

Proverbs for Parenting

Proverbs - Selected texts

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Introduction This is the final message of this 2005 Family Enrichment Conference. I don't know about you, but it has gone by way too fast! And there has been way too much to digest and meditate on. It has made some of us uneasy. It has, at times, disturbed our comfortable beliefs about child rearing. And that was the purpose. It has been the aim of this series to bring into focus the need for extreme parent transformation. We have deliberately brought into our sights the culture in which we live and its affects on our parenting. We have considered the place that heart transformation has as the initial radical change that should be undertaken by parents. We have explored the necessity of parenting in the midst of the believing community here at the Chapel. We have a responsibility to help each other parent. We were abruptly brought face to face with rebellion and how we need to have a balance between commanding our children and counseling them as they progress through their years with us. And last week, we examined pride as it expresses itself in violence and viciousness among children, teens, and adults along with the cultural influences toward those behaviors and heart attitudes.

It is my intent, in this final message, to bring in three of the leading experts in child rearing and compare their philosophies and techniques to what we find in the book of Proverbs. Those experts are: Dr. Benjamin Spock, Dr. Phil McGraw, and Dr. Laurence Steinberg. My sources are their books. Dr. Spock's book titled, Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care, is in its 8th edition and advertises that it is fully revised and expanded for the 21st century. It is subtitled "The One Essential Parenting Book". Dr. Phil's book is titled Family First. It's subtitle is, "Your Step-by Step Plan for Creating a Phenomenal Family". Dr. Steinberg is the Distinguished University Professor and Laura H. Carnell Professor of Psychology at Temple University and a former president of the Society for Research on Adolescence. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and is considered one of the most distinguished psychologists in the United States. He has been doing research on children and families for over 30 years. His book is titled The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting.

I chose the books that I did after doing some perusing of the shelves of some familiar stores to see what was on their shelves. I chose the books I did because they were on nearly every bookshelf in every store in which I went. For more research, I also did some surfing of the internet several times. I was surprised at how much was on the web for parenting. Last night, I decided that I would do some surfing to find out some of the specifics of the anti-spanking laws. That search ended all of my internet surfing for this message. I searched for sites that had the specifics on the Minnesota laws on Google.com, and chose one site that promised in-depth details on Minnesota spanking. I clicked and up came a porn site on spanking. My anti-virus software began going crazy and it began counting the viruses that were coming in. I couldn't get the internet connection unplugged fast enough! I learned that there is at least one dis-

advantage of high-speed internet connections. So, when I get to the point about spanking later, I do not have any of the details that I thought I would get. So much for that!

As I began to look through the books, listen to what each of them promises in the opening pages:

From Dr. Spock's book:

“Since *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* was first published in 1945, generations of parents have raised their children “by the book”. The book gave parents sensible, expert advice. Beyond that, it gave them the voice of Dr. Benjamin Spock: warm, straightforward, and reassuring, a voice that made it seem as though the doctor were in the room talking to you. That voice talked to parents through seven editions of *Baby and Child Care*. The challenge for this eight edition – the first since Dr. Spock's death in 1998 – is to keep that voice alive. Dr. Spock invented the modern parenting book and was a master pediatrician and writer. It would be foolish to imagine What I can do – and what I hope this new edition accomplishes – is to shine fresh light on an old treasure, so that another generation can find the information and encouragement they need as they go about life's most important task and most compelling adventure.” (pages *xi and xii*)

From Dr. Phil:

What I intend to do in *Family First* is tell you with great precision what you need to stop doing and what you need to start doing to lead your family with such a pure purpose and power that the competing messages and influences are drowned out. I plan to help you define success for your specific child or children and then take the steps to create and claim it for you and yours. Your children are the stars in your crown and it is time for them to shine; it is okay for them to shine and, if you do your job, shine they will. (page *xiv*)

From Dr. Steinberg:

This book is different from other books on parenting because it is based on the science of good parenting, on literally thousands of well-designed research studies – research that is just as credible as the research that scientists use to test new drugs, design safer automobiles, and construct sturdier buildings. Unlike most other parenting books on the market, this one is not based on one person's opinion, or someone's experiences in raising a couple of children, or the observations somebody made over the course of working with a few dozen families in a clinical practice. The advice contained in this book is based on what scientists who study parenting have learned from decades of systematic research involving hundreds of thousands of families.. What I've done is to synthesize and communicate what the experts have learned in a language that non-experts can understand. I've boiled this knowledge down into ten basic principles.

