

Proverbs — Ten ways to teach my children to make wise choices in a foolish world.

July 7, 2024

Good morning, CrossWinds! This morning, we begin our summer series in the book of Proverbs. In this series, Pastor Jordan and I will rotate back and forth between campuses. Pastor Stephen and Jeremy from the Spencer Campus will also teach in this series, which will give Pastor Jordan and me a little time off. My wife is looking forward to that so I have time to paint the shutters on the house.

This morning, I have two tasks. The first is to give you a brief introduction to the book of Proverbs to set up the rest of the series. The second is to talk about how to teach our children to make wise choices in a foolish world. A few weeks ago, when I taught our core value of family, I emphasized the importance of teaching our children the gospel and that the number one job of parents is to be evangelists in their homes. As I wrote the message, I realized there is more than the gospel that parents should teach their children. I kept thinking of Solomon when he wrote Proverbs. Most of the Proverbs are instructions from a father to his son, telling him how to make wise choices in a foolish world. If the number one thing parents must teach their children is the gospel, the number two thing parents should teach their children is wisdom.

This morning, we will look at teaching our children to make wise choices and some of the ways the book of Proverbs tells us to do that. Let's begin with the introduction to Proverbs.

Introduction to Proverbs

Proverbs are principles, not promises.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of short, pithy sayings about how life usually works. It does not make iron-clad promises about how life always works. Let me show you.

A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Proverbs 10:4 (ESV)

This is a true statement. It is usually the way life usually works. We all know there are exceptions to the rule. There are lazy people who purchase lottery tickets and win a pile of money. There are also hard-working people who, for a variety of reasons, just can't get ahead. As a general ruler, proverbs are always true. They spell out the way life usually works. Just realize that there will always be exceptions.

Solomon authored most of the proverbs.

Most of Proverbs was written by Solomon. The Bible tells us Solomon was the wisest man to ever live.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore,... For he was wiser than all other men... 1 Kings 4:29-31 (ESV)

The Bible also tells us Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs¹, of which fewer than a third are recorded. Solomon is the author of chapters 1 to 22:16 plus 25:1 to 29:7. The Bible tells us Solomon didn't write chapters 30 and 31, but that doesn't mean those chapters aren't inspired, just that Solomon was not the original author.

¹ 1 Kings 4:32

The book of Proverbs is challenging to teach straight through. Chapters 1 to 9 are orderly, and so is chapter 31. We can teach straight through them, but chapters 10 to 30 tend to jump from subject to subject. That is why, this summer, we will look at Proverbs topically.

Solomon was not just the author of most of the proverbs in the book, but the greatest irony of all is that in his later years, he abandoned the wisdom God inspired him to write. Instead of wisdom, he pursued foolishness and experienced the suffering that comes with unwise choices. For example, the book of Proverbs has many words of advice on the importance of men not letting themselves be seduced by women. Instead, a man is to enjoy his wife and stay faithful to his wife. Solomon started well in this area, but after a while, he built a harem and added foreign wives to his world. Even though God appeared to him twice, his foreign wives turned his heart away from God and led to the destruction of his kingdom in his son's generation.

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 1 Kings 11:1–2 (ESV)

There is a lesson for us in this. It doesn't matter how well we learn the Book of Proverbs or how diligently we teach our children the Book of Proverbs. If parents pursue foolish choices, their children will learn more from the actions they see their parents do than the words they hear their parents say. There is no surer way to provoke your children to ignore the wisdom of God than parental hypocrisy.

Jesus is wisdom personified.

At times, the book of Proverbs talks about wisdom as if wisdom was a person. When we think of wisdom embodied in a person, Solomon comes to mind. After all, he was the wisest man to ever live. The problem is that he began well, but he finished poorly.

When Proverbs describes wisdom as a person, it tells us that person was around when God laid the foundations of the world.² Solomon wasn't around when God laid the foundations of the world. Solomon began to live wisely but he ended in foolishness. Who is the wisest man to ever live? Who is a wise person we can always follow? The answer is Jesus.

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. Matthew 12:42 (ESV)

If people traveled around the world to hear Solomon's wisdom, Jesus has greater wisdom than Solomon. Jesus isn't just our savior, but he embodies wise living.

