

## PARENTING THROUGH PROVERBS pt 2

### Selected Proverbs



MAY 12, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

In our culture you hear a very subtle message: the reason bad and immoral things happen in our world is not because there are sinful people doing them, but because people are ill-informed and uneducated; it's an ignorance problem, but once we educate them they will stop sinning and making destructive decisions.

The state of humanity cannot be remedied through information or education. The Bible makes that very clear; there is nothing that rivals the Word of God in understanding the heart of man. Beginning in the Book of Genesis and throughout the entire Bible, it is taught that man is born a sinner. No child is born morally neutral; every person enters the world as a child of Adam, with a sin nature that needs little time and no encouragement to manifest itself.

- God says to Noah in Genesis 8:21, "For the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth."
- David says in Psalm 51:5, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, Sinful from the time my mother conceived me."
- Paul says in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."

Proverbs assumes that as we train our children and grandchildren, it must begin with the premise that a child left to himself or herself will only become more proficient at sinning.

- Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."
- Solomon says in Proverbs 5:12 that a rebellious child when he or she is all grown up will proclaim, "How I hated discipline! My heart spurned correction!"
- Solomon says in Proverbs 4:24, "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put devious lips far from you."

The problem with a child is not his or her environment; the problem is within his or her own heart. We cannot wiggle free from this web of sin that we have become entangled in. Just like us, their hearts are full of sin and like us, they have no hope apart of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Jesus became wisdom for us from God (1 Cor. 1:30) so that we can live life wisely in the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs says our children are vulnerable because they are impulsive and naïve.

- Proverbs 14:16, "A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless."
- Proverbs 27:12, "A prudent man sees evil *and* hides himself, the naive proceed *and* pay the penalty."
- Proverbs 14:15, "The naïve believes everything, but a prudent man considers his steps."
- Proverbs 24:1-2, "Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their minds devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble."
- Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

Children are vulnerable because they are impulsive and insensitive to danger, but also because they are undisciplined. Like us in our immature state, our children avoid pain and exalt pleasure. Part of our training as parents is for them to see the benefits of self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Proverbs 21:17, "He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich."

- Proverbs 16:32, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city."
- Proverbs 25:16-17, "Have you found honey? Eat only what you need, lest you have it in excess and vomit it. Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you."
- Proverbs 25:28, "Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit."

Proverbs says that we need to parent our children's bodies, but ultimately we need to parent our kids' hearts. Solomon says in one of the most famous verses in Scripture:

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Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the sources of life. –Proverbs 4:23

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"Watch over" or "guard" is the Hebrew word *natzar*, meaning "to preserve, keep." You are like a gate-keeper, a guard on a watchtower, whose role was invaluable. He continuously scanned the horizon for approaching armies of nighttime raids. He discerned who might enter the city. And he was authorized to use deadly force to prevent illicit entry. The lives of everyone in the city depended upon his diligence. It's no surprise the word is often used to describe God as Shepherd of His people (Isaiah 26:3). A shepherd watches over his flocks to keep them from harming themselves, to protect them from predators and to supply their needs.

From your heart "springs" (*motzah*) your life. *Motzah* is the "act or place of going out." The inner self is the very source of our lives. For the Hebrew sage, wisdom isn't determined by what a person knows, but what is coming out of his or her heart.

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### **What does it look like to help our children guard their hearts?**

1) Our children need to grow in their understanding of shame and their desire to hide and cover sin and guilt. We as parents, and our children, love the wrong self. We love the impressive self. We have a constant drive to impress and so do our kids. As a result we try to fix our bad by being good and when that doesn't work we hide and cover and become unknown.

2) Our children need to understand which part Jesus loves and pursues. This is where the Pharisees and religious leaders got it all wrong (Matt 23, Luke 12, Mark 7). Which part does Jesus love? The impressive me or the unimpressive me? He loves the unimpressive self. Those who love the impressive self always ask Jesus, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus always answers, "Those who are well don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:30-32, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:10).

3) Just like our loving, heavenly Father, we as parents need to be focused on the unimpressive parts of our kids. Sin, shame and guilt are deep and we can't be afraid as parents, but we must grow in taking our kids into their hearts. We need forgiveness and we need it every day. We need a Savior and we need Him every day.

- Next time your child hides or is deceptive, ask them the next day - what made you want to hide that from mommy or daddy or grandma?
- Next time they have an over the top reaction or an unusual reaction, a strong reaction to something, take a moment at some time and ask them - what were you feeling?
- Give them options to help them articulate their hearts.
  - Is it because you feel like you are being treated unfairly?
  - It is because you are angry about what happened to you?
  - Is it because you are lonely?

In age appropriate ways, our kids desperately need skills to know what is going on inside them. In order to do this we can't be afraid of their bad, but must demonstrate what Jesus demonstrates every day in our lives.