

Proverbs and the Family

Family blessings and warnings from the book of Proverbs ... in honor of my mother and father.

Introduction

During Easter vacation (April 2007), I traveled to California to visit my father (age 89) and mother (age 80). Both are in their final season of life and suffering from a variety of health issues. My father's memory is nearly gone (due to dementia and Alzheimers) and he could barely recognize me. My mother, because of her many surgeries, considers herself as the "bionic grandmother."

As I sat at my father's bedside, I could only communicate with him via a whiteboard (he is deaf). My real Dad was no longer there ... he was just a shell of the man he used to be. I asked him questions about our past together (sharing baseball games together, going on vacations, etc.). He remembered some of this and responding with an emphatic, "Yes!" Often, between questions, he would grimace in physical pain. Soon he tired of the communication and wanted to sleep. With tears streaming down my cheek, I left a parting message on the whiteboard, "I love you Dad; from your son James."

My mother now lives in a fine retirement home (independent living) and enjoys her tiny, little apartment. We sat together one afternoon watching a baseball game on TV (Giants vs. Dodgers).

As I ponder on my life experiences with my parents, my heart is full of thanksgiving. Were my parents perfect parents? No. Did they have problems? Yes, many problems. Did they raise me correctly? Probably not. Was I a perfect child? Absolutely not. Yet, in spite of these imperfections, God's grace covers. As my parents reach their final stage in life, I can only remember the good times that I had with them (and there were many). I also remember an inward commitment that I always kept, "I never want to intentionally do anything that would hurt my parents." I am proud of my parents and I honor and respect them. The Book of Proverbs (a commentary on the law of God) unpacks what honor means:

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee (Exodus 20:11).

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The teaching of Scripture is aware of the fallenness of man. Parents are fallen and they will err. They can and do irritate their children. Children are fallen and they will err. They can and do dishonor their parents. What option is available to such fallen creatures? I John 1:4-2:2 (Weymouth translation):

“And we write these things in order that our joy may be made complete. This is the Message which we have heard from the Lord Jesus and now deliver to you—God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness. If, while we are living in darkness, we profess to have fellowship with Him, we speak falsely and are not adhering to the truth. But if we live in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim to be already free from sin, we lead ourselves astray and the truth has no place in our hearts. If we confess our sins, He is so faithful and just that He forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. If we deny that we have sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Message has no place in our hearts. Dear children, I write thus to you in order that you may not sin. If any one sins, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we may know that we know Him—if we obey His commands.”

Grace restores, grace heals, and grace mends. As Corrie Ten Boom (1892-1983) was fond of saying, “No pit is so deep that He is not deeper still.” If sin has dug a pit in your family, then the Grace of God in Christ will dig you and your family out.

Remembering the imperfections of sin and the redemption of God’s Grace in Christ, I offer the following Proverbs (plus a short commentary) as an encouragement to families everywhere.

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Proverbs 1:7-9 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Note that knowledge, wisdom and instruction are intimately tied to a relationship to your parents. Fearing God is hearing the instruction of your parents. Knowledge,

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wisdom, and instruction form, in picture words, an ornament of grace your the head and chains on your neck. God will honor you as your honor your parents.

Proverbs 4:2-4 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. **For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.** He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

Retaining the teaching and commandments of Scripture (as imparted by parents) means life. A mother's tender love (this love is revealed by the teaching of things to obey) for her children reveals God's love for us.

Proverbs 6:16-23 These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. **My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:** Bind them continually upon thine heart, *and* tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life.

Notice how what the Lord hates (seven things) is tied closely to honoring parents. By implication, dishonoring parents will lead to you doing the seven things that the Lord hates! Binding the teachings of your parents to your heart is a lamp (light to your path). Reproofs and instruction from parent are the way of life and as the way of life, you will not be practice the seven things that the Lord hates. What a blessing!