(Jesus) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3 (ESV)

The apostle Paul tells us Jesus has all wisdom and knowledge. Even though we are studying the Old Testament book of Proverbs, it is a book about Jesus. Jesus didn't just save us from our sins; he also showed us how to live a wise and productive life. Unlike Solomon, who didn't follow the wisdom of his own words, Jesus perfectly followed wisdom in this life. This means the more we become like Jesus, the wiser we will be.

² Proverbs 8:22-31

What are ten ways I can teach my children to make wise choices in a foolish world?

We begin by remembering the context of Proverbs. It was a book written by Solomon to his son, to teach him how to make wise choices in a deceptive world.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, Proverbs 3:1 (ESV)

Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, Proverbs 4:1 (ESV)

I am going to pull out ten of the lessons Solomon taught his son. These are lessons every parent needs to teach their children. We may not get through all ten, but that is ok. There is plenty of good material in Proverbs and an entire summer of sermons yet to come.

Teach your children to fear God.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge... Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,... Proverbs 9:10 (ESV)

All wisdom begins with fearing God. This is what we must teach our children. The Bible repeatedly stresses this point. All successful parenting begins by instilling in our children a proper fear of God. This is not a cowardly fear but a reverence fear. It is awe of God's holiness and power. It is fear of God's displeasure. It is acknowledging that God didn't simply create the world, but he is involved in the world. He has a right to punish. He has a right to correct. True wisdom begins with an awareness of our own sin and a healthy fear of dishonoring God.

Children need to know from an early age that God is angry at sin and wickedness and punishes those who do evil. This is why it is good to read the Old Testament stories to our children, where they learn that when God's people sinned, they suffered. God sent his own people into exile because of their sin. This was not because God hated them but because he loved them; therefore, he disciplined them to break them from their love of sin.

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. Psalm 7:12–13 (ESV)

Too much children's material presents God as a gentle, meek grandfather who appears as a senile Santa instead of the God of the Bible. This is a mistake and leads to a careless attitude toward God and sin. If children learn to think of God as harmless, they will turn a blind eye toward sin and disobedience in their lives because they think God isn't watching. If he is watching, God doesn't care or he won't involve himself in their life. This isn't true!

Parents must lovingly discipline their children so they learn parents are involved in their life. They care about their life. There are consequences for disobedience. There is always suffering that comes with sin. It is when children fear mom and dad's discipline that they begin to fear God's loving discipline. Parents need to teach their children that when they sin, their sin doesn't just irritate mom and dad, but God is also upset.

Sin always has consequences built into it. Sin always leads to suffering. Children must be taught that just as mom and dad step discipline their children to correct them when they sin, God loves us. He steps in and also disciplines us when we sin.

...the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Proverbs 3:12 (NIV)

The problem for parents is there comes a time when their children are out of the home. Mom and Dad no longer have the authority to discipline their children like they did when they were little. Children must learn that while they have become independent of their parent's discipline, they have not outgrown God's loving discipline. God loves them, and because he does, he will be sure that sin leads to suffering and pain. This is God's fatherly correction in action. This is why all wisdom begins with children learning to fear God when they are young.

The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short. Proverbs 10:27 (ESV)

Those who fear God's displeasure turn away from sin, as a result, they live longer.

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death. Proverbs 14:27 (ESV)

Do you want to have a life that is blessed and filled with joy? That kind of life always begins with a healthy fear of God's displeasure. That turns us away from the traps of sin that lead to death.

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it. Proverbs 15:16 (ESV)

If you had to choose between giving your children an inheritance that allows them to own boats and houses and live in luxury or giving them a healthy fear of God, that healthy fear of God would be better for them than millions of dollars passed to the next generation. This is how important it is for children to learn to fear God's displeasure.

Teach your children to guard their minds.

I cannot emphasize this enough, especially in the age of the Internet.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)

In the Bible, the heart is the place of the emotions, the intellect, and the mind. Children must learn to guard their minds and what they put into it. Never before in human history have the forces of evil waged such a powerful campaign to capture the minds of people on the scale that we see today. As parents, we are responsible for guarding the impressionable minds of our children. The attack on their minds comes from television, movies, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, and even high school curriculum and college professors.

Mom and Dad have a responsibility to protect their children from the most unsavory aspects of modern culture. We have to know what our children are looking at and who they are spending time with. Don't give them an unfiltered Internet connection. Don't give them a remote control of the television and allow them to flip through all the cable channels. Parents have a responsibility to make sure they know what is going into their children's minds, and they guard their brains.

