

Family: Walking in Wisdom

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[0 : 0 0] All right, good morning, church. This morning we're continuing our series in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a book about living wisely. Proverbs says that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, that is, being in a right relationship to the one true God, but it expresses itself in every facet of human life.

And this morning we're considering what Proverbs has to say about wisdom as it's lived out in the context of the family. Now, before we dive in, let me give two recommendations for books on this topic, both of which you can find downstairs on the bookstall.

Number one, a book for parents and children. Let me recommend a book called *Wise Words* by Peter Lighthouse. It's a book of stories based on the themes and figures in the book of Proverbs. So I've been reading it recently to my children, and we were with their cousins. I was reading it to them. They range from four to ten years old. And what I really like about this book is how it engages the moral imagination of children using biblical imagery, giving pictures of wisdom and folly and some of their consequences in a really engaging and thought-provoking way.

And these are not just cute bedtime stories. Some of these are a little scary, and so they're appropriate for maybe elementary-aged kids. So let me recommend that, *Wise Words*.

[1 : 1 9] And also a book for husbands and wives. Now, there are many books for husbands and wives on the bookstall. Many of you might have read Tim and Kathy Keller's *The Meaning of Marriage* or Gary Thomas' book *Sacred Marriage*.

But let me recommend a lesser-known book called *The Mystery of Marriage* by Mike Mason. And he also begins by quoting from Proverbs. He begins by quoting, as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

And uses that to talk about how marriage works to refine us. But let me give you a quote from this book. He says, A marriage may be compared to a great tree growing right up through the center of one's living room.

It is something that is just there. And it is huge. And everything has to be built around it. Marriage is the most persistent reminder of the presence of other people in the world.

That they are there. That they are real. And that they are wildly different from the imaginary beings who normally people our thoughts and fantasies. And he goes on to talk about how marriage teaches us about God's otherness.

[2 : 2 3] And God's reality. And also God's deep love. And intimacy with us. So I recommend both of these. Consider them. But now let's delve into the book of Proverbs on the family.

Let me begin with the verse that's on the front of your bulletin. Proverbs 24, 3, and 4. By wisdom a house is built. And by understanding it is established. By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

And this verse highlights a theme that we see throughout the Bible. In Genesis 1 we see God forming and filling the world with his wisdom. In the Old Testament we see the Lord in his wisdom instructing Solomon to build him a physical house, the temple.

And then we see the Lord filling it with his glory. In the New Testament we see Jesus Christ, God's wisdom incarnate, building a spiritual house, the church, through his death and resurrection. Ephesians says God is building us into a place where God dwells. That is, where we're filled with God's Spirit. So, this theme of God building and filling the world and his people with his wisdom.

[3 : 3 1] That's the big picture. That's why we meet together every week. To be built up in God's Word and to be filled with the empowering presence of his Spirit so that we can live our lives to his praise and glory.

Now today we're looking at one particular expression of that Word-shaped, Spirit-filled life. When Ephesians tells us, be filled with the Spirit, walk in wisdom, it goes on to speak about the family. How God's wisdom should shape husbands and wives and parents and children in particular. We also read a similar passage from Colossians, right, that talks about what it means to put on love and kindness and forgiveness and all those godly character qualities.

And then it talks about a bit briefly about how those play out in marriage and parenting. So, that's our topic today. How God's wisdom can and should be embodied in marriage and transmitted to children.

And in the book of Proverbs, this is a central theme. In fact, as we've seen, the whole book of Proverbs is framed as parental advice, right? We hear the voice of a father speaking to his son. [4 : 34] And sometimes the voice of a mother as well, admonishing and encouraging the son to walk in the way of wisdom. And one of the main topics that the father speaks to his son about as his son is growing into a man is how to find a godly wife.

What kind of woman do you want to pursue, right? Wisdom and folly are embodied as women, right? And so, he's both speaking about wisdom generally, but also he's speaking practically about how do you choose wisely a marriage partner.

And the book ends with a poem in praise of the excellent wife. And we'll look at that briefly a bit later. So, in Proverbs, the family is one of the most important contexts where wisdom is embodied and transmitted.

So, this message about the family is important for you regardless of whether you're married and regardless of whether you have children at home. For some of you, message about marriage and parenting, that speaks to your current present situation.

You're like, yeah, I probably need some wisdom here. For others, it will be an important part of your future, right? We spend 12, 13 years in elementary school and then four years in college learning all kinds of things that you may or may not use.