Proverbs 10:2 The proverbs of Solomon. **A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.**

Wisdom and foolishness ... the antithesis of Proverbs. A wise son is the son that honors his father and mother and this son rejoices the heart of his father. In antithetical contrast, the foolish son is the son that dishonors his father and mother and this brings grief (heaviness) to his mother.

Proverbs 15:20-22 **A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.** Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a

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man of understanding walketh uprightly. Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

What is the evidence of foolishness? The evidence of foolishness is when a son (or daughter) despises his (or her) mother. To despise means to be in contempt of, to scorn, to disdain, to consider worthless and unworthy of honor. Note that the sin of folly is joy to one who possesses such vain attitudes. In antithetical contrast, the wise man walks uprightly and his plans are established as he seeks a multitude of counselors to assist him in his Kingdom walk.

Proverbs 19:25-28 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge. **He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.** Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

To waste means to despoil, to devastate, to ruin, to destroy, to spoil. To chase means to drive away. Shame, reproach, scorning sound judgments, and swallowing the deceptions of iniquity await children with these attitudes. Note also that correction is only useful for the wise man. The fool will receive no correction.

Proverbs 20:19-20 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips. **Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.**

Although Proverbs are pithy (one line) sayings sometimes the Holy Spirit puts two sayings together for a purpose (as we have already noted). In this case, note the connection between cursing parents and being a talebearer. One way in which a child curses a parent is by revealing a parent's "dirty laundry" to others who really have no need to know (usually children unveil these secrets in order to justify or rationalize some pathway that they have chosen). Proverbs 10:12 states, "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins." He who curses mother or father hates them and, as a consequence, they will not have a light for their path ... they shall walk in darkness

Proverbs 23:22-25 **Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.** Buy the truth, and sell it not;

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also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

There is no age limit for honoring parents. Notice the reward of this honor: great rejoicing. Nothing, no gold or silver, could be a greater earthly reward.

Proverbs 28:24 **Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.**

To rob means to take away, to consume, to seize, to plunder. What is being robbed? A first answer would be tangible things like wealth or property. Intangibles can also be plundered. Hurting a parent with words is like robbery for it consumes the asset of esteem (honor). John 10:10 states, "The thief [the devil] comes only to steal and kill and destroy: I have come that they may have Life, and may have it in abundance." I'll leave it for the reader to make the connection.

Proverbs 29:15 **The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.**

Correction and reproof are good for wisdom is obtained thereby. To refuse the correction and reproof of a parent shames the parent and dishonors God thereby

Proverbs 30:11 **There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.**

For the honor of the advancement of His kingdom, may God increase, by one-hundred fold, future generations of children that bless their father and mother!

Proverbs 30:17 **The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.**

To mock means to scorn, to laugh at, to have in derision. We have already noted that to despise means to be in contempt of, to disdain, to consider worthless and unworthy of honor. Look at the result! The picture speaks more than one thousand words. The eye is for vision and the one that mocks and despises a parent will not possess one iota of spiritual perception or discernment.

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Conclusion

The picture of a raven plucking out eyes is not a good way to end an essay so we shall close on a positive note. The Apostle Paul quotes Exodus 20:12 in Ephesians 6:1 (Weymouth translation), “*Honour your father and your mother—this is the first Commandment which has a promise added to it—so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.*” Paul adds something that is not in the Exodus passage. This addition is really an authoritative interpretation. To honor your father and mother means that life will go well with you. It means that you will prosper. It means that in all the ups and downs of life, God’s hand will be upon you to bless you, to endow you with His presence, and to cause your face to shine.

Children, honor is your duty under God. If you do not feel like honoring your parents, then feelings do not matter. God requires this of you, no matter what your age. If you have issues with your parents because they have failed you in some way, then commit your parents to God. God knows how to deal with them much better than you do.

Do you want to know and receive the blessings of God? Do you want your face to shine? Then, do what is right. If you have not done what is right in the past, it is never too late to start.

The LORD bless thee and keep thee; The Lord cause His face to shine upon thee, and favour thee; The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and appoint for thee—peace (Numbers 6:24-26).