Raising children is not typically something we think of as especially scientific. It may surprise you to learn, though, that there is a science of effective parenting and that there is an awful lot more systematic research on parenting than on any other aspects of life where we routinely rely on science to guide us. In fact, child psychologists and other experts have been studying parenting for about seventy-

five years, and it is one of the most well-researched areas in the entire field of social science. (pages 1-2)

From Proverbs 1.2-7: (NLT)

²The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. ³Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. ⁴These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people.

⁵Let those who are wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. And let those who understand receive guidance ⁶by exploring the depth of meaning in these proverbs, parables, wise sayings, and riddles.

⁷Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline.

How does all of that sound to you? I would think, based on the promises of these popular books, that we would be doing serious damage in our parenting if we didn't use these experts and the science that goes with it in our parenting! It is only reasonable that the average parent who is frustrated and at wits end would turn to these sources for counsel and help.

But the question is – do these experts square with what the Scriptures teach? And if the Scriptures are different (which you already presume to be true), is the Bible out of touch with our culture and the nuclear family of this 21st century? Is it old wisdom for a by-gone day that had no comprehension of what we would be facing today? Should we throw out the Bible in the name of expert science? Or, are we going to believe the Scriptures and use them as our guide for the process of parenting, even going so far as to go against the experts of today?

Now, it is going to be impossible for us to look up and read all of the verses to which I am going to refer in Proverbs and still get through the material I have prepared in a reasonable amount of time. So may I make a suggestion; just list the verses that I have on the screen in your notes and look them up later. I will give a summary of what the verses say most of the time. At other times I will read them from the ESV or from the NLT. Let's pause and pray to ask God for grace to hear and evaluate what His Word says. <Pray>

The Battle for Hearts

In the first message of this Conference, Russ outlined from Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 that the transformation that must take place must begin in the hearts of parents.

The Hearts of Parents

“God defines parenting radically different from the way the world does. Remember what Dr. Phil promised, “Your children are the stars in your crown and it is time for them to shine; it is okay for them to shine and, if you do your job, shine they will.” Parenting in the Bible is not about what is produced, but in faithfulness to what God requires. Doing all that God requires guarantees you nothing except that you have pleased God. But failure to please God in our own character

and conduct as parents then contributes to, but does not cause, the sinfulness of our children. In order to keep on pleasing God even when it doesn't seem to be working requires a decisive commitment of ourselves to God. It will be hard. It will mean sacrifice, not in the common way we think of it, but in ways that God will use to expose our own hearts. In other words, you must present yourself to God as a living sacrifice so that you will be holy and pleasing to God in your parenting.

“We are to do this because this is how true rational or spiritual worship and service of God is defined. Worship is not just a Sunday event; it is the moment by moment stream of believing God in an obeying way – living obediently by grace.

“This radical transformation is first, *AN INWARD ONE*. It has to do with rebuilding and renewing our minds. What is being called for here is a radical change in our thinking – its content and stream that leads to a radical change in our behavior. The renewal of mind that transforms us both *VIEWS* and also *VALUES* God's will. It *discerns* God's will and *delights* in God's will and *does* God's will. We are talking about wisdom – knowing God's Word, bringing to bear on our situation to illuminate it, interpret it and indicate the path of righteousness in it. Many, many people clearly know what God's Word says about life situations, but do not want or prize God's will. Remember, our choices and emotions flow out of what we think and what we want. So to *discern* God's will means that we *delight* in God's will as good, acceptable and perfect.”

So there is a battle for the hearts of parents.

The Hearts of Children

But there is also a battle for the hearts of our children. Listen to how Dr. Phil describes our children:

“We like to think of our own children as angels filled with love and good intentions. In many respects, I think you can explain the unsocialized nature of children very succinctly: Children can be selfish and power seeking. Like many adults, they seek pleasure and avoid pain. That may sound pessimistic, but it is not. Your children aren't evil or bad if they behave this way, they're just waiting for you to do your job and socialize them properly. If you don't, your children can become tyrannical and demanding because they're not mature enough to handle the power surrendered to them inside a complex family. You also need to realize that your child is capable of lying, cheating, bullying, and stealing. That doesn't mean they do or even will do those things, but they're capable of them.” (page 236)

Here is what the Proverbs say:

4.23 - Guard your heart because it affects everything that you do.

