-Ping had a Heavenly Father because of his relationship to God. Ji-Ping had the Spirit of God in him and he was able to live a life that was rational and purposeful.

So in any case, the emphasis of Proverbs 10, 1-5 is what the wise son is. It's not about parenthood. It is about how we should live our life in relation to our parents and also in particular to God.

None of us can actually live up to the standard in these five verses, as a wise son, partly because we do not know how to, partly also because we do not want to.

That's why Jesus came. Jesus came not only to show us what a wise son is like, he can also help us to be one because Jesus Christ is a perfect son.

[30 : 39] When Jesus came to the world, though he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. God said to Jesus in Luke 3, verse 22, you are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.

So, he shows that God is well pleased with Jesus Christ. Jesus honored the Father by not only not going after the pleasures of the world, but he also did that by choosing to suffer according to God's will.

For the first 30 years of his earthly life, Jesus prepared for his mission. In Luke 2, verse 52, it says, and Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

After those 30 years, he called his disciples and proclaimed the message of God, telling people to repent and come to know God. What did Jesus gain by being obedient to God the Father?

He was treated with hatred by the religious and political leaders and he was eventually killed by them. However, his death was for the purpose of saving his people and also for being the first person who inherited the imperishable body.

[32 : 00] For the joy that is, for the joy of saving his people, for the joy of being the first fruit or first person who inherited the imperishable body, for the joy of the glory that is to come, Jesus enjoyed the cross, despising the shame and now he's seated now at the right hand of God, the right hand of the throne of God.

Through Jesus Christ who died for us and now he's interceding for us, we can relate to God as our father. In Christ, God is helping us not so much to be successful in life, he's helping us to relate to him.

Until God is our father, everything else we do is quite meaningless. There's not much point for me to tell you to be diligent if at the end we all die. When God becomes your father, your life is about God's business.

Then there will be motivation and hope for you to live a life that has eternal value. When God becomes your father, you will ask him for the Holy Spirit to fill you so that you might become mature in Christ and have the strength to live a life worthy of his calling.

And when God becomes our vision, there's nothing that will stop us to live a life that's rich, profitable, and glorious. Let us pray.

[33 : 33] Father, we know that we are foolish and short-sighted and we thank you for your goodness and mercy upon us that we could see our falling short of your glory and also could see your glory in Christ Jesus.

Oh, may you help us to see clearer and more of the Lord Jesus Christ and have this life that you have promised in Christ.

Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.