I will set before my eyes no vile thing... Psalm 101:3 (NIV84)

The Psalmist refused to look at anything filthy or unwholesome. Most movies with their body bags, sex, and gore would be unacceptable to the Psalmist.

I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? Job 31:1 (ESV)

Job refused to allow himself to look at another woman and think about her in a sexual way.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

When we tell our children to guard their minds and avoid looking at anything unwholesome, the first problem we have is that sin looks fun. It looks enticing. If sin didn't look good, nobody would pursue it. Sin is like bait on a fish hook. What looks good always conceals something that will capture and destroy us. We pursue sin because we think it will bring us joy, but instead, it brings suffering and death. We need to teach our children that guarding what we put into our minds is not a choice for less happiness. It is a choice for more happiness. Sin may look good, but it is like bait on a hook. It will capture and destroy. This is an important lesson all of us must learn.

I think of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis tells us the forbidden fruit looked good and appealed to the senses. The problem is that once Adam and Eve consumed it, it led to sin and death. That is how sin worked the first time, and it is how it works every time. We must teach this to our children, or they will fall for the enticements of sin every time.

...take every thought captive to obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

It just doesn't matter if we are guarding our minds from sinful input. It also matters if we are allowing our mind to ruminate on sinful thoughts all on its own. For example, how do we respond when someone says something hurtful about us? Instantly, our mind begin thinking of ways to get even. What happens when

we succeed in life? It doesn't take long for our thoughts to become prideful. As soon as we sense our minds pursuing these things on its own, we need to take our thought life captive and make it obedient to Christ. When hatred, lust, pride, or a host of other sinful thoughts surface in our thought lives, we must confront them and repent of them to Jesus.

What we allow ourselves to role-play in our minds, we will eventually become what we real-play in our lives. Teach your children not to be deceived into believing that there are no consequences to allowing our minds to dwell on hurtful things, angry thoughts, or lustful desires. What we role play in our mind is always a dress rehearsal for what we will eventually real play in our life.

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. Mark 7:21–22 (ESV)

Look at all the wicked actions in life. Sexual sin, theft, murder, and adultery. Where did all of it begin? It began with what people allowed themselves to think. They didn't take every thought captive and make it obedient to Jesus.

Teach your children to obey their parents.

Proverbs is saturated with instruction on this topic.

My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, Proverbs 6:20–23 (ESV)

Let your children know that everything their parents tell them is because you love them. Outside of Jesus, nobody on this planet loves them more than you do. Don't be afraid to tell them the truth. Everything you teach them, even the

hard discipline you have for them is because you love them. Other people don't discipline them in life because nobody else loves them as much as their parents.

The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures. Proverbs 30:17 (ESV)

Proverbs tells us that disobeying one's parents will usually lead to a tragic death. That is harsh, but that is the way it usually works. As I thought about this, I wished I could take a survey of the criminals in jail, the drug dealers, and those strung out on drugs and poverty in our streets. I wonder how many of them listened to their parents. I suspect almost all of them flagrantly disobeyed their parents. Look where it led them.

Parents must teach their children obedience. This is one of the most basic and obvious responsibilities of parenthood. If you are going to raise children who love Jesus and live well in this life, it begins with them learning to obey their parents. This is a commandment with a promise.

Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Ephesians 6:2-3 (ESV)

If children do not learn to honor and obey their parents, it is a promise from God that it will not go well with them in life. We need to teach this to our children. They get to choose their future. Disobey and disregard your parents and it will not go well in life. Honor and obey your parents, and it will go well in life. Make your choice.

When it comes to teaching children to obey, several passages in Proverbs talk about correction. Surprisingly, they remind us that parents who fail to

discipline their children have a lack of love for their children. It is parents who don't love their children who neglect to administer the pain of correction.

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24 (ESV)

Not all children are the same. I had one child, and all I needed to do to correct her was furrow my eyebrow, and she broke into tears. I had other children where more forceful measures were required to get their attention.

This is not socially acceptable in our culture, but the writer of Proverbs reminds us that in some cases, parents need to spank their children so they get the message. Spankings are not to be done out of anger or revenge but out of love. They are done to turn a will that is heading toward destruction.

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. Proverbs 23:13–14 (ESV)

Parents who love their children will not shy away from controlled physical discipline, especially if they persistently disobey. Remember that a spanking is only to be temporary pain that is intended as an aide to growth. It is to associate suffering with sin and remove foolishness from the heart. It is not to bruise a child or get revenge. Parents must be calm and in control of themselves. Parents who spank out of anger in the heat of the moment will find no support for that in the Bible. Instead, a parent should be grieved they disciplined a child in an improper way.

