

# The Wise Family

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[ 0 : 00 ] be a part of our Sunday morning worship together, so appreciate that. Those of you who are gonna be checking in this later online, glad that you're still keying in.

And miss you though, look forward to having you with us. So we're continuing our series on the book of Proverbs and we're almost done. It's this one and another one. Next week, we're gonna push positive on Proverbs, have a friend and fellow pastor from our Moorhead site coming and preaching with us.

It's actually Becky's husband, Travis. So we're getting the Evans family one-two punch, you know, it's a little shake and bake. I don't know who's shake and who's bake, but we're happy to have them with us, ministering to us.

So today we are going to look at the topic that Proverbs gives us on wisdom for the family. And I just wanna say, if you're here and you're single, don't check out.

One, because you might have a family one day and this may help. And then two, even if God calls you to singleness, which is a great thing, right? You can help others in your church family with some of these truths as well.

[ 1 : 07 ] So before we begin, I'll tell you that the first part of the sermon's probably gonna be more theological in nature and the second part of the sermon will be a little bit more practical. So let's just jump into it.

So Proverbs 18, 22, it says this, he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 23, 24 says, the father of the righteous will greatly rejoice.

He who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. And so these two verses from Proverbs, what they tell us is that marriage and family, what they are is they are a gift from God, right?

You know, we often have this picture from culture as like marriage is the old ball and chain, you know, our spouse is the old ball and chain. And then we obviously have that like famous show from the 80s, early 90s, married, dun, dun, dun, with children, you know?

It's kind of like you get married, things are good, and then kids show up and it ruins the whole thing. But actually what Proverbs tells us is exactly the opposite. Marriage is a gift from God.

[ 2 : 10 ] Family is a gift from God. And this is the start of wisdom for your marriage and your family. It's from God. It's a blessing to you. And wisdom says that everything we have comes from him.

Like we don't take the, we don't look at like, hey, I chose to do this and this is all on my own. And this is me, Jesse. I am the king of my castle, which is my home and my family.

Now I realize like all this, all that I have, my wife Haley, my kids that aren't here, they're in kids ministry. They're a gift from God. Which means that they are gifts that he's put into my care.

Your marriage, your kids, they are gifts that God's put into your care. We are stewards of these gifts, which means we are entrusted with them and we're responsible to God for our role with them, within them.

We don't get to do whatever we want. So we are called to live according to God's purpose and commands. And for some of us, we think our family is perfect, like the Cleavers.

[ 3 : 22 ] For others, you may think your family is more like the Bundys. But here's the thing, guys. There's only two types of families, right? There's the perfect ones and then there's the real ones. And you know what every marriage, you know what every family has in common?

Again, it's full of a bunch of sinners, right? So you and I have two choices. We can, one, try and live by our own wisdom and figure this thing out for ourselves or turn to God and live according to his wisdom.

Now, I don't want to sell you a false bill of goods. Even a family following God's wisdom, it's not going to be problem-free, right? I mean, think about the notorious pastor's kids. I was one of them

and I was notorious.

Just because your family follows God and follows wise principles doesn't guarantee the perfect outcome. But the wise family is simply people pushing in to God's grace and mercy, pushing into God's forgiveness for themselves and God's forgiveness for each other.

And the gospel teaches us two unchanging truths to abide in and practice every single day.

Repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is how you step into God's grace for yourself.

[ 4 : 37 ] Forgiveness is how you step into God's grace for others. Jesus, he said a lot of great stuff and when it comes to repentance and forgiveness, he said some real record-scratching stuff, right?

And he said this, if you can't step into God's forgiveness for others, if you can't step into God's forgiveness for others, you don't get to step into God's forgiveness for yourself.

You might say, whoa, whoa, Jess, that sounds a little heretical. It sounds a little anti-gospel. Where do you get that from? Okay, let's go to Matthew 6, 14 and 15. Jesus said this, for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.

Now we step back from that verse and we say, wait, wait, did Jesus really say that?

Did he really mean exactly what? Maybe if we get into the Greek, we'll find something different.

Maybe it'll like help us explain this a little bit better. But no, it means what it means.