23.26 – O my son, give me your heart.

22.15 – A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness

17.3 – the Lord tests the heart

23.19 – Keep your heart on the right course.

27.19 – As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person.

Do we have a problem of socialization, or do we have a problem with a heart that is sinful from the beginning? As one person quipped, vipers in diapers. Our children have sinful hearts from day one.

The Battle Never Ends

And this battle for hearts is never over. There are the calls from Wisdom and Folly each and every day. Proverbs 8.1-21 describes Wisdom and Understanding calling out from the hilltop, the crossroads, at the entrance to the city, and at the city gates. They raise their voices to all people. And Proverbs 9.13-18 records Folly sitting in her doorway on the heights overlooking the city calling out to all who will listen. Which one will our hearts go after at this moment? Which one will our hearts go after at the next deciding opportunity? This battle for hearts has not seen ultimate victory and won't until we get to glory. We all struggle. Is it any wonder that our children never seem to really get it?

The Goal of Child Rearing

Let's turn our attention to the goal of child rearing. Listen to Dr. Phil once again:

“It is time that as parents we say, “Hey, I do not surrender, I do not give up. I will not be intimidated by all the forces tugging on my children and family. I will not accept that disconnected children are just ‘how it is’ these days. I do not accept the epidemics of oral sex, drugs and alcohol in the middle and upper schools. I do not accept a child that appears ‘deaf’ when I say, ‘Pick up your toys and don’t hit your sister in the head anymore.’ I will not continue to parent out of fear that my kids won’t like me if I require more from them behaviorally, academically and spiritually as I teach them that relationship-building is important in life. I will not feel guilty and go into debt trying to keep them in designer clothes and toys from preschool on up! I am not charged with being their friend. I am charged with being their parent, their protector, their teacher and their leader. I will ‘rise above my raisin’, if necessary, to break any family legacy that may be contaminating how I lead my family and deal with my children. Give me the specific tools, guidance and techniques and I will work to socialize my children in a way so that they become immune to the many seductive promises of instant gratification, false realities and provocative lifestyles of today’s fast-paced world. I will not let the television or Internet ‘baby sit’ them as I communicate only through e-mails, pagers and cell phones. I will instead plug in the old-fashioned way and prepare them to deal with the distractions that assault them and blur their vision of self. I will create the pride, unity and loyalty and ‘team spirit’ that is so critical to a phenomenal family.” (pages *xiv and xv*).

“A successful parent helps children find their unique gifts and talents.” (page 142)

“Two main goals: socialization and authenticity. ... Socialization is learning to be a responsible citizen, leaning how to work in harmony with other people, developing intimate and trusting relationships, and learning to pay attention. ... Authenticity is teaching them who they are, that life ultimately rewards the pursuit

of authenticity, allowing your child to set personal goals within the framework of the goals you set for them, and clearing a path that encourages self-discovery.” (pages 149-154)

And now to Proverbs:

1.8-9 – 8Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you. Don’t neglect your mother’s teaching. 9What you learn from them will crown you with grace and clothe you with honor.

4.1-13 – My children, listen to me. Listen to your father’s instruction. Pay attention and grow wise, for I am giving you good guidance. Don’t turn away from my teaching. 3For I, too, was once my father’s son, tenderly loved by my mother as an only child.

4My father told me, “Take my words to heart. Follow my instructions and you will live. 5Learn to be wise, and develop good judgment. Don’t forget or turn away from my words. 6Don’t turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you. 7Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do! And whatever else you do, get good judgment. 8If you prize wisdom, she will exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you. 9She will place a lovely wreath on your head; she will present you with a beautiful crown.”

10My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life. 11I will teach you wisdom’s ways and lead you in straight paths. 12If you live a life guided by wisdom, you won’t limp or stumble as you run. 13Carry out my instructions; don’t forsake them. Guard them, for they will lead you to a fulfilled life.

23.22-23 – ²²Listen to your father, who gave you life, and don’t despise your mother’s experience when she is old. ²³Get the truth and don’t ever sell it; also get wisdom, discipline, and discernment.