Teach your children how to select their friends.

This may be one of the most important, but most neglected aspects of parenting.

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. Proverbs 13:20 (ESV)

Show me your children's friends, and I will show you their future. Mom and Dad must take the lead on this. If you do not help your children learn to select good friends, bad friends will select them. It is Mom and Dad's responsibility to teach their children how to make wise friendship choices. It is Mom and Dad's responsibility to teach their children to limit their involvement with friends who are not helpful.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals. 1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

Your children's moral standards, the language they use, and the activities they enjoy will probably not rise above the lowest common denominator of the friends they keep. Rarely does a child have the ability to elevate himself beyond the friends with which he functions.

I think of my oldest son. When he was young, he spoke perfect English. He met a friend down the street who was his age. The children played together. The problem was the other child spoke with a lisp. After a week, my oldest son was speaking with a lisp. He subconsciously picked it up. He had to limit him from that friend, and we spent over a year trying to work the lisp out of his vocabulary.

...Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6 (ESV)

The bad influence of one friend quickly spreads between friends. It is a fact of human nature that people are more prone to follow a bad example than they are to set a good one, especially if it involves going against their peers.

Let's get back to Solomon's words in Proverbs.

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. Proverbs 1:10 (ESV)

Solomon warned his son many times about guarding himself from bad company. He cautioned his son about being lured by bad friends into making wicked choices. Bad friends will always make their wicked foolish choices sound exciting, adventurous, and fun. In reality, they are heading to their own death.

Don't join them.

If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason;... we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse"— my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood... These men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. Proverbs 1:11–18 (ESV)

When I read those verses, I pictured the state of young people in the city who are lured into gangs by their peers, only to pursue their own death because of the company they chose to keep. In Spirit Lake, we don't have a problem with young adults being lured into a gang by their friends, but young adults are lured into foolish and sinful choices by the company they keep. All of us know about the underage drinking parties that happen at the high school. When those parties are busted, all of the students there pay a price, even if they weren't consuming the alcohol. All of us have heard the stories of students who lose the opportunity to participate in a state wrestling meet a state track meet, or a football game because they were caught underage drinking with their friends.

Mom and dad, you must take this responsibility seriously and talk about it with your child. Your child's friends will put them under tremendous pressure to head in the wrong direction.

This is one of the reasons the church youth group is important. In AWANA and youth group children find other friends who are trying to follow Jesus. Those friends encourage them in the right direction when everyone else at school is heading in the wrong direction.

Teach your children to control their lusts.

...flee youthful passions.... 2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV)

It is significant that the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the importance of not letting his lusts run his life. A wise parent will realize that their children will develop a powerful sex drive, and their sex drive is at work younger than most parents think. If young adults do not learn to control their lusts, their lusts will control them and ruin their lives. This is one of the dominant topics that Solomon wrote to his son about in Proverbs, and it was the source of his own downfall.

For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; Proverbs 5:3–5 (ESV)

Fornication can be fatal. Do not be deceived by a forbidden woman. Her looks are enticing. Her words will be smooth, but in the end, she will lead you to death. Do not be tricked into pursuing the wrong relationship with the wrong kind of person at the wrong time in your life. If you simply follow your lust, it will lead to death.

Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished... He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. Proverbs 6:27–32 (ESV)

Solomon's point is there is that there is no way to escape the consequences of sexual sin. In these verses, Solomon focuses on an adulterous

relationship. If you allow yourself to pursue a relationship at work with someone who is already married, you are a fool. You lack common sense. You will destroy yourself. If you are not married and you allow yourself to be intimate with someone you are dating, there are still consequences. The memories of those intimacies are seared into your brain. When you marry, you will wish you could forget what you had done because those memories will intrude into your thought life at the worst possible moment.

Folks, sexual sin always has consequences. There is no way to escape them. This is why it is only a fool won't restrain his lusts.

For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. Proverbs 7:6–9 (ESV)

In these verses, Solomon describes the way sexual sin works. The young man was not just the victim of a seductress. He was a victim of his now naivety and evil desires. He deliberately took a path by an immoral woman's house so he could pass her street corner. He may not have a particularly evil plan beyond walking by her house to see what would happen. He was curious, so he went to a neighborhood he should not have been. He exposed himself to temptation he did not need to face. This is the way sexual sin works. Instead of steering clear from temptation, we talk ourselves into walking closer and closer to the act of sin. We rationalize that we have come close to sin but we comfort ourselves by remembering that we haven't crossed the line of sin. The problem is we are setting ourselves up for a fall. The problem is that if you don't want to fall, don't walk where it is slippery.