[5 : 48] You may or may not use calculus ever again once you finish high school. Well, maybe you'll have to use it in college, but you may not use it once you're done with college, right?

But we value those kinds of things. We value that kind of learning. But all those years of school give you very little training in how to choose a spouse wisely, how to live with a spouse in love, or how to raise kids, even though many of us will spend much of our lives doing that.

So, these are areas where we need wisdom, even if you're not at that stage of life yet. Now, some of you, you may never get married or have kids, or maybe that's part of your past, but it's not going to be part of the future.

But many of your brothers and sisters in Christ will, and it's important for you to learn how to encourage those of us who do, just as it's important for us who are married to learn about God's calling on those who are single and seek to walk alongside you and encourage you in God's calling on your life.

Further, as we speak about these topics, marriage and parenting, we'll see the character of God Himself sort of behind God's teaching on these things.

[6 : 58] So, as we've delved into these topics, I've put some of the main Proverbs in the bulletin, and I think it's on page 6 in your bulletin this morning. Proverbs on family.

So, you can follow along here. I think it's easier than flipping back and forth just to find one verse at a time. So, this is the outline we're going to follow this morning. So, number one, wisdom embodied in marriage.

We're going to begin here. What does Proverbs teach about marriage? Well, Proverbs teaches that marriage is a very good thing. It's a good gift from a good God who created us.

1822, he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. 1914, a prudent wife is from the Lord. Proverbs affirms the goodness of God's creation order.

That's one of the main themes of the book. And marriage, as we see in the creation story, is one of God's best gifts to humanity. Right? God provides Eve as a helper, that is, as a strong ally for Adam.

[8 : 00] She is a suitable companion, an intimate friend, a co-worker in ruling over creation, a bearer of life, one who compliments him by providing what he lacks. And Proverbs affirms all of that that we see in Genesis 1 and 2 about marriage.

Proverbs also affirms that there's something marvelous and mysterious about marriage. Chapter 30, 18, and 19 says, Three things are too wonderful for me.

For I do not understand the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a woman.

You might think, how does that logic go? Well, the eagle in the sky, the serpent on a rock, the ship on choppy waters, they all move in and cleave to, that means they hold on to their appropriate and difficult environments in an easy, intriguing, gracious, rolling manner, without leaving a trace, yet reaching their goals.

And Proverbs says, In a similar way, the way of a man with a woman is mysterious and marvelous. Most likely, this includes a reference to sexual intercourse, to the unique and even breathtaking intimacy between a man and woman in the covenant of marriage.

[9 : 23] Proverbs said, This is a wonderful thing. It is a mysterious, marvelous thing that God in His infinite wisdom has made. Proverbs also goes on to speak not just about the goodness of marriage and the mystery of it, but it goes on to describe and praise an excellent wife.

12.4, An excellent wife is the crown of her husband. Chapter 31 is a poem in praise of such an excellent wife. Now, the phrase, an excellent wife, could also be translated, a valiant wife, or a woman of strength.

You know, when the Bible talks about the wife being a helper to her husband, that doesn't mean that the woman is a second-class assistant. It means she's called to be a first-rate ally who stands by her husband in unswerving loyalty.

In Proverbs 31, the excellent wife works hard, makes money, feeds and clothes her household, cares for the poor, faces the future without fear, enhances her husband's reputation, and speaks with wisdom.

She gives herself to her family and her community with wholehearted selflessness. And Proverbs praises such a woman. For 31.10 says, she is far more precious than jewels.

[10 : 43] In other words, such a woman isn't always easy to find, but when you find her, you should treasure her. And so Proverbs is saying to men, if you're single, this is the kind of woman that you should want to marry, a woman who fears the Lord.

And it's saying to women, this is the kind of, whether you're single or married, this is the kind of woman you should seek to become. Now, one caveat, Proverbs 31 is an idealized picture, and it's representing the work of a lifetime.

So don't read Proverbs 31 and think that it's a standard that you should judge yourself against at the end of every single day, because you'll certainly feel like you fall way short, right?

It's a picture of a lifetime. And it's also a portrait of a life that embodies wisdom. So as the conclusion to the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 31, it isn't just talking about an ideal wife, it's also saying this woman is a model for us all.

Not just for wives, but for all of us, male and female, married or not, because her life and her character embodies God's wisdom. So marriage as God intended it is a very good thing.

