

## SERMON NOTES: TEACHING CHILDREN WISDOM



*Like Arrows*

# Teaching Children How To Walk in Wisdom

Intro: Did your parents have any memorable wisdom or advice or counsel that they passed on to you as you grew up?

The one I remember most hearing my dad say, that he had heard his dad say was this little rhyme "Good, better, best, never let it rest, til your good is better, and your better's best."

Back in 1998, a man named Robert Fulghum, a Unitarian minister, wrote a book that ended up spending two years on the NY Times best seller list and sold 16 million copies.

The book was a collection of 50 short essays which Mr. Fulghum titled "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten."

He started his list with 16 items on it.

"These are the things I learned (in Kindergarten):

1. Share everything.
2. Play fair.
3. Don't hit people.
4. Put things back where you found them.
5. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS.
6. Don't take things that aren't yours.
7. Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody.
8. Wash your hands before you eat.
9. Flush.
10. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
11. Live a balanced life - learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work everyday some.
12. Take a nap every afternoon.
13. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and

stick together.

14. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

15. Goldfish and hamster and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.

16. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned - the biggest word of all - LOOK."

A few years later, in 1991, the creative director for a Nashville Ad Agency decided to pass along to his son a collection of wisdom in the form of short sayings. He ultimately gathered 511 of what would qualify as tweets today and he presented them to Adam as he headed off to college for his freshman year. He called the collection Life's Little Instruction Book.

Here is some of what the dad, H. Jackson Brown, shared with his son:

1. Compliment three people every day.
2. Have a dog.
3. Watch a sunrise at least once a year.
4. Remember other people's birthdays.
5. Never mention being on a diet.
6. Have a firm handshake.
7. Look people in the eye.
8. Say "thank you" a lot.
9. Say "please" a lot.
10. Learn to play a musical instrument.
11. Sing in the shower.
12. Use the good silver.
13. Learn a card trick.
14. Plant flowers every spring.
15. Own a great stereo system.
16. Floss your teeth
17. Call your mother
18. Take someone bowling
19. Don't ever watch hot dogs or sausage being made

By the way, Mr. Brown's collect spent two years on the NY Times Bestseller list, including 47 weeks at #1. He went on to write sequels that have led to him having more than 16 million books in print in 35 languages.

But long before Fulghum or Brown wrote their best sellers, King Solomon wrote his own collection of wise sayings and pithy counsel, and it's part of the all time best seller, the Bible.

Proverbs was designed as a book for parents. Solomon collecting and passing on wisdom (skill in every day living) for his sons.

## 1. Three observations about children found in Proverbs.

A. Children are born foolish. So were you and I. A parent's job is to teach them to reject foolishness and to embrace wisdom.

Wisdom: skill in everyday living. Different than intelligence.

B. Children are born self centered. So were you and I. A parent's job is to teach them how to deny self and be other centered.

We cannot teach our children to to be anything other than self centered at the motivational (or the heart) level. But we can teach our children how to honor and esteem and put others first at the behavior level. How to be unselfish.

C. Children are born with a knowledge of God – General revelation. It is a parent's job to teach them how to respond to that knowledge and surrender their lives to God.

- We can't train our children to be Christians. God has to change their hearts.
- But we can demonstrate for them what it looks like to know and love and serve Jesus.
- And we can teach them what God expects of His children.

## 2. It's the Heart of your Child That Really Matters

A. You don't have to be a Christian to be a moral person. You Don't Have to Believe in God to Live a Wise Life

The difference between a wise and honorable unbeliever and a wise and honorable believer is the motivation for what they do.

- The motivation for the unbeliever is ultimately rooted in bringing honor and glory to himself.
- The motivation for the believer is ultimately to bring honor and glory to God.

B. The wisdom found in the book of Proverbs is wisdom for any person, believer or unbeliever. This is a book about what wise living looks like for anyone.

Solomon explains at the beginning of the book why he has written down this collection of wisdom to pass along to his sons.

Proverbs 1:2–9 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, <sup>3</sup> to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; <sup>4</sup> to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— <sup>5</sup> Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, <sup>6</sup> to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. <sup>7</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. <sup>8</sup> Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, <sup>9</sup> for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Solomon, as we know, is the king who asked God for wisdom as he began his reign. And we know that God was pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom, and that God responded by saying to Solomon **"Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have**

asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like.”

Wisdom is a key for all of life. Having and understanding of how life really works and knowing how to make good choices as a result.

C. Helping your children cultivate wisdom should happen randomly as you walk by the way, but also intentionally and with diligence, as you teach principles of wisdom diligently. With focus and intentionality.

Here are some things that the Bible says are generally true about people who are wise.

- The wise will prosper and have long live.

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will *prolong your life* many years and bring you *prosperity*.”

(Proverbs 3: 1-2)

- The wise are honored

“The wise inherit *honor*, but fools he holds up to shame.” (Proverbs 3:35)

- God protects the wise

“For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he *guards* the course of the just and *protects* the way of his faithful ones.” (Proverbs 2:6-8)

“For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in *safety* and *be at ease, without fear of harm*.” (Proverbs 3:31-32)

As parents, we want our children to prosper and have a long life where they are honored and where they are safe, right? Teach them wisdom!