[ 5 : 45 ] It's very straightforward. And you know what? He reiterates that same principle again through the parable in Matthew 18 of the unmerciful servant. Repentance and forgiveness, they are inseparable in the grand design of God's grace and mercy.

Now we hear these things, cool. Got it, Jess. Repentance, forgiveness, boom. I'm just gonna go out and live it. I can do this. But it's not that easy to live out. So here's what we gotta do.

We gotta reckon with what impedes us from actually living in this reality, living in what God's called us to do. And the problem we have, the one word answer for this is sin.

That's why we find it so hard to do this. I mean, look at the way sin can work itself out in the context of marriage and family. Proverbs 19.13 says, a foolish son is ruined to his father and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.

Proverbs 19.26, he who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach. Proverbs 21.9 says, it is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

[ 7 : 01 ] Now I know the Proverbs are picking on wives here, it seems like, but you know what the true, it's true for husbands as well. Like it's not pleasant living with a quarrelsome husband. But all these verses are pointing to this one fact, sin ruins marriages and families.

So why don't we just stop sinning, right? Seems like the easy answer, let's just stop sinning. But we can't, because sin seems to have so much power over us.

You know why that is? You want to know the ugly, honest truth? It's because you and I love it. Now you might say, wait, wait, Jess, no, no, no.

Not me. I hate my sin. I love God. I'm a Christian. Okay. But every time you and I sin, this is what we're doing.

We are loving ourselves more than God. We are loving ourselves more than others. And that's the ugly reality of sin that you and I need to wake up to.

[ 8 : 10 ] And until we do, what we will do is minimize our sin and make it less ugly and horrible than it really is. And the result is, is that we won't turn from it.

You won't feel the need to repent to God and to others. Now let's dig a little bit deeper into this sin problem. At the root of every sin is a desire to exalt ourselves over everybody else, even God.

And at the heart of sin is a self-love that exceeds the love for God and others. So in marriage and family, our sin ends up turning our home into a combat zone of quarreling and rebellion against each other, right?

Instead of seventh heaven, we're the Hatfields and the McCoys. Instead of laying down our lives to bless others, we fight to bless ourselves. James 4 talks about this.

Verse 1, it says, what causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires? That battle within you? You desire, but do not have, so you kill.

[ 9 : 20 ] You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and you fight. You do not have because you do not ask God, and when you ask, you do not receive.

God doesn't give it to you because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend it on you, right? You may spend what you, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Consider every relationship that we have, right? Marriage, parenting, friends, church. God designed each of these relationships to be a covenant relationship, okay?

Covenant relationship, it's a big concept, and unfortunately, I don't have all the time to unpackage what this means, so I'm gonna give you like the 30,000-like dime version of this, sorry.

But it's important that we have a concept of covenant relationship. Covenant relationship, according to the Bible, is, it's deep and it's central to this understanding of what God's doing and what he's on about in his redemptive plan.

[ 10 : 25 ] And a covenant relationship is how God relates to us and how God relates to himself and how we're called to relate to each other. And it signifies this unbreakable bond.

It signifies this oneness and this unity, this connectedness, this interwovenness that we're meant to have in our relationships. That's the biblical meaning of covenant relationships.

So here's a quick picture to help unpackage this just a little bit better. Imagine, right, Haley's right next to me and we have this unbreakable bond, this rope tied to each other at the waist.

Now, Hales has some desires. I have some individual desires as those verses in James 4 point out, right? So in a relationship, we have two options for how we get our desires met, right?

We can each try to get them ourselves, which means she walks that way to get her thing and I walk this way to get her thing and what happens? Right? The rope tightens and all of a sudden the relationship becomes this tug of war.

[ 11 : 32 ] Right? We're fighting against each other of how I can get my thing for myself and how she can get her thing for herself. It's working against each other or, or, the better way is walking together, helping each other, going in the same direction together.

Oh, honey, that's what you want. I'm going to help you. I want to bless you and she does the same for me but that's what's meant to happen in every relationship that God puts us in and if we don't do that, we end up enemies.

If we don't live that way, we end up enemies but God's holding out to us, guys, there's a better way you can be allies. The first way is sin and selfishness. The second way is love and service.