[11 : 54] It's a good, mysterious, and excellent thing, one of the best things in this world. Proverbs affirms that. But the second truth Proverbs affirms about marriage, not only that it can be one of the best things in this world, but it says a bad marriage can be one of the worst things in this world.

12.4, a wife who brings shame is like rottenness in her husband's bones. Marriage can make your life wonderful and it can make your life miserable. And when it's really toxic, it can eat away at you from the inside out.

Skipping down to 21.9, better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife. There are several other warnings against quarrelsome wives in particular.

In other words, better to stay single, better to stay single, even if you're lonely, even if you're poor, than to get married to a fool and end up miserable. Because once you're married, Proverbs says you're married.

And if you marry a quarrelsome spouse, you have to deal with them. Having a quarrelsome spouse may be difficult, but it is not biblical grounds for divorce. Now, practically, in Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul urges wives to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives.

[13 : 15] So I want to start with Proverbs words to wives, and then we'll get to Proverbs words to husbands. Now, before we jump into Proverbs words to wives, some of you might be asking, well, why are all the criticisms of a quarrelsome wife in Proverbs?

Why doesn't Proverbs talk about quarrelsome husbands? And why is there only a portrait of an excellent wife that a wife is supposed to measure herself up against? Why isn't there a portrait of an excellent husband that a husband should measure himself up against?

Isn't Proverbs a bit one-sided and putting all the burden on women? Well, remember, Proverbs is written in the form of a father instructing his son.

That's the form, or perhaps you could say, the setting or context of the book. And so the father is saying to his son, consider carefully what kind of woman you want to marry. So that's why Proverbs only talks about, only warns against quarrelsome wives, not quarrelsome husbands.

Now, of course, there's plenty of words in Proverbs about quarreling in general, and all those clearly apply to husbands. But Proverbs isn't only written for young men entering adulthood. As God's word, it's useful for the instruction of all God's people.

[14:26] So many Proverbs, such as the warning against the quarrelsome wife, can be applied in much the same way to husbands. Husbands, don't be quarrelsome. Right? And it'll be just as miserable for your wife as it would be for you.

Okay? And now, for a various obvious example of this from another part of the Bible, the 10th commandment says, don't covet your neighbor's wife. That doesn't mean you can covet your neighbor's husband. Right?

It's very obvious. It's framed in gender-specific language, but the appropriate application is to both men and women. So that's true for many of the Proverbs. Now, as a contrast to Proverbs, you might think, well, are all the books in the Bible written primarily to men?

Well, no. Song of Songs, in particular, another one of the wisdom literature, is written primarily from the woman's perspective, and some of its concluding advice is in the form, again, of advice given to a young woman.

But of course, Song of Songs, that advice can be applied to men as well. Both books have much to say to both men and women. So, having said that, let's start with Proverbs' words to wives.

[15:33] Particularly, these Proverbs that are quoted here, warns against a wife who is quarrelsome and brings shame upon her husband. Wives, consider this. More than trouble at work, more than criticism from outsiders, more than health problems or financial stresses or even children's demands, persistent disrespect from a wife can eat away at a husband's soul like rotteness in his bones.

It can wear him down from the inside out. And another one of the verses says a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day, a leaky roof, drip, drip, drip.

And this can happen perhaps more easily than you might think. Wives, beware of this danger. Do you despise your husband in your heart?

Do you try to get him to listen by nagging him or by attacking him with angry outbursts or harsh criticism? Do you publicly shame your husband by criticizing him to others?

Now maybe you think you have reasons to despise him. You see his flaws more clearly than anyone else and he's still blind to them. You're probably right. But just as he is called to love you despite your flaws, you are called to respect him despite his flaws as the man God has given to you.

[17:00] Now respect does not mean overlooking or excusing his sin. It may mean lovingly, courageously confronting him. It may mean if he refuses to listen to you and refuses to change, bringing one or two others into the conversation.

Other mature Christians who can help both of you. Now it's possible that you might sometimes need guidance about how to be a better wife despite your husband's flaws. That is a legitimate topic of conversation.

But wives, especially when you gather with one another, beware the temptation to complain about your husbands because it's not respectful.

Now husbands, Proverbs has much to say to us as well. Ephesians 5 says, husbands should love your wives as Christ loves the church and cherish them.

Look at, turn to Proverbs 31. Page 552 if you're looking in a pew Bible. Let's look at the end of the poem about an excellent wife.

