

Cat's in the Cradle
Small Group Discussion
Proverbs

Opening question:

- Who do you know who is a really good parent? What makes him or her that way?

We are in our fifth of six weeks studying wisdom as revealed in Scripture. In this past Sunday's sermon, Pastor Josh looked at what wisdom the Bible offers us for the foundational relationship between parents and children.

1. Read the passages from Proverbs below:

Pr 23:23-24 "Buy the truth and do not sell it—wisdom, instruction and insight as well. The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him."

Pr 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Pr 22:6. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

- a. What key goals in child rearing that are indicated in these passages?
 - b. How would you define wisdom (remember, Josh defined it for us a couple of weeks ago)?
 - c. How would you define the "fear of the Lord" (Josh also defined this a couple of weeks ago)?
 - d. What reason(s) do you find in the first and third passages for raising wise children?
2. So, how do we train up wise children? Josh discussed three ways. First, know the unique children God has given you. Take turns reading the following from Josh's sermon:

The original Hebrew used an idiom in Pr 22:6, which literally said, "Start a child according to the mouth of his way." To start a child in the mouth of his way is an idiom that most likely means to intentionally raise a child according to the unique way she is *designed* to go. Chuck Swindoll says it this way: "In every child God places in our arms, there is a bent, a set of characteristics already established. The bent is fixed and determined before he is given over to our care. And the parents who want to train this child correctly will discover that bent."

Let's take turns answering one or two of the following questions that reveal your child's "bent" or personality (if you don't have children, apply these questions to your nephew, niece, or to a friend's child):

- a. What are you learning about your children and grandchildren these days?
- b. When do they seem most alive, most themselves?
- c. What do they choose to do when nothing is forced on them?
- d. Who are their heroes?
- e. Where do they seem most comfortable?
- f. Are they musical or mechanical? Athletic or artistic?

- g. How should these observations affect the way that you parent or otherwise care for them?
3. The second way Pastor Josh said to raise up wise children was “be willing to discipline them.” In other words, establish boundaries and hold your children accountable to them. Take turns reading Hebrews 12:5-11, noting why God thinks discipline/accountability is important.
- a. Parenting is an area where we need to balance mercy and justice, and it is easy to get out of balance (see Ephesians 6:4). Where do you think you would be on the line below and what might help you be more in balance?

License/Mercy/Grace -----|----- Justice/Truth/Control
 Balanced

- b. Josh talked about the importance, for our parenting ability, of embracing our identity in Christ. Of course, none of us has perfectly embraced our identity in Christ, in the gospel. How might a shortfall in this area affect the way we parent (and affect how balanced we are)?
4. The third way Pastor Josh shared to raise a wise child is to “model a life of wisdom.”
- a. How does the “Cat’s in the Cradle” song illuminate this point?
- b. Who in your journey as a Christian has most effectively modeled this kind of life for you?
- c. Are there areas wherein your small group has helped to “model” wisdom for your children? If not, how could you all come together to jointly model something together for your children?
5. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:2-3, “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise – “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”
- a. As adults, what do you think it means to “honor your father and mother”?¹
- b. What are some challenges you are experiencing in honoring your father and mother?
- c. Talk about the five ways that Josh suggested honoring your parents (based on Tim Keller). They are re-printed below as a reminder. Is there one of these that you could focus on doing? What would that look like?
- a. In your culture, find the appropriate **symbols** to show respect.
- b. Don’t under-estimate your parents’ need to see themselves **reproduced** in you.
- c. Don’t **stereotype** them—they can change.
- d. **Forgive** your parents.
- e. Be **liberated** from them—become a wise, independent adult.
6. **Share and Pray:** Among our usual prayer requests, let’s pray that we will raise wise children and honor our parents in order to please and glorify God.