Dr. Ed Welch, he's a biblical counselor, he writes this, that for all of us, the pathway to sin is a desire, even a good desire, that turns into a demand.

Right? So sin starts with a desire, good desire. Example, I'm at home and it would be nice to just have 10 minutes of quiet. Right? All the parents are like, yeah, I get that.

[ 12 : 45 ] That desire then becomes a demand. I must have 10 minutes of quiet. And the stronger the demand grows in our hearts, the more entitled to it we become than when somebody violates that.

Like kids being rowdy, making noise, breaking my 10 minutes of silence, what do we do? We respond in anger. When we don't get what we want, we respond with anger.

And we call that discipline or fighting for our right to something. But you know what, guys? Neither is true. It's just a sinful response to an unmet demand.

That's really what it is. And it's important that we don't call those type of sinful responses discipline because discipline is a good thing. It's a grace gift from God. And God's discipline isn't about punishing others when you don't get what you want.

Discipline is about learning and teaching the way in which we are to walk before God. Proverbs 19, 18 says, discipline your son for there is hope.

[ 13 : 51 ] Do not set your heart on putting him to death. Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old he will not depart from it. And there's many other verses that talk about this and it's meaning this, lead your family in the discipline of following Jesus.

When the Bible talks about discipline it's referring to disciple making. Okay? It's the process of making disciples. And you know what? In disciple making you spend more time teaching than anything else.

Disciple making involves time and instruction and dialogue which means, you know what? We got to be present. Now we learn in the Bible two types of discipline.

There's formative discipline and corrective discipline. I'm going to unpackage these a little bit.

Okay? Let's talk about formative discipline first. Formative discipline is this idea of being molded.

Think of clay on the potter's wheel. Right? God uses formative discipline to shape us to be more like Jesus. It's about taking part in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible reading and serving and corporate worship like what we're doing today.

[15:07] What we're all involved with today. These are the ways, some of the ways God shapes us. These habits that we partake in. And when we do that, these formative habits, what we're doing is we're getting placed on the potter's wheel and God comes and he's putting his hands on us and he's shaping us and the Holy Spirit's taking out some of the rough edges but he's forming us into something wonderful and beautiful, these vessels of grace to be used for his purpose and for his glory.

And in the family, we not only engage this, we not only engage these things for ourselves and especially as parents, we lead our families into these things.

We lead by example. We show them. Right? My kids need to see dad with the Bible open, reading and meditating. They need to hear me and walk in on me in my room praying to God.

Right? Those are good things for them to see and know. Like, oh, dad's doing this. That's awesome. But you know what? It's also good for me to sit with them and open the Bible and read a few verses and talk about it with them.

Those are good things. Praying with them, those are good things. Too often, with people, what we do with our relationships and with our kids, let's be honest, we tell them what to do and then we don't show up again until they do something wrong and then we kind of come in like a Tasmanian devil screaming and yelling and making a big old scene and then poof, we disappear again until the next time.

[16:42] Right? Now, I doubt our kids or our spouse in those moments is thinking, you know what? This guy has it together. I really need to pay attention.

This guy seems to be totally in control. I need to pay attention to what he's saying. Now, typically what happens is they just tune us out.

And you know what? That's not the kind of discipline Proverbs is talking about. Discipline puts the onus on us individually, whether you're a spouse or a parent. You make time, you're intentional, you teach, and you lead by example.

And if you're a parent, you have to realize this, you are the main disciple maker of your family.

Right? We don't outsource it to the church, we don't outsource it to the youth ministry leaders or the kids ministry leaders.

You are the main disciple maker of your children. Dads, the Bible calls us to be the spiritual leaders in our homes. Doesn't mean moms don't matter.

[17:45] Moms need to be a significant part of this too. But men, we don't abdicate that responsibility. We take up that mantle, we teach our kids, we involve them, we include them, we lead them.

But are we too busy with other important things to do that? It's something you need to wrestle with. And you're men, so I'm sure you can handle me challenging you.

Now, let me give you an easy target because probably if you haven't done this, you're thinking, where do I even start? If you're going to do one thing, do this one thing.

One night a week. At the dinner table, read a short psalm, open up and read a chapter out of one of the Gospels, and then you know what? Just talk about it together.