[18:12] Verses 28 to 31. It says, her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her. Many women have done excellently, but you surpassed them all.

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates. Do you see three times, really four

times, it talks about the wife being praised.

Her children bless her. Her husband praises her. A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Let her works praise her. Husbands, if you have a wife who fears the Lord, if you have a wife who displays wisdom in any way, she ought to be praised.

That means verbally affirmed, privately and publicly, appreciated, thanked, cherished. Don't just read Proverbs 31 and tell her where you see that she falls short.

Start by telling her specifically how you, she does reflect this portrait of godly wisdom. Thank her tonight when you sit down to dinner. Tell her how she excels in front of your kids.

[19 : 28] Do so privately in your bedroom. Do so regularly and sincerely. Ray Ortlund says, says this, he says, when the word husband is used as a verb, it means to cultivate.

And he says, that's the job of those who are husbands, those of us who are husbands, to cultivate and nurture our wives so that they become all of who God wants them to be and to praise them for it.

He says, a husband cultivates his wife by setting a high tone of praise in the home. No put-downs, no fault-finding, no insults, not even neutral silence, but rather life-giving praise.

And he says, and if you cannot think of any way in which your wife deserves to be praised, then that is your fault. Because God has called you to husband her, to cultivate her into excellence.

Now, to be honest, many of us guys, including myself, don't do this very well. My wife knows it, and she's gracious, so she doesn't tell you about it.

[20 : 32] But I fall short in this way very often. And many of us become passive and self-protective instead of nurturing our wives into all that God has for them.

We remain silent and take our wives for granted instead of praising them privately and publicly. And Proverbs calls us to be more than just a husband who provides and protects and leads, but a husband who cherishes and praises his wife because she is God's good gift to him.

You see, Proverbs is simply calling us to do what the rest of the Bible says, to love and respect one another in the context of marriage. And to do that because of who Christ is and because of the Holy Spirit working in us.

Now, some of you might be asking, what does it say to me if I'm single? Well, Proverbs says at least two things. Number one, it says that marriage is good, but it's better to stay single than to marry a fool.

So, don't let desperation or infatuation make you blind to someone's true character. Chapter 11, verse 22 says, like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion, that is, without good judgment.

[21 : 55] Chapter 30, verse 30 says, charm is deceitful and beauty is vain. So, if you're dating, guard, if you're dating, don't fall into desperation or infatuation, right?

That's why it's important to guard against excessive physical or emotional intimacy in a dating relationship because it can blind you to someone's flaws. And one of the questions you need to be asking yourself if you're considering marriage is can I live with this person flaws and all?

And don't assume that when you get married their flaws are going to magically change. If anything, you might only see more of them because they feel secure in the promise of marriage and rightly so.

Proverbs warns, don't stare at the gold ring and miss the fact that it's hanging in a pig's nose. I mean, Proverbs is a little blunt here. But it's warning us, don't be infatuated.

Don't let infatuation lead you into a foolish decision. So, if you're dating, don't spend all your time one-on-one just looking into each other's eyes. You're not going to spend the rest of your life doing that. Get to know each other in the context of your family, in the context of your friendships, in the context of your church.

[23 : 15] Seek and receive counsel from people you know and trust. This is especially important if you're doing any kind of online dating, right? Because you're... And online dating, many people have found good marriage partners through that.

But the challenge there is you're starting with two people who usually don't share much of a common context and so you need to see not just each other as sort of divorced from the rest of your life, but you need to get to know the context in which you already live where people can see who you really are.

And to be open to receiving counsel and build some common relationships relationships or at least be able so you can have other people speak into your lives and give encouragement and sometimes warning.

So Proverbs is saying in some situations it's better to stay single than to get married. Now, the New Testament goes even further about singleness because some of you may be single and either you want to get married but you cannot find an appropriate partner or you, for various reasons, are not pursuing marriage.

And Proverbs says it's better to be single than to be in a bad... than to choose than to choose to enter a marriage unwisely. But the New Testament says even more than that.

[24 : 31] It has a positive vision and a positive vocation for singleness within the kingdom of God. And that's another topic for another day. But 1 Corinthians 7 we see a positive vision for singleness in the kingdom of God that goes even further than Proverbs.

As it's a witness to the sufficiency of Christ proclaiming that our ultimate hope is not in the joys of this present age but in the resurrection life of the world to come. So singles, that's an important calling.

So, number one, marriage is good but better to say single than marry a full. Second, if you're seeking marriage don't ignore people who lack charm or beauty but do have some wisdom.

