

**“Giving and Heeding Wisdom”
(Proverbs 1:8-19)
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Introduction:

NIV Proverbs 1:8-19

- ⁸ *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*
- ⁹ *They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.*
- ¹⁰ *My son, if sinners entice you,
do not give in to them.*
- ¹¹ *If they say, "Come along with us;
let's lie in wait for someone's blood,
let's waylay some harmless soul;*
- ¹² *let's swallow them alive, like the grave,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;*
- ¹³ *we will get all sorts of valuable things
and fill our houses with plunder;*
- ¹⁴ *throw in your lot with us,
and we will share a common purse"-*
- ¹⁵ *my son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;*
- ¹⁶ *for their feet rush into sin,
they are swift to shed blood.*
- ¹⁷ *How useless to spread a net
in full view of all the birds!*
- ¹⁸ *These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they waylay only themselves!*
- ¹⁹ *Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the lives of those who get it.*

Years ago when I was doing youth ministry, our church was involved in Native Missions, or Missions to First Nations People. And while we were doing that ministry for a number of years I learned some important things from their history. For example one pastor I know well is a missionary who is deeply involved in Native Missions. And he teaches that there are three types of missions. Missions to Reached people. Those are people who have a sizable percentage of Christians in their population, like Canada, the USA, Korea. Then there are the Unreached Peoples of the world. These would include the many countries where there isn't a significant sized Christian population, nor is there a self-sustaining, multiplying church. These are the countries where Christians and churches like ours are focusing their efforts. Two example countries that are considered unreached are Kyrgyzstan and Cambodia. And the last category that my missionary friend teaches about are not Reached or Unreached, but the Wrongly Reached.

And so he classifies Native Canadians and Americans and some other aboriginal communities as the Wrongly Reached peoples of the world. And the reason he calls him that is because so much

harm and wrong were done to them in the name of Christianity or under the purpose of missions. Many of you already know very well of the injustices that were inflicted upon Native Peoples. One of the injustices that was done was forcing Native children in Residential Schools that were founded in the 19th century and only stopped operating completely about a 15 years ago.

Basically these were boarding schools Native children, that were run by Christians. The very obvious injustice done in these Residential schools that everyone now knows about is the sexual abuses that was done by the Anglo-Christians and the Canadian government, upon Native children. The second injustice was the re-culturing of Native children. Residential schools were trying to get the Indian out of the child. For example they forced the young boys to cut off their hair when for an Indian boy, long hair was his pride, it was his manhood. But perhaps the worst thing that residential schools did to Native children was that they broke apart families.

So the Residential school laws removed children from their parents and from their tribes, and by placing them in these residential school, they for the first time, initiated a whole generation of Native children who were not taught by their parents. These Residential schools broke apart the most fundamental and important building block of society—the family. Think of all the things a Native child would need to learn from his parents. Hunting, fishing, building a shelter, cooking, botany, medicine, fighting. Every skill required to survive was taught to boys and girls by their parents and their tribe.

I share all of this to say that what was done in the name of Christianity was something that was never endorsed by the Scriptures. In fact, it totally went against everything the scriptures teach about the importance of the family unit and the primary role of family in teaching life skills, faith and morals.

You and I, as parents, might be guilty of unintentionally putting our kids in 'so-called' residential schools. Because we are too busy or because we feel we are not knowledgeable about certain matters, we defer these things to the so-called experts. We entrust the character and moral development of our children to the public school system. And as central and important as the church might be in the education of our children, it does not exempt us from pro-actively parenting our children. We just do not have the right to defer that to anyone else.

For example, Deuteronomy 6 makes it very clear that the spiritual instruction of our children is a family affair.

¹ These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

I know that there were no public school systems back in the days of Moses, but you don't see God saying to us after this command to teach God's laws to our children, "so build a great school system or drop off your kids at church." The primary place for spiritual instruction is in the home.

And so parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children these things. And children have the responsibility to learn these things from their parents. So that when they too become adults and later parents, they can pass on these same spiritual truths to their children and so on and so on.

Even in the passage we looked at in Proverbs 1, the dialogue, the teaching is between a father and mother and their child. I don't know if this was formal instruction. I'd like to rather think that this was a teaching moment where a parent and a child had a chance to pass on some really important things. Proverbs is a compilation of spiritual wisdom, where important life lessons are recorded. In there you will find things related to diligence, speech, business, family, spirituality—in other words things related to the development of a person's character.

^{NIV} **Proverbs 1:8** Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

The first thing we learn is that both moms and dads are to be involved in the spiritual and moral instruction of the children.