Hey, what stood out to you? What do you think Jesus meant when he said that? Wasn't that amazing when he did this thing? You don't have to be a seminary teacher, right? You don't have to run and be like, you know what we're going to do?

[18:50] We're going to go through Wayne Grudem's systematic theology from the start to the beginning with my kids. You know, every single day, let's not start there, all right? Let's start simple.

Let's start something doable, a target that we can all hit. Just open the Bible. Read it. It is powerful. Trust the Holy Spirit.

He will help you. Have fun. Trust God. And here's the thing. When we spend more time doing that, when we spend more time in formative discipline, we spend less time needing to enact corrective discipline.

Now, I can't say that principle is true 100% of the time. You know, I have a wonderful child who, you know, he needs a lot of corrective discipline. You know, some of my other children need less corrective discipline.

Every kid's different. That is okay. But, man, I think that principle plays out more often than not. And it doesn't mean that we avoid correction. Correction is good for us.

[ 19 : 52 ] Proverbs 13, 24 said, whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. Proverbs 22, 15 says, folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Proverbs 29, 15 says, the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. So, this isn't like, oh, I better go find the biggest stick, you know, to make sure my kids get sorted out.

No, the basic premise of these Proverbs is if you never correct your child, they will end up crooked. If you refuse to take time to correct your child, they are going to end up crooked.

There's going to be times when little Johnny and little Susie act naughty. And in these moments, they need to be reminded that bad behavior has consequences.

And some of us, we hate that part of parenting because, man, it feels so unloving, or you grew up in a household where that was an excuse for abuse. And so, you've swung the pendulum and say, I'm never going to do that.

[ 21 : 05 ] But when things aren't done right, the response isn't to chuck it out the window, the response is to find out the right way to use it. Right? Because correction is love.

Hebrews 12, 5-7 says, And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? This is to Christians he's writing. My son, God's writing to us, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him, for the Lord disciplines the ones he hates?

No. The Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

And then jumping down to verse 11, finishes the argument this way, For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

And he's saying, God the Father disciplines his children. He disciplines us because he loves us. And that is an entirely different motivation for correction. And our correction should be done in love and in the hope of producing righteousness.

[ 22 : 26 ] righteousness. Which means we don't spank in anger. We don't yell and scream. We don't use belittling language that brings shame.

And you know what? If you're like, oof, yikes, I've done all those things. Hey, so have I. And you know what? The best thing to do is go and repent to your kids. That's what you should do.

Daddy blew it on that one. Remember when I said this? Remember when I did that? Remember when I spanked you and I go, man, I'm so sorry. That does not represent God at all. And I'm sorry to you for that.

I've had to do that with my own children. You know, when God corrects me, you know what he, he never calls me. He never calls me a dinkus or an idiot. He never says, Jesse, what's wrong with you?

Do you have no brains between your ears? He never uses the familiar shaming phrases, what's wrong with you? What were you thinking? Why are you like that?

[ 23 : 31 ] But when I'm stubborn and unwilling to repent of my sin, God the Father doesn't give up on me. He uses correction to get my attention because he loves me.

He brings conviction. He brings conviction that leads me to confess and to repent. And you know what's on the other side of that? I know this about him. He always forgives.

He never keeps a record of that wrong again. Parents, this is the best pattern for disciplining your kids. The motivation has got to be love.

The goal has to be a future harvest of righteousness in their lives, meaning that you don't spank just for the sake of instant results.

You have to leave it to God. First, pray for conviction. Holy Spirit, He does that. Remember that, parents.

[ 24 : 31 ] The Holy Spirit convicts hearts, not the Holy Parent. Second, lead them to confess. You know what I love about the first story of sin, Adam's sinning? God calls to him, pulls him out, and says, why did you do that?

Why are you hiding? God knew, but you know what? He needed Adam to confess that. He needed Adam to reckon with the sin that he had just done and confess it to God.

Lead them to confess. Third, teach them repentance. Right? Repentance is, okay, I was walking this way, which is the wrong way. I shouldn't have been walking this way, and I realize, oop, that was a big mistake, and it's turning and walking the other way.

Walking in the right way, walking in the path of Jesus. And it's asking forgiveness from God and from others. And then lastly, forgive them.

