

Wisdom For Parents

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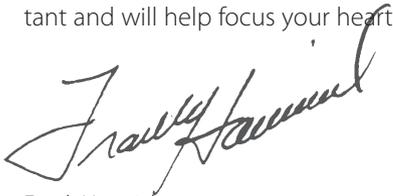
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Preface

Several years ago, I wrote a devotional entitled *Apples for Teachers* to encourage Christian educators to focus on reaching their students' hearts rather than merely teaching their heads. The book received such an enthusiastic response that I decided to produce an edition geared towards the home rather than the classroom. Changes have been made throughout, and several days have been entirely rewritten to include proverbs that focus specifically on family matters. It is with much excitement that I present *Wisdom for Parents*.

This book contains thoughts from the book of Proverbs that are an outgrowth of my personal devotional life and many years of experience as a parent and grandparent. Hopefully these thoughts will minister to your soul and be "an ornament of grace and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:9) to glorify God in your home. My prayer is that this book will be a daily reminder of what is truly important and will help focus your heart and your family's eyes upon our Lord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank Hamrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "F".

Frank Hamrick

Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Day 1

PROVERBS 1:1

"The proverbs of Solomon, the Son of David, King of Israel."

Pithy Parents

Interestingly, the wisest human who ever lived spoke in proverbs. Solomon understood that terse, pithy statements stick. We are often too verbose, and thus, less memorable. As parents, it should be our desire to make what we say memorable. This was Solomon's concern. He took profound truth and reduced it to easily understandable phrases. He used comparisons, similes, and word pictures ("apples of gold in pictures of silver"). Why? He wanted his children not just to hear but also to understand, apply, and remember! The wise parent of our day does the same.

Good parents do not constantly nag or rant and rave. They are not like a saw that rasps continually against the grain. Rather, they use words to draw pictures, to gain attention, and to stick truth in the hearts of their children.

Which of the following is easier to remember and understand?

- "Good enough is never good enough."
- "Son, don't be mediocre. You need to always do your very best."

Good parents use proverbs to help their children remember important truths. They become guideposts or beacons that point the way years after they have left their parents.

Learn to be pithy, precise, and picturesque in your correction. Wise parents do! Ask God to give you the creativity to make your parental instruction understandable, practical, and memorable.

Final thought: Use your words to grab your children's attention and focus it on God.

Day 2

PROVERBS 1:2

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding."

Knowledge vs. Wisdom

Parents impart knowledge. Good parents impart wisdom. It is good for children to know $2+2=4$. It is better that they know that behind the strict mathematical code is a God of order, organization, detail, and exactness. It may be good that our children play sports, but it is far better that they see the LORD behind every event in their lives.

What is wisdom? Some have said it is the practical application of knowledge, but I don't think that definition goes far enough. James 3:15–17 describes two kinds of wisdom: earthly wisdom and wisdom from above. Earthly wisdom may be the practical application of knowledge, but people go to hell if they only have earthly wisdom. A builder may use mathematical measurements to wisely build a house. But that doesn't mean he is wise!

Fathers may think they succeed if they teach their boy a skill. Moms may think they succeed if they teach their daughters to keep house. But heavenly wisdom is more than the practice of knowledge. This wisdom is "from above." That is, it finds its home in the Godhead. Colossians tells us that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). In Colossians 1:9–10, Paul prays that we would be filled "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...in the knowledge of God."

True wisdom is not teaching our children how to behave in public, to cook, to play ball, to drive a car, or even to be a responsible adult! True wisdom is teaching our children to know and love the Lord. The wise parent points to God in daily conversation with their children: in disappointments, in stories of God's providence in their life, in how God answered prayer in Dad's job, by reminding them that God made the moon, or by remarking that God painted a beautiful sunset.

When we are so God conscious that we reveal the LORD in every circumstance of our children's lives, then we are imparting wisdom.

Final thought: Are we just parents, or are we wise parents?

Day 3

PROVERBS 1:3

"To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity."

Great Parenting Goals 1

Here are four great personal goals for a wise parent: wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity. Today we will discuss the first goal.

We must not merely instruct in wisdom, we must ourselves receive the instruction of wisdom. *Receive* is the King James translation of a Hebrew word that means "to accept, to believe, or to commit to." The concept of possession is inherent in the meaning of this word. Thus, a wise parent must be personally saturated with wisdom. Wise parents are literally dripping with the knowledge of God in their daily lives. Wise parents are totally committed to knowing, loving, and enjoying the Lord. Is this your goal? Do you daily seek fellowship with Him? Does your heart pant for God (Ps. 42:1)?

Proverbs 1:2–4 describes the wise parent. A wise parent knows the Lord (experiential fellowship, vs. 2) and is possessed by this knowledge (v. 3). Like Paul, the wise parent counts all things but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Ask God to give you a thirst for Him that can only be satisfied (as David puts it) when "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Ps. 63:5–6). When this is your quest, your pursuit, and the longing of your soul, your family will soon take note! Be a receptive (possessed) parent today.

Final thought: The wise parent knows God and desires to share that relationship with his family.

Day 4

PROVERBS 1:3

"To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity."

Great Parenting Goals 2

Here are the four goals of wise parents: to be possessed by wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity. Today we look at the second of these goals.

We must be possessed by justice. *Justice* is the Hebrew word most often translated "righteousness" and refers not to the quality of righteousness but to right living. Experiential knowledge of God leads to righteous living.