27.11 – How happy I will be if you turn out to be wise.

The Methods of Child Rearing

In one of the messages we talked about going from a almost completely command-centered approach to our children rearing with little counsel to a completely counsel-centered approach to child rearing as the child progressively got older. Let’s look at how the experts say we should be rearing our children.

First from Dr. Steinberg:

“There are only three basic ways to get your child to change his behavior when he’s done something you disapprove of: punish him, reward him for some desirable alternative behavior, or explain why what he did was wrong and tell him how you’d like him to behave the next time.” (page 143).

“If you had to choose between two equally effective medications, one of which has terrible side effects and one of which does not, I assume you’d choose the one without the bad side effects.

“If you are choosing between two equally effective forms of punishment, I hope you will use the same logic. Two different types of punishment can be equivalent in their short-term effectiveness but have markedly different side effects.

“Of all the forms of punishment that parents use, the one with the worst side effects is physical punishment. Physical punishment is no more effective than other types of punishment – in fact, in many situations it is less effective – and it has been proven to have a harmful effect on children’s development. That’s why you should never spank, hit, slap, or otherwise physically punish your child.

“When I say *never*, I mean *never*. No matter how angry you are. No matter what your child has done. No matter how frustrated, annoyed, desperate, or fed up you are. In the long run, when you use physical punishment, you are creating more problems than you are solving.

“The main side effect of physical punishment is excessive aggression. Children who are spanked, hit, or slapped are more prone to fighting with other children. They are more likely to be bullies and more likely to use aggression to solve disputes with others. Who can blame them? Their parents have taught them that hitting someone is an acceptable way to solve a problem.

“Excessive aggression is a serious enough problem in its own right, but it also leads to other, equally serious difficulties. Children who are overly aggressive are more likely to be rejected by their classmates, to get into trouble in school, and to develop early conduct problems. All of these place a child at risk for academic difficulty, forming friendships with antisocial peers, and delinquency. Spanking your child will increase the likelihood of all of these problems.” (pages 148-149).

“If you need to punish your child, do so by telling him that you’re disappointed in how he has behaved, putting him on a time-out (if he is young), or depriving him of something he wants or enjoys (if he is older). These work just as well as physical punishment, but they do not have adverse side effects.

“Let me repeat myself, just to make sure you get my point. Never spank, hit, slap, or otherwise physically punish your child. The link between physical punishment and children’s aggression has been scientifically documented in hundreds, if not thousands, of research studies.

“Physical punishment is bad for children.” (page 150).

It is these scientific research studies that have been used as evidence to have laws passed in 10 European countries and the state of Minnesota. In these places it is against the law to spank your child. I do not know the severity of the crime or its punishment (I told you the reason at the beginning), but it is against the law to spank your child. Oakland, California has been having hearings on a “no spank zone”, but a law has not been passed yet. The backers of this kind of legislation make it very clear that their agenda is to get legislation passed worldwide.

And Dr. Spock:

“Nearly every two-year old has a tantrum from time to time; some healthy children have lots of them. Sometimes a parent can see a tantrum brewing and head it off by distracting a child, offering a well-timed snack, or leaving a situation

that is just too stimulating. At other times, the tantrum blows up in an instant. All you can do is wait for the storm to blow over.

“During a tantrum, it’s helpful to stay nearby so that your child doesn’t feel alone. At the same time, it’s best not to get angry at your child, threaten punishment, plead for calm, or try too hard to make everything better. Any of these responses just tends to make tantrums occur more often and last longer. Afterward, it’s best to move on to a positive activity and put the upset in the past. A quick word of praise along the lines of “Nice job pulling yourself together” can let your child salvage some self-esteem and learn to recover faster the next time. Remind to praise yourself, too, for staying calm and rational – not easily done when your two-year-old is having a melt down.” (pages 158-159)

And lastly, from Dr. Phil:

“I believe that it is important to avoid confrontation with your children as much as you possibly can. Having head-to-head confrontations, delivering ultimatums and essentially throwing down the gauntlet breed conflict, power struggle and resentment. Therefore, I think it is usually good to try to figure out the best possible alternative and come up with a jointly sponsored plan that both of you but into and can be excited about. Avoid confrontation as much as possible, but if and when you have one, as a parent, *you must not lose.*” (pages 213-214)

“More than thirty years ago, psychology professor David Premack accurately described something mothers have known for generations. He found that high probability (enjoyable) behaviors can serve as currency for low probability (unenjoyable) behaviors. Simply put, if they have to, children will do things they don’t particularly want to do, such as homework, in order to get to do things they do want to do, such as watch television or play with their toys.