Alright, Proverbs is saying beware against marrying someone whose character does not reflect wisdom but don't rule people out because it says charm is deceitful, beauty is vain. Okay, now husbands don't misuse that verse.

Don't dismiss your wife's beauty or fail to affirm it because of that verse. That's not what it's saying. Okay, beauty in the context of a wise life is a wonderful gift from the Lord.

[25 : 38] But Proverbs is saying charm and beauty, in other words, personality and looks and Proverbs would also say wealth are not the most enduring things and they're not the most important things.

Alright, many single people today walk into a room with 20 people of the opposite sex who are not married and immediately rule 17 of them out because she's not attractive or he's too awkward. Or if you go on dating sites, you decide who to pursue conversations with based on a profile picture. Proverbs says don't do that. Right? If you want to pursue marriage to a wise person, don't let your initial filter be charm and beauty. If you can cultivate a friendship with someone, if you have a mutual commitment to Christ, if you can help one another grow in Christ, then the physical attraction may well grow over time.

But you won't ever know that if you just rule them out from the start. So, Proverbs teaches us that wisdom is to be embodied in marriage. That's the first thing Proverbs teaches.

Second, we see that wisdom is to be transmitted to children. Now, I've spent quite a bit of time talking about marriage, so I'm going to go through the parenting stuff a bit more briefly.

[26 : 57] But I want you to know the elders think this is a very important topic and we're planning, we're working on putting together a seminar on parenting for either this fall or next spring. We don't have the dates yet, but we're working on it, so parents, we will have more for you.

But what we see in Proverbs is we see three ways that wisdom can and should be passed on from parents to children. The first way is by example.

14.26, in the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence and his children will have a refuge. 27. 27. The righteous who walks in his integrity, blessed are his children after him. 23.26, my son, give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways. Other translations say, let your eyes delight in my ways.

You see, perhaps more than any other way, children learn by example, they learn by watching, they learn by imitating. And so, whatever kind of instruction you give or whatever kind of discipline you implement, it's never going to go much farther than the example that you set.

[28 : 06] Because you can't give what you don't have and children watch at least as much as they listen. So, parents, as we instruct and discipline our children, let's keep on being instructed by the Word of God ourselves.

And let's keep on being disciplined and accepting God's fatherly discipline in our own lives. Right? We need to lead our children by setting an example for them of being instructed and disciplined as we seek to instruct and discipline them.

Proverbs also warns that folly, in particular greed or malice, will lead to trouble not just for oneself but for one's household. That's 1527 and 1713. The Old Testament talks not just about God's faithfulness enduring from one generation to another but it also talks realistically about sin being passed down from one generation to another.

And again, parents, that's another reason for us to keep fighting against sin in our own lives. And putting, the New Testament says, put sin to death, mortify it and live by the power of the Holy Spirit. And one reason for that is because if we don't put it to death in our own lives, guess what? It's probably going to reappear in our children's lives. It's probably going to be passed down. That's sort of the normal course of things.

[29 : 33] And so Proverbs urges us to set, first, to set an example. The second way that wisdom gets passed down to children is through instruction in Proverbs.

So one, chapter one, verse eight, hear my son your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching. So in Proverbs we hear warnings against folly and its consequences.

We hear encouragement to walk in the way of wisdom and we hear about wisdom's benefits. There's ongoing intentional instruction from parent to child. Now if you are a parent, you can't simply delegate this responsibility to somebody else.

Now yes, we have children's ministry every Sunday and so the kids can be in their class for about one hour a week. But you know what? One hour a week is a helpful supplement but that's never going to be the main course of spiritual formation for your child's future.

If spiritual instruction is absent from the rest of their lives, that one hour a week will probably not make the decisive difference. Maybe by God's grace on unusual occasions you know, God does unusual things.

[30 : 43] But that's not what you can expect. Right? The Bible calls on parents to instruct our children. Now you might say, how do I do that? How do I instruct my child spiritually?

Where do I begin? Maybe that wasn't a part of your childhood at all growing up. Maybe your children are already halfway grown up and you're starting off a little late.

Well you know what? That's a great question to talk about after service in the fellowship hall or up here with another parent. Ask them. Somebody, actually Jonathan Tidwell asked me yesterday. He said, what do you guys do for family devotions? That's a great question to ask. You know, or more broadly, how do you try to instruct your kids spiritually? It's going to look different in each home, but we can share some helpful ideas with each other.

