

EFFECTIVE PARENTING

Malachi 2:15 “Did he not made them one? With a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? **Godly offspring**. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.” ESV

- **In marriage** children are a **gift**, but also our **toughest assignment**.
- Children don't always respond well to parental input.
- It's an awesome responsibility to **shape** a child's life and there is no formal schools for parents.
- The aim of this teaching is to help us **return to God's ways of parenting** and the **Bible** gives us amazing wisdom in working with children.

Turn to Proverbs 22

- Contains some of the most helpful insights into parenting.
- Each proverb must be seen in context of the other proverbs in the chapter. E.g. **Vs 6** is placed before **Vs 15**. This tells us that effective parenting is more **preventative** than **corrective**..
- We will look specifically at **Vs 6 & 15**.

Effective parenting is both preventative & corrective:

A. Preventative

- **Vs 6** tells us: Effective parenting is **primarily preventative**.
- Let us look at the **three parts of Vs 6**.

The first part of Vs 6 tells us:

1. “Train up a child”

- The Hebrew word translated “*Train*” is from the Hebrew word **khaw-nak**. (Used five times in the OT)
 1. Four of the five times the word is used to convey the meaning to **dedicate something for a particular purpose**. (Twice used in context of dedicating a house - Deut. 20:5. And twice in dedicating the temple 1 Kings 8:63 and 2 Chron. 7:5).
 2. It also suggests the idea of **starting something**. The footnote in the NIV bible reads '*Start a child...*'
- When a baby was born into a Jewish family, the mother or midwife would put some juice on her finger and rub it on the baby's pallet **to start the sucking action**.
- So the meaning of “*Train up a child*” is to **dedicate** and then to **start your child** in the way he should go for a specific purpose.

The goal is to **train** and not to **tame**

- Your aim is not to **break your child's will**, but **giving your child a good start in the right direction**.
- It's easier to **tame** than to **train** a child. To tame you've got to be bigger and stronger than they are, and **fear** plays a big role.
- This will provoke them to the point they become discouraged. In Col. 3:21 we are told, '*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*'
- We want to train them so that their energies and strengths are used in productive and God honoring ways.
- **Training** comes first (preventative), & **punishment** is for when rules are broken, and clearly defined boundaries crossed (corrective).
- NB: You cannot **correct** for things never **taught**.

This brings us to the second part of the verse.

2. “The Way he should go”

- “Train up (start) a child in the way he should go”
- The question is: *What is the way he should go?*
- Many think it is just about the child's behavior / manners / morality / a suitable career etc.
- This is of course true, we do need to train our children in all these areas, and God does require it of us, but this is not what this passage is talking about.

Proverbs 22 is essentially saying two things:

1. “*The way he should go*” (Vs 6) is the **way of wisdom**.
 2. “The way,” or natural bias of a child is **foolishness**. “*Folly (foolishness) is bound up in the heart of a child.*” (Vs 15)
- The Bible teaches that every person born into the world inherits **Adams sinful nature**, and therefore **all sin**. This condition is **only ultimately dealt with in Christ**.
 - This passage tells parents, that from birth, they are to turn their children **away from foolishness**, and **dedicate them**, and **start them** off on **the way of wisdom**. We all know that JESUS is the ultimate way of wisdom. He is *'...the way and the truth and the life.'*
 - My prayer for my children is not primarily for health, wealth and happiness, **but that they become wise**, and choose *'the way,' JESUS*, and never depart from it.
 - For many parents, the goal is: a good career / success with and a huge salary / and happiness.
 - The Bible says NO. **Our goal should be to dedicate them and start them on 'the way' of wisdom that will lead them toward faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ, straight into a relationship with God, and to live godly lives as a result, with eternal blessing.**
 - Everything about their lives should flow out of that.

Training children to make right and wise choices

- This training starts on a very practical level - teach them how to discern between: good and bad / needs and wants / and how to handle peer pressure etc.
 - **When our children were still babies** we taught them what they could touch and what was out of bounds – using primarily body language and tone of voice.
 - **When they got older** we would walk through a toy store, and they would want whatever they saw - good or bad. We **started them** on a journey to make right and wise choices: With regard to affordability, quality, **and** / You can't have whatever you want, **and** / You don't need everything people say you do.
 - **From there we trained them to choose wisely on the more weighty issues of life, like:**
1. A good name (Vs 1)
 2. Humility and the fear of the Lord Vs 4
 3. Financial wisdom (Vs 7, 26) - Where you spend your money shows where you spend your life.
 4. Generosity (Vs 9). Start with tithing. *'God so lived that he gave...'*
 5. Pure heart / mind and gracious speech (Vs 11)
 6. Sexual purity (Vs 14). God wants an intimate and pure relationship with us.
 7. Respect for others no matter who they are (Vs 2, 16, 22, 23). God Himself is no respecter of persons.