“This became known as the Premack principle. It is a simple but powerful truth that you children will perform those need-to-do behaviors with a high degree of consistency and efficiency if you establish and *enforce a consistent rule* that they must follow before they get to do what they want to do.” Page 217)

“I probably recommend time-outs more often than any other single behavioral management technique because when properly done, they are highly effective.” (page 219)

Training in the Early Years

I have divided this portion of the presentation of Proverbs into three parts – the early years, the transition years, and the later years. I am doing that to go along with the presentation that I did on Sunday evening, January 16th. Obviously, I could have given many more examples of the three experts and how they divided parenting up between age groups. And all three of them employed some of the principles that we find in Proverbs. After all, God’s principles are wise, and it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to observe what works. But the important point about the samples that I have given show the philosophical backgrounds and pre-suppositions that these men bring to the table.

So let me begin with the early years of child rearing according to Proverbs. If you were here on Sunday evening 2 weeks ago, I presented the point that parenting is a balance between commanding our children and counseling them. Commanding involves spanking and making commands that are expected to be obeyed without complaint, delay, or excuse. And counseling involves discussion and pastoring in order to get to the heart of the child to bring about repentance and change. There isn't any magical age when these two approaches cross over, but the one final point is that commanding does come to an end.

Listen now to the Proverbs for this commanding approach:

20.30 – Physical punishment cleanses away evil; such discipline purifies the heart.

22.15 – Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

10.13 – Fools will be punished with a rod

13.24 – If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.

19.18 – Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives.

23.13-14 – Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them. ¹⁴Physical discipline may well save them from death.

26.7 – Guide a horse with a whip, a donkey with a bridle, and a fool with a rod to his back!

29.15 – To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom,

Transitioning in the Middle Years

During this transition time, which comes during the middle years, we are commanding less and less and counseling more and more. We can see this is some of the extended portions of Proverbs the best:

1.10-19 – **My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!** ¹¹They may say, "Come and join us. Let's hide and kill someone! Let's ambush the innocent! ¹²Let's swallow them alive as the grave swallows its victims. Though they are in the prime of life, they will go down into the pit of death. ¹³And the loot we'll get! We'll fill our houses with all kinds of things! ¹⁴Come on, throw in your lot with us; we'll split our loot with you."

¹⁵**Don't go along with them, my child! Stay far away from their paths.** ¹⁶They rush to commit crimes. They hurry to commit murder. ¹⁷When a bird sees a trap being set, it stays away. ¹⁸But not these people! They set an ambush for themselves; they booby-trap their own lives! ¹⁹Such is the fate of all who are greedy for gain. It ends up robbing them of life.

2.1-22 – My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for under-

standing, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

29.19 – 19For a servant, mere words are not enough—discipline is needed. For the words may be understood, but they are not heeded.

Counseling in the Later Years

And during this later years, our commanding mode should be dwindling continually as we allow our children to make decisions of their own. We counsel and instruct. We make less and less decisions and allow them to make more and more. We even allow them to make foolish decisions and to suffer the consequences for those decisions, using them as teaching and counseling opportunities. Our goal is to have independent children who are wise, discerning, and able to live life pleasing to God without our commands. Again, some of the extended portions of Proverbs express this well. For instance, in Proverbs 7 we see Solomon taking his son out into the culture and counseling him about the truths and the lies that are all around him.