What do you do at home to instruct your kids in God's Word? Let's talk about that with each other. 22.6 also talks about instruction. It says, train up a child in the way he should go.

[31 : 45] And that Hebrew verb translated train up is a word that means to dedicate or to initiate or to set someone on a path. It's actually related to an Arabic verb that was used to describe the practice of rubbing a newborn's child, rubbing the tongue of a newborn child with either oil or a mixture of dates sort of mashed up dates to get them to suck, to get them to start.

It means to accustom a child to a taste and motivate the child to take it in. That's this idea of training up. And the verb is also used of training a horse to be responsive by putting a rope in its mouth.

So the goal of training, biblical training, is for your children to taste and see that the Lord is good. It's not just to give them the right answers, but it's to introduce our children to the Word of God so they begin to sense its beauty and its sweetness.

You want to help your children see what a daily relationship with God looks like. Deuteronomy 6 says, you shall teach God's commandments to your children. Talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise.

In other words, talk about them not just formally, but informally as the day goes along and at different times of the day. So here's a very practical suggestion that another parent gave me recently that we've done a couple of times.

[33 : 10] So this other parent said to me, we have a five-year-old child at home and we asked three questions over dinner. The first question is, what are three things you're thankful for today?

All right, cultivating thankfulness, you can never do that enough. Second, they asked, what was a low point of the day? Either sometime when you didn't do something right or you were disappointed by something else, right?

It's good to be able to give voice to our disappointments. The third question they ask is, what was Jesus teaching you today? And that's an important question because it introduces the idea to kids

that God might be teaching me something today.

He might be teaching me something through my parents. He might be teaching me something through my interactions. He might be teaching me something through His Word. That's what a personal relationship with Christ means, is the Holy Spirit dwells in us and He's bringing to mind things.

He's teaching and shaping us throughout the day. So three questions, three things you're thankful for, what was a low point and what's Jesus teaching you today? So that's a very practical way to sort of begin spiritual conversations with your children.

[34 : 16] Consider that. You know, again, there's many ideas. You don't have to do all the ideas. Some of them might not work for you but again, we got to talk with each other about ideas. Alright, so wisdom is transmitted by example, by instruction and third, this is the controversial part, so I put it last.

Wisdom is transmitted by corrective discipline. Let's read these verses. 1324, whoever spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

2215, folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. Chapter 2915, the rod and reproof bring wisdom but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs is very clear that mere example and instruction are not enough. Human beings are born in sin. That's why Proverbs says folly is bound up in the heart of a child and therefore the path of wisdom necessarily includes correction and correction never feels pleasant.

Hebrews 12 says no discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful. Afterwards, it produces a harvest of peace and righteousness for those who have been trained by it. Now practically, what does it look like to administer corrective discipline in a way that promotes peace and righteousness?

[35 : 37] Now, on the one, I can't say everything on this topic but let me say a couple things. On the one hand, I don't think we should say that when Proverbs talks about the rod, that's talking exclusively about corporal punishment administered with a stick and that every time our children behave foolishly, they need to be punished in this way and in no other way.

The rod in Proverbs seems to be a figure for corrective discipline more generally, a bit like the holy kiss in Paul's letters is a figure for Christian greeting, a different expression of Christian greeting more generally.

Corrective discipline can take a variety of forms. The appropriate form may vary from one child to another and one situation to another. On the other hand, if we take Proverbs words seriously, it is very hard to conclude that Christian parents should never or as a general rule not spank their children.

Why would Proverbs use the metaphor of the rod to refer to necessary corrective discipline if any kind of corporal punishment was inherently harmful? So let me ask if you would never consider spanking your child, why?

And do you end up just yelling at them instead? Or do you indulge them by coaxing them to obey, asking them five and six times to do the same thing and bribing them with rewards?

[37 : 10] Children need to know that they are under authority and that disobedience hurts. Now many of us are hesitant to spank because we've never seen it carried out in a way that actually seems to promote peace and righteousness, what the Bible says.

Maybe you've only seen or experienced it administered impulsively or excessively or inconsistently. An impulsive or excessive or inconsistent discipline is a problem.

So if you as a parent are in a fit of rage, get your anger under control first and then figure out how to discipline your child appropriately. Maybe you need to give the child a time out so that you can cool off and so that you can figure out what's actually appropriate and helpful to your child.