1. Dad can't defer to mom, which many dads are prone to do. And at the same time, though probably less common, moms can't defer this awesome responsibility to dad. So important is this that both mom and dad need to be involved. For example, James Dobson speaks about this. He says that when boys are infants, the primary care is given by mom. Mom is the one who spends the most time with him and bonds with him and nurtures him. But as the boy becomes a toddler, dad's role in his life becomes increasingly more important, as he begins to model what it means to be a man.
2. Related to that, there are lessons a young child learns primarily from his father and there are lessons that a young child learns primarily from his mother. For example: What does it mean to be a godly masculine man? Mom can't teach that or model that. What does it mean to be a godly feminine woman? Dad can't teach that on behalf of mom either. They're not going to learn character and godly family values from watching the Simpsons. Every sit-com portrays dads as dufuses. They're silly, they're stupid, they're irresponsible, they're cowards, they're bullied by their wives. This is the image that's given my media. And we think that that is what our children want from dads. I can't imagine our children, after they have grown up, and look back on their childhood and recollect what they appreciated most about their dads was that he was a goof. Being a goof is different from playing and having fun with your kids. If all kids remember about their moms when they get older is that she was such a nag, then I don't think we've succeeded either. But if they say that my mom was a strict, principled, demanding, tender, loving, caring and godly mother then I think we've succeeded.
3. Mom and dad need to be on the same page. What children need, especially in the home is consistency. Children are incredibly adept exploiters of inconsistencies. They're like water. They will find the crack, the weak spot and seep right through. So they'll ask mom for something. And if mom says no, then they'll go ask dad. And if dad says yes, then they'll continue to exploit that parental inconsistency. So, back up a step, take a time out. Mom and dad, you need to have a huddle like they do in a football game. "Hey, we're getting killed out there. We have no offence, we have no defense. They're just running all over us, and the

kid's only 7 years old. Okay, here's the play. If any of our kids ask us something, our first words are, "did you ask your father? Or "did you ask your mother?" And if he answers yes, then we ask, "What did mom or dad say?" and then we say, "Well, that's my answer too." Linda and I know one family. Where mom and dad are not even playing the same game. In fact they're on the opposite teams. Mom says one thing, and then dad actually tells the kids, 'don't listen to your mother.' Isn't that crazy? How can anyone possibly parent their children that way? All you will end up with are confused children. So here's a practical step parents can take to get on the same page. Buy a James Dobson parenting book. Read several pages to each other before you go to bed. And spend a few minutes talking about how to apply what you've read to your children. Then pray for your kids and pray for yourselves as parents.

4. Parents need to teach kids situational wisdom.

In this passage, the mom and dad are teaching their kids about not going down the path of violence. Kids of all ages can lack the wisdom of adults. Kids may think they know everything we learned from our parenting classes, but they really don't. So what do parents need to do? Create potential situations where your child have to make a judgment.

For example, our youngest had an assignment, to give some report. And the topic was, if I was invisible what would I do? And so he shares with me, I would rob a bank. I said really? He said yes. I said really, really? He said yes again. I said, you know, even if no one can see you God can see you and it would be a sin. Would you still do that? After a short pause he says, yes. And while in the middle of some deep thought wondering how do I counter this, Tabitha just blurts in, at least he's being honest. That's why she's not a parent yet. Sure, he was being honest, but I should have continued talking about how bad stealing is. You might get caught. Leave fingerprints behind. It'll ruin your character. You'll never develop a love for hard work, etc. But those are teaching moments.

And we have to teach about the consequences of our actions.

¹⁸ These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they waylay only themselves!

¹⁹ Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the lives of those who get it.

So we tell our kids, if you do this instead of doing that, then these are the consequences.

Another example of situational learning that occurs repeatedly in the first nine chapters, actually over and over, is the whole topic of sexuality and fidelity. Believe me, you don't want the schools to do this for you. Just recently there was that whole big stink in the papers about Premier McGuinty revamping the sex-ed curriculum in our schools, wanting to begin teaching sex-ed in 3rd grade.

Fathers with the sons and mothers with their daughters have to have the sex talk. As uncomfortable as that might be, it has to be done. As the title of one of Dobson's book states, Parenting Isn't For Cowards. This IS your job. Do not defer it to anyone else.

Everyone who's a parent knows the incredible challenges of being a parent. Like they say, the kids don't come with instructions or warranties and there is no return policy. So let's commit to be learners ourselves—that we as parents would learn from the Scriptures how to be better parents and prayerfully, yet confidently impart godly spiritual wisdom to our children.