

## The King and His Mother

### Proverbs 1: 7 - 9

The book of Proverbs begins, *"The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel."* He was a great king and the son of a great king, David. That means he was famous and powerful and supreme in all the realm. People bowed in his presence. They did what he said. He had immense authority and honor.

### But even Great Kings Should Bow to Their Mothers

How did he treat his mother in this exalted role? You recall his mother was Bathsheba. She had married his father David under very ugly circumstances—very displeasing to God. But she was his mother, and this is what it says in

*"When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand."*

Then they had their conversation. He rose for her. He bowed to her. And he called for a throne to be put beside his for their conversation. She was his mother. Even kings should bow when their mothers enter the room.

Solomon was not a perfect king. He was not a perfect man. None of the writers of the Bible were. But God guided his insights and preserved for us truths here in the book of Proverbs. And I want us to listen to God's word through Solomon today.

There are at least six things he tells us in . They all relate to God. They are not merely the kind of wisdom you might pick up in reading *Parents* magazine or viewing a TedTalk. The absence of God in the world's family-advice columns is ultimately a fatal flaw. Solomon means for us to hear his counsel as all of it is related to God.

We often think of the book of Proverbs as a book of what you can learn from ordinary earthly life. And much of it is. But the point of the book is to bring all that into relation to God so that He becomes the center of it all.

Here's just one example. In \_\_\_\_\_ it says,

*"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."*

Do you see what this says about God? The wise man prays, *"Guard me from riches and guard me from poverty."*

Why?

Because if I'm rich I might say, "Who needs God!" And if I'm poor I might steal. And why is that so bad? Because you might get caught and go to jail? Or because you might lose your reputation?

No! He says, Because, if I steal, I will dishonor the name of my God.

Riches are dangerous because the ultimate issue is God.

And poverty is dangerous because the ultimate issue is God.

The book of Proverbs—the most practical, down-to-earth book in the Bible—is written for God's sake. That we might not deny God in our prosperity and that we might not dishonor God in the hour of need.

All six lessons in \_\_\_\_\_ relate to God, and they are all intensely practical.

### **1. The family is God's idea.**

Solomon takes for granted that there are mothers and fathers and children related in relationship of unique accountability.

Verse 8: "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching." This is just a given with Solomon. It used to be with us too. Perhaps it can't be taken for granted any more.

Families are God's idea. God's plan. God's way. They are not arbitrary evolutionary developments based on instincts. The family is ordained by God in creation.

The very first chapter of the Bible, says,

*"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." 28 "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth . . .'"*

How are they to do this fruitful earth-filling?

By indiscriminate mating and pregnancies?

The second chapter of the Bible ( ) gives the answer: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother, and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

A profound covenant relationship between one man and one woman—a cleaving to each other alone, in a one-flesh union—is God's idea of the heart of the family.

When this is broken by a tragic death or a tragic divorce, there may have to be single parent families - And God has been faithful to millions of mothers and fathers who have had to raise children alone - But God's original purpose for the heart of the family was one man and one woman cleaving to each other as husband and wife and becoming one flesh in fruitful union.

In this way he meant to fill the earth with humans who reflect his glory, and with couples whose covenant-relationship shows the world the way that God relates to his covenant people in love and faithfulness.

The family is God's idea and it is for God's glory. Solomon assumes that here in

## **2. The Family is a School**

The family is God's basic school for instructing children how to live in the world.

Verse 8 again: *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."* The father is an instructor and the mother is a teacher. Therefore the family is a school.

God ordained the family not just to be fruitful and fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with instructed people and taught people. The family is the place where the next generation is born and where the next generation learns how to live.

Life does not come naturally for human beings.

The sucking reflex comes naturally.

The falling reflex comes naturally.

The iris of the eye closes naturally in bright light.

We don't have to learn to cry when hungry. But that's about it.

And those skills will not get us very far in this world.

Humans have to learn just about everything from the most basic skills of walking and talking and eating, to the moral actions of courtesy and gratitude and respect and faith in Christ.

The family is God's school for this huge undertaking—teaching the next generation how to live in this world and be ready for the next world to come.

And if a mother and a father seek help from others through relatives or nannies or day-care or Sunday schools or day schools or primary schools or secondary schools, the responsibility is still the parents' and we parents will give an account to God for how the minds and hearts of our children were shaped and molded by the educators and care-givers we entrusted them to.

That's point number two: the family is God's basic school for instructing children how to live in the world.

### **3: The foundation of family instruction is the fear of the Lord.**

Verse 7: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."*

In other words if we ask, what's the basic and integrating theme of the father's instruction and the mother's teaching—what is it that runs through all their daily modeling and counseling and explaining and correcting and disciplining that give unity and meaning to it all—the answer is "the fear of the Lord."