Parents sometimes mistakenly demand righteousness from their children. True biblical righteousness, however, comes from the inside. As we know and love God, our lives ooze with His righteousness. Personal, intimate fellowship with the Lord produces an inner pressure that forces righteous living into our lives. The same goes for our children.

We can force our children to do right, but this does not build righteousness in their hearts! Rules, standards, and regulations may produce correct outward behavior, but it does not change hearts.

Your mission is to instill a passion for God that works out righteousness in your children. Righteousness is not mandated or molded, it is pressed out from within! Be on guard against externally molding your children to do right. Rather, ask God to help you exude such a love for Him that your children are caught up in the same love. You will soon see the "oozing" of righteousness in their lives.

Final thought: Remember that true righteousness must always grow from the inside out.

Day 5

PROVERBS 1:3

"To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity."

Great Parenting Goals 3 & 4

Previously we have discussed two of the four goals that Christian parents should have for their own lives. Today we see the final two goals: to be possessed by judgment and equity.

Godly parents are possessed by good judgment. The Hebrew here for the word *judgment* refers to decision-making. Its biblical usage is especially applied to leaders. Wise parents make wise decisions. But where do they get that wisdom? When our knowledge and love of the Lord possesses our souls, we make wise decisions. When our decisions are based on biblical teaching, we make wise decisions. Salvation alone does not guarantee wise choices. Only knowledge of God guarantees such.

Godly parents are possessed by *equity*. The Hebrew word for equity is an interesting one. It simply means "ease, level, or smooth." It gradually came to stand for the easy-going spirit of a person that causes them to be at peace with those around them. *Level* carries the concept of honesty and trustworthiness. These two ideas convey equity. The parent, possessed by equity, is at peace with his/her mate and children. Peace and love dominate the house rather than strife. One who enjoys God enjoys his children. One who is at peace with God is at peace with her family. The home becomes a haven for the children.

Do your children love to be around you? Are they happy at home, or does the atmosphere at home cause them to prefer being somewhere else? Do your children love to be around you? Do they sometimes choose to stay at home when they could be with their friends, simply because you are fun to be around?

Final thought: Ask God to give you peace with your children and to destroy any adversarial spirit you may have.

Day 6

PROVERBS 1:4

"To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."

Goals for Instruction

Having seen the parent's goals for his own life, we come now to his goals for instruction. The object of parents is to "give subtlety...knowledge and discretion." Note the progression of verbs in Proverbs 1:2-4: to know, to perceive, to receive, and to give. First, we must have an intimate knowledge (experiential knowledge) of the Lord (true wisdom). Second, we must understand the implications of that wisdom. Third, we must be possessed by that wisdom. Finally, we must instill that same wisdom in our children.

Until we know, perceive, and are possessed by True Wisdom, we have nothing to give to our children. We can fuss and force; we can chastise and coerce. But until we know, perceive, and are saturated with God, we cannot impart wisdom to our children.

Give is a translation of the Hebrew word meaning "to practice, teach, or share." We can only share what we have experienced. We can only teach our children what we know, understand, and are possessed by. True instruction is far more than dispensing information! A parent IS the lesson! Jesus shared His life and His heart with His disciples. They became learners of Him.

Notice the recipients of this sharing: "the simple" and "the young man." The word *simple* means those who through lack of experience do not yet fully comprehend or understand. We often accuse youth of ungodliness, when, in reality, they only lack maturity. We sometimes misinterpret immaturity as rebellion. It takes patience and transparency to share with the inexperienced and the immature. Do you have the patience and honesty to share your life, your heart, and your experiences (failures and triumphs) in your daily walk? Transparency alone will give "subtlety to the inexperienced" and "knowledge and discretion" to the young.

Final thought: Make it your goal today to share one failure and one triumph in your walk with the Lord with your children.

Day 7

PROVERBS 1:5

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

Producing Helmsmen

This verse points us to the kind of children our homes must produce. Let's work backwards in this verse. The ultimate goal of a home is to produce children who "attain unto wise counsels." Literally, the phrase *wise counsels* can be translated "helmsman" (one who steers a ship). Thus, our homes are like naval academies producing young people capable of steering their own lives and rightly influencing the lives of others. When our children leave home, they must be equipped to steer their lives in a godly direction on an ungodly sea. They must, likewise, have a burden to help other youth avoid the rocky shoals of temptation.

Back up one phrase: "a man of understanding." Helmsmen understand their purpose. They understand that they are to live God's truth and to teach it to others. They understand that obedience to the Word is the only successful course in life. Is this true of your children? Are you consciously teaching them how to counsel themselves with the Word so they can counsel their peers biblically?

Backing up again we see that helmsmen "increase learning." This is how children become men of understanding. They have parents who don't just pass off this responsibility to Sunday school or Christian school teachers. Rather, the parents take the time to personally teach their children "thus saith the Lord." How much godly, biblical wisdom do your children get from you?

Finally, notice where this begins with the child: "A wise man will hear..." Hearing is paying attention. If your children would become helmsmen, you must focus their attention. You must direct their heart from entertainments and social functions to theology! You must bring them face-to-startling-face with the majesty and glory of God in such a way that they are jolted from apathy and drawn to His multi-faceted beauty! This is your mission. Will you accept it?

Final thought: As a godly parent, you should be developing children who will impact others for Christ.