7.1-27 – ? 1Follow my advice, my son; always treasure my commands. 2Obey them and live! Guard my teachings as your most precious possession.£ 3Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.? 4Love wisdom like a sister; make insight a beloved member of your family. 5Let them hold you back from an affair with an immoral woman, from listening to the flattery of an adulterous woman.? 6I was looking out the window of my house one day 7and saw a simpleminded young man who lacked common sense. 8He was crossing the street near the house of an immoral woman. He was strolling down the path by her house 9at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. 10The woman approached him, dressed seductively and sly of heart. 11She was the brash, rebellious type who never stays at home. 12She is often seen in the streets and markets,

soliciting at every corner. 13She threw her arms around him and kissed him, and with a brazen look she said, 14“I’ve offered my sacrifices and just finished my vows. 15It’s you I was looking for! I came out to find you, and here you are! 16My bed is spread with colored sheets of finest linen imported from Egypt. 17I’ve perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18Come, let’s drink our fill of love until morning. Let’s enjoy each other’s caresses, 19for my husband is not home. He’s away on a long trip. 20He has taken a wallet full of money with him, and he won’t return until later in the month.” 21So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him. 22He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, 23awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life. 24Listen to me, my sons, and pay attention to my words. 25Don’t let your hearts stray away toward her. Don’t wander down her wayward path. 26For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims. 27Her house is the road to the grave. Her bedroom is the den of death.

9.8-9 – So don’t bother rebuking mockers; they will only hate you. But the wise, when rebuked, will love you all the more. 9Teach the wise, and they will be wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn more.

16.21—The wise are known for their understanding, and instruction is appreciated if it’s well presented.

16.23 – From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive.

19.19 – Short-tempered people must pay their own penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again.

19.20 – Get all the advice and instruction you can, and be wise the rest of your life.

This is perhaps the most challenging of times for us as parents. We don’t want our children to make mistakes and pay consequences. We don’t want them to embarrass us. We don’t want them to fail. But, as we have said all during this conference, God calls us to be faithful to the process of child rearing. The results are His area of concern.

The Results of Child Rearing

Which leads us to what those results can be. I don’t believe that there is a parent sitting in front of me this morning who wants to have children that are described as fools, violent, disobedient, and the host of other terms that are used in the Scriptures. But God has not given us any guarantee that our children will turn out to be good if we follow His plan for child rearing, just as He doesn’t guarantee that if we don’t, the child will turn out to be bad. We cannot do anything about changing our children’s hearts. Changing hearts is God’s business. So Proverbs describes the two results that can come about: heartaches and joy.

Heartaches

- 1.7 – A fool despises wisdom and discipline
- 15.5 – A fool despises his parent's discipline
- 15.20 – Foolish children despise their mother.
- 15.21 – Foolishness brings joy to those who have no sense
- 15.32 – If you reject criticism, you only have yourself to blame
- 16.27 – A worthless man hunts for evil
- 17.11 – An evil man seeks rebellion
- 17.21 – It is painful to be the parent of a fool; there is no joy for the father of a rebel.
- 19.3 – People ruin their lives by their own foolishness
- 19.27 – If you stop listening to instruction, you have turned your back on knowledge.
- 20.3 – Fools insist on quarreling
- 29.15 – A mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child

Joys

- 10.1 and 15.20 – A wise son brings joy to his father
- 15.21 – A man of understanding stays on the right path
- 23.15-16 – My child, how I will rejoice if you become wise. 16 Yes, my heart will thrill when you speak what is right and just.
- 23.24-25 – The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure it is to have wise children. 25 So give your parents joy! May she who gave you birth be happy.
- 29.3 – The man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father
- 29.17 – Discipline your children, and they will give you happiness and peace of mind.

Conclusion I would like to try and summarize this Conference with a series of questions. There is no way that you can write all of these questions down, so just contemplate them as they come up:

Do you have a God-honoring goal for rearing your children?

Do you love ease more than obeying God?

Do you live through your children?

Are your children the source of your success and the star in your crown?

Do you define success in terms of the outcome of how your children turn out?

What outcomes are acceptable and which aren't?

Do you have a child-centered home?

Do you model Christ before your children?

Does your life reflect wisdom and discernment?

Can you say to your children, "Observe my ways"?

Do you trust God with your children, or do you believe you can do a better job with techniques developed by the experts?

Do you keep your children so busy so that there isn't any time for them to get into any trouble?

Do all infractions of the rules receive the same response, without any distinctions?

Do your children reap the harvest of foolish choices?

Are you helping your children see the culture through the lens of Scripture and being pleasing God?

Are you using the culture to help your children develop discernment and wisdom?

Will your children be prepared to face this culture and be light and salt to this dark world?

Are you evaluating your parenting to see where you need an extreme parent transformation?

