

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (22:6)

INTRODUCTION—Parenting may be the most difficult, yet rewarding job in the world—because being a child is the most important time in anyone's life. The person that child will become is shaped and formed **most** by the parent's influence during the adolescent years.

Parents must provide the necessary instruction, training, guidance, and example which are fundamental for the child's development. Therefore, children must honor their parents and be willing to receive instruction and correction (1:8-9; 4:1-4).

I. PARENTS

A. Task of Child Training (22:6).

1. Difficult (22:15). Children are immature. Their silly whims and childish thoughts must be removed and replaced as they grow, making them **thinking** people rather than just **reacting** people.
2. Important (19:18). If not trained and directed properly in the formative years, it may be too late to change him later. The folly of youth seems to be not giving a matter **enough** thought whereas the hardened folly of an adult is in refusing to give a matter **any** thought!
3. Serious (29:15,17; 19:18). Leaving a child to grow himself without guidance, either through neglect or choice, will be destructive for the child and his parents.
4. Key to the Task (3:11-12). Discipline is first and foremost a matter of **instruction** for the child and then afterward **punishment** for his wrong doings. Parental discipline is advised and recommended for both ends of a child!
 - a. Rod (29:15; 23:13-14; 13:24). The plain truth is that without the unpleasant discipline parents must administer, the child is likely to follow the path of folly to his own destruction (cf. 22:15; 19:18).
 - b. Reproof (29:15; 6:20-21,23). The wise child is able to accept reproof (a fatherly lecture or 'sermon') and such sets him straight (15:5,32), but the foolish needs to have those lessons driven home by the force of the rod.

These proverbs address the importance of parents disciplining their children and not exclusively **how** this should be done. Such judgment is left for the wise parent to use with each individual child.

II. CHILDREN

A. Showing Honor to Parents. How can the conduct of wise children honor and delight their parents (20:11; 23:25). The following points are taken from *Proverbs*, by Kenneth Aitken, pp.149-152.

1. Listen to Them (13:1; 15:5; 23:22). Some children are fools, refusing to listen to their parent's instruction. Others are so brash and cocky that they cannot be taught. Still others are so contemptuous, the rolled back eyes tell it all (30:17).
2. Don't Speak Ill of Them (30:11; 20:20). Picking fault and criticizing them reveals our dishonor and disrespect for them.
3. Don't Mistreat Them (19:26; 28:24). Children who would harm their parents in any way are inexcusable.

- 4. Pull Your Weight (10:5). A lazy child is a curse to his parents. Parents are not running a hotel, they are running a home!
- 5. Watch the Company You Keep (29:3; 28:7). Their influence on you may bring a father shame.

B. Effect of a Child's Life on Parents (10:1,5; 15:20; 17:21,25; 19:13; 23:15-16,24). Children can be a man's greatest source of pride and joy or the most grievous burden he has to bear!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Should the spiritual training and guidance of the child be judged less important than his material needs?*
- 2) *What are some things included in the idea of “training” a child?*
- 3) *Why is training a child difficult?*
- 4) *Why is training a child such a serious matter?*
- 5) *What are two useful tools for training children (29:15)?*
- 6) *Is the rod of correction likely to warp a child's personality? What are some useful tools for disciplining children?*
- 7) *Parental discipline must be meted out as God administers discipline to us. How could a father provoke his child to wrath by his use of discipline (Ephesians 6:4)?*
- 8) *How long must a child honor and respect his parents?*
- 9) *Is any child ‘too big’ to listen to his parents?*
- 10) *Tell how children can be a blessing and source of joy. Tell how they can be a source of sorrow.*