The family isn't just a place where children learn to hold spoons and walk on two feet and say "please" and tie shoes and read and look both ways and cut grass and put on makeup and drive a car.

The family is where all of this and more begins in God, is guided by God's Word, and is shown to be for the glory of God.

The fear of God—the reverencing of God, the standing in awe of God, the trusting of God—is what families are for.

The family is God's idea. The family is a school. And the unifying theme in the curriculum of this school is God.

Under God, both fathers and mothers share in the responsibility of this family instruction.

Verse 8 again: *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

It does not say, "Fathers instruct, and mothers change diapers." It does not say, "Fathers work at the office and so have no responsibility to teach their children." Nor does it say, "Mothers work at the office and turn the responsibility of teaching over to a care-giver." It says fathers instruct, and mothers teach. They share this responsibility.

If it were Father's Day, I would probably challenge fathers to take fresh initiatives at home. But it is Mother's Day, so I want to encourage mothers by reminding them that this responsibility to teach your children **is a great privilege as much as it is a huge challenge - only to be accomplished by God's grace, mercy and power.**

I've tried to do my wife's job, and I've seen very quickly how difficult it can be. But something more important about mothering must be said besides describing its level of difficulty and it's found in one great illustration from the New Testament: The effect of Timothy's mother and grandmother had on his life. Paul highlights it in

*"I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."*

Then in 3:14–15 Paul continues,

*"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [that is, your mother Eunice and through her from your grandmother Lois]; and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures [because your mother taught them to you] which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

Here is a remarkable testimony.

Timothy's father was a Greek ( ). He probably didn't know the Scriptures. So, Paul celebrates the great heritage that Timothy has through his mother and his grandmother.

They did what his father could not or would not do. They filled him with the Scriptures, and the Scriptures brought him eventually to faith in Christ, and faith in Christ brought him salvation.

Timothy will live forever and ever with God because his mother and his grandmother were faithful to .

### **5: God calls sons and daughters to be submissive to their mothers and fathers.**

Verse 8 again: *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

These two commands warn against the two common temptations of rebellion:

One is when a child is home; and the other is when he is away from home.

If he is home, the temptation of rebellion is not to listen when his parent speaks. So, Solomon says, *"Heed your father's instruction."*

If he is away from home, the temptation is to forsake what he was taught. So, Solomon says, *"Do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

Young people, when you are at home, listen to your parents. Do not write off what they say. Do it for God's sake.

This is so important in God's eyes that he made it part of the Ten Commandments that sum up the whole law. , *"Honor your father and mother."*

Honor your father by listening respectfully when he speaks.

Honor your mother by remembering what she taught you about right and wrong—about the fear of God—when you are away from home and no one can see but you and God.

**6: Finally, God promises a reward for sons and daughters who do not forsake the teaching of their mother and father.**

Verse 9: *"They [hearing your father's instruction and not forsaking your mother's teaching] will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."*

What this verse makes plain is that the instruction of fathers and the teaching of mothers, rooted in the fear of the Lord, is good news!

Kids usually don't feel this way. Likewise, parents who have never grown up into grace feel this way either.

But this is what the verse says: Listening to a father's instruction and not forsaking a mother's teaching will be a wreath of grace and glory and joy; it will be like receiving gifts and prizes.

And who doesn't like receiving gifts and prizes?

In other words, it will mean triumph and celebration and joy.

The apostle Paul said in *Colossians 3:14* that to "honor your father and mother" is "the first commandment with promise."

All the commandments are full of promise, but God goes out of his way to make this explicit for sons and daughters.

There is great promise in honoring your mother and father and embracing the fear of the Lord which parents are supposed to teach.

- *"In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence . . . The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 14:26).*

- *"The fear of the Lord leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil" (Proverbs 10:27).*

Is there anything more wonderful than strong confidence and satisfying, restful sleep?

This is the wreath on your head and the adornment on your neck for embracing the fear of the Lord that your mother and father taught you—a fountain of life and strong confidence and deep satisfaction.

Since today is Mother's Day, perhaps the way we should end is by reminding ourselves as sons and daughters—whether old or young—that the fountain of life, the strong confidence, and the deep satisfaction that come from honoring all the truth that our mothers taught us also comes back to them as a crown of joy and honor and blessing in their later years.

*"Do not despise your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:27). "Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you" (Ephesians 6:2).*

Do not forsake the teaching of your mother.

It will be a wreath of grace to your head and a crown of joy upon hers.

Amen, and Happy Mother's Day!