And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart... I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. Proverbs 7:10, 16–18 (ESV)

She met him and enticed every one of his senses with all the tools at her disposal. She was dressed as a prostitute. This refers to what she wasn't wearing, not what she was wearing. She had on perfume. She described a luxurious love nest. She played on his imagination by telling him they would make love all night long. He wasn't planning of this. He wasn't prepared for this. With her seductive speech she persuaded him.

With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. **All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life.** Proverbs 7:21–23 (ESV)

Notice the change. All at once, he followed her. Earlier, he reminded himself he was in control of his lusts. He had done nothing wrong. He was just curious. Suddenly, he crossed the line. His lusts were in control of him. He dove to his death.

Parents must teach their children that the way to beat their lusts is not to get as close to sexual sin as they can and then try to resist. It is to avoid it at the beginning. Don't go places they shouldn't go. Don't turn on the Internet late at night. Don't turn on the television when you are home at night and alone. Parents must teach their children that the way to avoid being controlled by their lusts is to steer clear of temptations at the beginning, not focus on resisting temptation when their passions are inflamed at the end. Don't leave your children naive about this, so their curiosity leads them into situations where they are set up for failure.

Teach your children to get married and enjoy their spouse.

Parents must teach their children that all the sexual passion and energy inside of them is a good thing. It was given to them by God. It is given to them to pour into their spouse and enjoyed inside of the security and blessing of marriage.

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Proverbs 5:15 (ESV)

Solomon says tells his son to seek sexual gratification, that is sexual refreshment from his wife.

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? Proverbs 5:18–20 (ESV)

Teach your children to find someone of the opposite sex who loves Jesus even more than they love them, then get married. Then thank God for all your sexual passion and energy inside of marriage. Solomon started right in this area, but he ended wrong. He didn't listen to his own wisdom. He took multiple wives and destroyed the joy-filled union God intended.

Teach your children to watch their words.

Proverbs is filled with instructions on what to say, how to say it, and what not to be quiet.

Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Proverbs 4:24 (ESV)

Tell your children to always speak the truth. Tell them to never speak half-truth. Tell them never to lie and manipulate. When people learn they can't trust

what you say, they won't trust you in any relationship. That is extremely painful. It ruins all relationships in the future.

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18 (ESV)

When you get upset, be careful what you say. When you say rash words when you are angry, you will regret them. Even if you forget what you said in anger, those who heard you will not forget what you said. Many will struggle to forgive what you said. Parents should teach their children to use their words to bring healing when they are hurt, not rash outbursts of anger.

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight. Proverbs 12:22 (ESV)

A moment ago, we talked about the damage lying causes in human relationships. Lying also damages our relationship with God. Lying is the devil's native tongue. He always lies. When we lie, we act more like the devil than like Jesus. This is why, when a child does something wrong, parents must discipline them. If a child lies after they are caught, double the discipline so they learn the seriousness of not telling the truth.

If a person can learn to train their conscience to lie, that person will become susceptible to any sin. You will tolerate any sin if you learn to cover your sins with a lie.

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. Proverbs 10:19 (ESV)

We need to teach our children that when they are upset, sometimes it is best not to speak. Many times, the more people speak the more trouble they get

themselves into. All of us need to learn to guard our lips. If we can't say something helpful that builds people up, it is often best to not say anything at all.

Teach your children the value of hard work.

Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. Proverbs 6:6–8 (ESV)

Almost anyone will work hard, or at least appear to work, when the boss is watching. Ants work hard when the boss isn't watching. They are self-motivated. When my oldest son was young, he worked for a concrete company. When he came home, he told me how hard people worked when the boss was on the job and how much they slacked when the boss left the job. He was shocked. Even today in his current job, he talks to me about the low level of initiative people display at work.

Mom and dad must teach their children the importance of being self-motivated and being a hard worker. We need to teach our children the importance of taking initiative if they are going to succeed in life.