D. Two examples of how to train a child in wisdom.

Example #1 Proverbs 13:20.

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,  
but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Here are some practical ways a family can spend time learning this principle:

- Take a verse like that and memorize it as a family. Easy enough.
- Have each child select a person they know who they think is a wise person, someone they know who they respect or admire. Could be an adult, could be someone a few years older.
- Have the child come up with a list of 5-10 questions they would like to ask their wise friend.
- Invite the wise person to dinner or out to lunch with you and the child, and have your child interview that person. When they're done, have them write a one page paper on the lessons they learned. Pay them \$5 or \$10 for the assignment.
- Download the song Walk With the Wise by Steven Curtis Chapman and play it every morning before breakfast for two weeks.
- Read or watch Pinocchio and talk about how that story teaches us that the companion of fools suffers harm.

Example #2. Proverbs 26:18-19

“Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I was only joking!”

When our children were young, some of them – two in particular – had developed a bad habit of teasing a sibling and when the teasing caused the sibling to start crying, the teaser would say “I was just kidding!”

So we decided that for one week, before anyone could have dinner, they had to recite that verse as they came to the table. One at a time.

And, if the child started teasing at dinner, dinner was over for that child.

Worked great! For years, whenever someone would tease a brother or sister, someone would say “like a madman...” and that was it.

E. How can you tell if your child is growing in wisdom or is still foolish?

- Is your child hotheaded and reckless?

“A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless. (Proverbs 14:16)

- Are any of them quickly and easily angered?

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. (Proverbs 29:11)

- Is your child quick to quarrel?

“It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.” (Proverbs 20:3)

- How does your child respond to your discipline and correction?

“A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.” (Proverbs 15:5)

- Does your child seek or heed wise counsel or good advice? Or are they confident in their own wisdom?

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. (Proverbs 18:2)

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” (Proverbs 26:12)

- Does your child listen when you are correcting or teaching them?

He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

Bottom line is – a wise child demonstrates good judgment. A foolish child lacks the ability to make good judgments.

**“The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.”**  
(Proverbs 10:21)

### **3. How to train a child to be wise**

#### A. Be wise yourself

Be seeking wisdom. Read books, listen to podcasts, watch videos, get training.

Learn biblical wisdom. Don't rely on your own wisdom.

**“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”**  
(Proverbs 14:12).

#### B. Walk with the wise – have real mentors, not just mommy blogs!

You need mentors who have learned from life, who are full of grace and aren't going to judge you, and who know God's word.

#### C. Lean not on your own understanding, but trust God's word

- It is sufficient. **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2 Peter 1:3)**
- It is the key to life change. Romans 12:2, John 17:17

### **4. Don't be content with better than average kids**

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

There is no more sacred responsibility given to us by God than the responsibility to raise our children to honor Christ.

- A. Are you looking to the scriptures as your primary source for what to teach and how to train your children?
- B. Are you studying the scriptures diligently, so that you might not only live a godly life yourself, but also pass along that same wisdom to your children?
- C. Are you satisfied with the goal of raising children who act right, while ignoring the “thoughts and intentions of their hearts?”
- D. Are you content to raise children who are better than average, or do you aspire to the high standards of God’s word?

## **5. Two important truths for you to remember as you raise your children.**

- A. Even if you could do everything right, your children might still rebel. The Prodigal Son. Luke 15.
- B. Even if you mess up big time as a parent, God can still by His grace save and bless and use your son or daughter.

That’s because ultimately, your kids are in His hands.

With These Hands  
by Mark DeYmaz

With these hands, I gently cradled this child;  
Held him close to my heart,  
Nursed his wounds and calmed her fears,  
Held the books that I would read  
And rocked this child fast asleep.

With these hands, I made his lunches

And drove the car that carried her to school;  
Snapped endless pictures, wrapped countless gifts—  
Then did my best to assemble those gifts.  
Combed his hair and wiped her tear,  
Let her know that I was near  
To nurse his wounds and heal her heart  
When it would break.

With these hands, I made mistakes.  
And with these hands, I prayed, and prayed, and prayed.

These hands are feeble—these hands are worn,  
These hands can no longer calm the storms.  
These hands have done all they can do.  
These hands now release this child—my child—to You.

For Your hands are able, Your hands are strong,  
Your hands alone can calm the storms.  
Your hands will continue to do  
What they are so gifted to do  
To shape his life and make her new.

Into Your hands, receive this child.  
For my child I now give back to You.  
In the strong name of Jesus,  
And with all my heart, I pray, Amen.

As parents, we ultimately have to know that as much as we love our children, there is one who loves them even more. One who loves them so much that He sent His Son to first call them to follow Him and to be reconciled to God, and then who went to the cross to pay the debt for all who would trust Him and surrender their lives to Him.