Now whatever form it takes, time out, removing privileges, spanking, whatever, corrective discipline is hard and it's painful and often inconvenient for both parents and children in the short term.

And it doesn't always produce immediate results. You can't judge corrective discipline by do the children behave better tomorrow. But Proverbs says it's a necessary component of wisdom being transmitted.

[38 : 25] We need to be consistent in the way that we follow through with our words, with our instructions to our kids. And we need to pray, right?

We need to pray because we all fall short in this area in different ways. So Proverbs says wisdom is to be transmitted to children by example, by instruction, and by discipline. But let me conclude by acknowledging that even the best parenting does not guarantee good results.

And Proverbs acknowledges this fact implicitly. I've put two verses about one, about the father of the righteous will rejoice and the next one about a foolish son is a grief to his father and mother. Proverbs acknowledges that being a spouse or being a parent, it means being deeply emotionally involved and personally invested in the lives of others whom you cannot ultimately control.

And so marriage and parenting can be a source of immense joy and they can also be a source of deep pain. And probably everybody has some mixture of those.

Now we've covered a lot of ground this morning. sermon's gone a lot of different directions but I want to bring it together with this. God knows intimately both the joy and pain of marriage and parenting.

[39 : 53] Consider this. According to the scripture, God knows the pain of a bad marriage. He knows what it's like to be taken for granted.

He knows what it's like to be given the silent treatment. Ignored, not praised, only criticized and questioned. God knows the pain of being disrespected, publicly shamed, blamed for things that are not His fault.

God endures all that every single day. But God persists in loving His bride, the church. Jesus shed His blood for us on the cross so that we might be His and so that He might be ours forever.

He's patient with our faults and failures. He speaks liberating truth into our minds which are full of lies and noise. He mercifully cleans up our messes and doesn't shame us for them.

And the Bible says He sings and rejoices over us. Beginning of the service we read that verse. The Lord delights in those who fear Him, who's placed their hope in His unfailing love.

[41 : 14] He delights in us. Even today, even in our imperfect expressions of seeking and reaching out to Him, even when we're in the midst of sin and our lives are messy and we aren't living up to His standards in every way, when we're looking to Him and reaching out to Him and placing our hope in His love, He delights in us.

And one day, His delight in us will be fulfilled at the marriage supper of the Lamb when we will be with Him and we will be like Him. God knows the pain of a hard marriage, but He persists for the joy of having us as His own.

And God also knows the pain of being a brokenhearted parent. in Jesus' parable, the prodigal son, God's portrayed as the father of two foolish sons. One son demands his money, insults his father, abandons his responsibility to the family and leaves home.

The other son stays at home and appears responsible on the outside, but on the inside, he's distant and he resents his father and he's calculating.

But the father persists in loving both of his children. When the first son is still far off, the father sees him and runs to him and rejoices to welcome him home.

[42 : 33] When the second son is resentful and angry and refuses to come in the house and shames his father by refusing to come into the father's party, the father leaves the party to go out and plead with him.

God knows intimately the pain of parenting. Rebellious children and children who appear very good on the outside and on the inside are resentful and calculating.

But yet he loves us as a father loves his children, as a mother holds her children close to her and fiercely fights for them and never abandons them.

You know, I don't know whether or not you're married, whether or not you're a parent. Do you know this God?

Do you know him as your father in heaven? Do you know him as your covenant partner, your best friend, your lover?

[43 : 41] He will never leave you or forsake you. And you can know him if you will turn to Jesus Christ today and put your faith in him.

Let's pray. our father, we praise you because great is your faithfulness.

We praise you that as you instruct us in the ways of marriage and parenting, that you have not done so without setting an example for us.

That you have not done so without being the parent that we need and the spouse that we long for. We pray, Lord, that we would find our refuge, our security, our hope, our joy in you, in your

steadfast love, in your compassion, in your mercy.

Lord, build us by your word. Fill us with your spirit. May our homes be full of your spirit and be shaped by your word. Forgive us, Lord, for we have fallen short.

[45 : 19] Lord, we have ignored your instructions. We have persisted in our own ways. We have justified our sin against our spouses, against our children, against our parents.

Lord, renew us. Fill us in a fresh way with your Holy Spirit so that we may turn towards our spouses, turn towards our children, turn towards our parents with the love that you pour into our hearts through your Holy Spirit.

Lord, renew us. Continue to transform us and change us day by day into your likeness more and more, we pray. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.