How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 6:9–11 (ESV)

Solomon frequently talks about the sluggard in Proverbs. A sluggard is someone who is lazy. They make excuses instead of getting things done. They procrastinate. They stall. They do what they enjoy first and delay until the last minute what they find unpleasant. Sluggards forfeit tomorrow's success for the sake of today's pleasures. Being a sluggard is one of the worst character flaws and one of the most demeaning insults.

One of the ways we recognize a sluggard is their love of staying in bed. Instead of rising early and getting work done, they want to stay in bed until half of the day is gone. As parents, we need to teach our children the importance of getting up early and getting a good start on the day.

Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men. Proverbs 22:29 (ESV)

Solomon reminds us that when we do our work, we should do a really good job. We should do our best. We should never accept a half-done job out of ourselves. Low-quality work is the way most people do their work. That will get you nowhere. But, if someone does a good job and becomes skillful at their job, they will find doors of opportunity opening before them. If you want your work to get noticed and go places in this world, do your absolute best in whatever you do. Do not accept mediocrity.

Teach your children to manage their money.

You might think I am talking about how to open a 401k and starting a savings account when your children are young. That is good, but the Proverbs teaches us principles of money management that are even better. We must teach these to our children.

Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. Proverbs 3:9–10 (ESV)

When God gives your child a paycheck, teach them to honor God by giving first off the paycheck. If you do, instead of being short on money, God will bless you with plenty. This is the first lesson of financial management children must learn when they are young. Tithe to the church off what they make, and

God will provide for their needs, and often he will give us more than we need. If your children want to know the fullness of God's blessings in life, they need to learn to give the first fruits of their income to God in life.

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Proverbs 11:24 (ESV)

We need to teach our children that generosity toward others is always a wiser financial decision than being miserly. If you are generous toward people, as a rule of thumb, God will make you richer. If you don't pay what you owe, you will find yourself always being in need. These are important financial lessons to teach our children.

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed. Proverbs 19:17 (ESV)

Last week, we began a Flood recovery fund to help those who lost so much in Spencer. This week, after one week, \$42,000 was given to help those in need. When we are generous to the poor who can't pay us back, God knows. He will pay us back.

Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live. Proverbs 15:27 (ESV)

This is practical. Any time we cut corners or we are dishonest or shady in our financial dealings with other people, we will not enrich ourselves. Instead, we will bring trouble to those we love the most, our family and children. It is always better to be honest and financially trustworthy and bring blessing to our family than to be dishonest and financially deceitful to bring trouble to one's spouse and children.

Teach your children to love people.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you. Proverbs 3:27–28 (ESV)

If you have the ability to help someone, don't withhold good from them. Do not delay doing good for anyone when you can help. This means that when we are going to work and we see someone broken down on the side of the road, we don't ignore them. We stop and help them.

Anytime you have an opportunity to do good for someone, we are not to delay. I saw many of you put this into practice with the flooding in Spencer. You set aside your schedule to help people around you whose lives were destroyed as you mucked out basements. Everyone has something else they could do, but Solomon reminds us that when we see someone in need, out of love, we focus on them and do what we must do.

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. Proverbs 25:21–22 (ESV)

Solomon reminds his son, don't just love people in need that you love, but love people in need who are your enemies. Don't wish the worst on your enemies. Go out of your way to help your enemies in their time of need. In doing so, you may be able to turn an enemy into a friend. Loving an enemy in time of need is an opportunity to heal a broken relationship.

We need to teach this to our children not just with our words but we teach it to our children with the example of our life. We love people and do good for our enemies every opportunity we get.

Conclusion

As parents, we do not just present the gospel to our children to solve the problem of sin. Since we love our children, we teach our children how to make wise choices in a foolish world.

1. We teach our children to fear God, not to ignore him.
2. We teach our children to guard their minds because what we put into our minds is what will come out of our lives.
3. We teach our children to obey mom and dad because it is a promise from God that it will not go well for anyone who refuses to honor and obey mom and dad.
4. We teach our children to select their friends carefully. Show me your friends and I will show you your future.
5. We teach our children to control their lusts. Sexual sin can lead to death and devastating consequences.
6. We teach our children to get married and enjoy their spouse.
7. We teach our children to watch their words because words bring either life or death.
8. We teach our children to work hard in life because that is the only way to a successful future.
9. We teach our children God's principles of money management because that is how God will bless them with more.
10. We teach our children to love people whenever they have an opportunity, even if it is their enemy.

When we don't know what is the wise choice to make, we simply ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" Jesus is not just our savior, but he is the wisest man to ever live.



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