

Series on Proverbs

Much of Proverbs was spoken by a father to his son. In fact, the first nine chapters are a dad's plea for his boy to listen. It's a father trying to pass on lessons from his life, hoping his son won't err in the ways he did.

Solomon was that father, and he hoped Rehoboam would grow to love wisdom and pass it to the next generation. Rehoboam became the next king; he rejected his father's words, and the consequences of governing by folly erupted on a national stage.

These were the golden years of Israel's history. Solomon succeeded his father David and ruled for 40 years in the 10th century B.C. Israel was at peace, accumulating a massive trade surplus, building the first temple (1 Kings 10:14-29). Yet, like voyaging upon the Titanic, no one knew what lie just ahead.

Solomon started out well, but he became another leader who veered from wisdom and from God. It seemed so wise to wed the daughters of other kings—never mind that God condemned polygamy (Deut 17:17). Solomon was king, and he wanted to cement his alliances.

After accumulating hundreds of wives (1 Kings 11:1-8), the result was tragic. Solomon's reign ended with international problems worse than before it began. He lost his influence as a father, and reached a point where he would "congratulate the dead" (Ecc 4:2). Life was no longer worth living.

Hear your father's instruction! My son, do not forget my teaching! My son, be attentive to my words! (Prov 1:8, 3:1, 5:1). It would be hard for any son to listen to a father so unfaithful to his mother. Rehoboam was no different (1 Kings 12). He actively rejected his father's wisdom, and it plunged their once prosperous nation into civil war.

It's such irony that God selected a foolish man to deliver this book of wisdom. The Lord gave Solomon more wisdom than anyone He had ever or would ever create (1 Kings 3:12), and Solomon penned more than 3,000 proverbs (only a fraction of which are in the Bible). He knew what was wise, told others to listen, and then spent much of his life doing the opposite.

Solomon walked by faith at the start of his reign and trusted God for a time. At some point, the king wandered. He confesses throughout Ecclesiastes of years wasted in painful experimentation with sin. It seems he tried everything under the sun. Life came to be colorless, empty, and without meaning for the king.

In his twilight years, Solomon turned back to God. Some of his final words were: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecc 12:13). It seems he finally understood the value of wisdom before he died.

As for Rehoboam? He had little to do with the wisdom or the God of his father. Rehoboam's seventeen-year reign split the nation and embroiled the Jews in war.

SOMETHING WORTH PASSING DOWN

Proverbs 8:10-11—"Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

No one enters this world wise (Prov 22:15). We're born with a desire to do what seems right in our own eyes. For instance, are children known for sharing with others or for taking from others? They naturally take until taught the value of sharing. All of us had to learn this just as we had to learn to listen, to work hard, or to control our impulses. Wisdom isn't innate—it's acquired over time.

Solomon understood that children need to be taught wisdom, so he pleaded with his young son to listen. Though having plenty of gold and silver, he pled with Rehoboam: "Take my instruction instead!" *Son, money isn't what you really need from me.*

Rehoboam had money, power, fame, even the highest education, but Solomon wanted his son to treasure wisdom. As David his father had faithfully instructed him, so Solomon sought to instruct his son in the same (Prov 4:3-9). Strive to do the same with your children. Place a premium upon wisdom, and may God give you success to the degree you pass on the wisdom of His Word.

Proverbs on Parenting

DO AS I SAY...

It's evident after reading Proverbs 1-9 that Solomon wanted his son to become wise. He was a concerned parent, but it seems he was one who told his son to: "Do as I say, not as I do." While condemning adultery (Prov 5-7), he was openly and thoroughly engaged in it. Had he consistently feared God, one wonders what effect this might have had upon Rehoboam.

On a final note, nothing is more powerful in the life of your children than the example you set at home. Solomon loved his son, and he knew the world was filled with dangers to avoid. Had he himself avoided those dangers, his influence as a parent might have remained. One can only imagine the blessing Rehoboam would've been to the nation of Israel had he embraced wisdom from above.

TWO BASIC COMMANDS

Over 600 verses in the Bible mention children, but about 50 of these directly pertain to parenting. Some encourage parents to leave an

inheritance for our children (Prov 13:22) or to show compassion (Psa 103:13). Others are firm against exasperating young ones (Eph 6:4, Col 3:21) or mistreating them (Ex 22:22). Children are one of God's blessings (Psa 127:2-5), and in them, we're given a chance to speak to generations we'll never know (2 Kings 17:41; Psa 78:5-6).

Moreover, God gives parents two basic commands: To instruct children (Deut 6:4-9) and to discipline them (Prov 29:17). Proverbs is filled with instruction. For instance, it has something to say about money and ill-gotten gain (Prov 1:10-19, 10:1-5), friendships and illicit relationships (Prov 5-7), shame and honor (Prov 3:35, 13:5).

It's loving to teach your children what is wise and to discipline as appropriate, but what's the ultimate goal? What's the point of instructing and disciplining? According to Scripture, the goal of is that our children "should set their hope in God" (Psa 78:7). Teach them all the life lessons in Proverbs with a view to honoring the Lord. May He graciously bless your parenting and turn the hearts of your children to Him.