8. To control emotions - Starts with tantrums. They are never cute and harmless. (Vs 24)

- We taught this primarily by modeling it.
- **My ultimate goal** was to lead them to the ultimate wise choice - the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can save us from our slavery to the sin nature inherited from Adam.
- We did have reason to use the '*...rod of discipline...*' (We used a wooden spoon), but I will get to that later.

Let me again stress:

- Before we deal with **Vs 15**, I emphasize again that the most important part of parenting is **preventative** training **Vs 6**.
- There is more emphasis in the book of Proverbs on **instruction** than there is on **correction**.
- Remember you cannot correct what you have not first taught.
- But, because of the fact that '*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child*' (Vs 15), **using the rod is inevitable** - so it is important to know how and when to use it.

Five point focus of positive training:

1. Speak with a Common Voice

- I call it "same page" parenting
- Children learn very quickly the art of playing one parent against the other.
- As they get older the game only gets more sophisticated.
- Discuss in private with two voices, but in their presence lead with one voice.
- The big idea: **prevention is better than cure**.

2. Establish a routine in your family from day one

- Should start from birth.
- Routine with regard to bath time, bedtime, meal times, when can friends come to play. When and what can the child watch on TV.
- Must be established by the time the child goes to school.

3. Establish Clear Values

- o The value of **a walk with Jesus Christ / mutual respect / truth / generosity / of being an active part of a church family / of self-control**.

4. Set Clear Boundaries

- Henry Cloud says, "*Don't rob your children of knowing their boundaries; otherwise they will have a lifelong problem of thinking that they are God. It is a role in which they are sure to fail.*"
- Only God is **infinite**, '*And he made from one man every nation of mankind, to live on all the face of the earth, having determined **allotted periods and, the boundaries** of their dwelling places, **that they should seek God...***' Acts 17:26
- Teaching kids boundaries is Biblical and starts from birth. And it involves lovingly determining '*...allotted periods and, the boundaries of their dwelling places*, for their healthy growth. (Very much like 'periods' in a school day)
- When kids are very young, set routines and reasonable boundaries.
- Start with very basic things and moves on to more weighty issues.

Set boundaries with regard to:

- Temper tantrums / what they can and cannot play with / back chat / ugly language / cheekiness / negative communication / stubbornness / sulking, negative attention seeking / rebellion – inward & outward manifestations / playing with friends / what time to be home / responsibility around the home, etc.
- Boundaries need to be consistent and continually communicated to the child, adjusting them as the child is growing up. Be consistent and speedy in dealing with transgressions – **Keep short accounts**.
- From young you must train them to understand and appreciate rules and boundaries are for their own good.

Compliance primarily outward

- But, you will soon realize as a parent that because *'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child...'* that compliance is **primarily outward** and **not from the heart**.
- **Illustration:** Story of two kids fighting in back of the car / reprimanded by father / all quiet / is all OK / *No dad, I am sitting down on the outside but standing up on the inside.*
- My point is that rules and boundaries are essential in parenting, but never-the-less **inadequate at a heart level**. They prove to us and our children that **they cannot actually keep all the rules**.
- This training will and should frustrate your kids, and don't be surprised by that. Keep doing it because just as Acts 17: 26 tells us the effect of keeping rules is designed to help your children to seek God. It is the ideal opportunity to **introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to them**. Rules that we cannot keep
- Teach them that the rules and boundaries are there because all of us, without them, would without restraint lean toward the way of foolishness / and we will all shipwreck our lives if we break them.
- Tell them that keeping rules and can't make them good, and they will fail in any case. Rules only brings out the *'folly (foolishness)'* that is bound up in the heart of a child but does not deal with it. But it will keep it in check until faith in Jesus comes.

This is where you can powerfully introduce the gospel

- Start with the fact that they will never be comfortable with rules and boundaries to enforce behaviour, and will always be frustrated and discouraged by their continual failure.
- **Keeping rules is never God's way to gain approval**. Tell them that our struggle with rules and boundaries should cause us to seek God for His way of solving the problem of 'folly bound up in our hearts.'
- Tell them even though we try, it is **impossible for us to keep all the rules**, but Jesus came to die for the rules we have continually broken and will continually break. He forgives us and invites us **to give our lives to Him**, and **in Him** we are in the one who kept all the rules perfectly and in Him we are justified, (just as if I'd never broken a rule).
- Tell them that He will put a new heart in us and then **we will start to walk in His ways at a heart level**, but always by **faith in Jesus** and always because of the 'new heart' He puts in us.

5. Punishment for willful crossing of boundaries already taught