Give them forgiveness. When you lead them into repentance and you say, you need to say sorry to mom and dad, you need to repent to God, and you say, you know what?

[ 25 : 40 ] God always forgives you, and you know what? So does mom and dad. And the best way you leave that is you give them a hug. Right? It shows reconciliation.

The whole goal of God's correction, the whole goal of God's caring for us during this time is to bring us back to himself, to remind us that he loves us and that we're one with him.

And then last little tip, always do that privately. If you're going to, if you're going to discipline your children, don't do it in front of others. That is, that is a horrible method. We always take our kids into the bathroom if we're going to discipline them.

We do everything there. The conversation, the spank, if you don't spank, you could just talk to them about whatever time out or thing you're going to take from them. Whatever you're going to do, you do it privately. Okay?

It's between them and you. And it's important to remember that in all of this, these principles aren't going to make them the perfect kid one day.

[ 26 : 43 ] You can lead your family like Billy Graham on steroids. Your kids still won't turn out perfect. You're still going to have family quarrels because you and I, we don't have the power to change our kids' hearts.

We don't have the power to change our spouses' hearts. And this is where you and I have to surrender this mirage of control, this mirage of, man, if I just perform enough, if I just do all the right things.

No, no, no. We live in God's sovereignty. We lead and we love our family absolutely. But we put our faith and our hope in Jesus who saves and transforms hearts.

and regardless of what your family is doing, regardless of what your family is like, never stop putting God first. Proverbs 19, 23, and we're going to end with this.

The fear of the Lord leads to life and whoever has it rests satisfied. You will not be visited by harm. Have fear of the Lord. That means God is the biggest thing in your life.

[ 27 : 47 ] You're putting him first. You're putting his kingdom first. But there's a lie that can creep into our hearts and it goes like this. If I just become a better spouse or a better parent, if I give them what they want, if I always make them happy, maybe then life will be good.

Maybe then there will be more peace in the home. Maybe then they'll turn out right. Maybe then their hearts will soften toward God. and with good intentions, we slowly drift into putting our families first ahead of God.

And guys, that will crush you and it will crush your family. Don't put your hope in the fantasy that you can save your family. Only God can.

Love them, lead them, but lead them always by putting God first and trusting in him. So will you stand with me?

I'm going to pray a prayer of confession and repentance because I'm sure we've all fallen short of that. Right? This has been a very kind of practical teaching, probably more practical than typical sermons that I've done, but man, this is wisdom.

[ 29 : 11 ] and this isn't for you to walk home feeling guilty and ashamed and beat up and just like, oh, I'm the worst parent in the world, I'm the worst spouse in the world. No, no, no. We get to go to God and we get to hear, okay, God, your wisdom has shown a light on something.

Now I can turn from walking this way and start walking this way. And as I pray, if you are like, you know what, man, that was me, simply agree by saying amen to this prayer of confession and repentance that I'm praying and I'm praying this for myself, so just because I'm saying it doesn't mean I'm not amending myself, okay?

All right, let's pray. So Father, we come to you and we realize that you alone are the perfect father, you alone are the perfect parent, and we're not.

Lord, I pray that you would forgive us where we've sinned. Maybe the sin is because we've abdicated our responsibility to make disciples of the children that we have or to lead our families to follow you.

Maybe our sin is we've been too harsh with our words, we've been too harsh with our corrective discipline. And so Lord, in both cases, we come to you and we repent.

[ 30 : 45 ] We ask you to forgive us and we ask your Holy Spirit to come and to lead us from this point into wisdom and we confess that we know we're not going to do it perfectly.

and in fact, without you, Holy Spirit, we have no hope in doing this perfectly. And so we ask that you would just help us.

Help us walk more in wisdom. Father, where we have put our spouse, where we have put our family first ahead of you, we also repent of that.

and we ask you to forgive us. And Lord, in all of these things, we are thankful that the promise is if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

We don't have to earn our way into your good books. You delight in us, you love us, you reconcile us to yourself.

[ 31 : 52 ] May we go and live in freedom. Freedom to live for you. Freedom to live, to put you first in our lives. Freedom to love and lead our families well.

Amen.