

Chapter One
Sermon #1
August 24, 2014

Your Parents Know More About Life Than You Think – Listen to Them

(Proverbs 1:8 ESV)

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,

As I write this chapter, there is a city in America that is on the brink of full scale rioting. The looters in this city are smashing windows of storefronts, entering the stores after they have been closed and stealing whatever they want to steal because they feel there has been an injustice done to a member of their race. The city is Ferguson MO, a suburb of St. Louis MO, and the people doing the crimes call themselves African Americans. Their skin color is darker brown than ours but that doesn't make them a part of a different race than ours. We belong to just one race of people, the human race and we all have one color of skin; it is brown.

The injustice they are claiming is that a young black man, age 18, who was the size of an NFL linebacker, was shot and killed by an angry "white" police officer for no good reason. The facts of the shooting are coming out slowly, but indicate that the young black man, Michael Brown, was not at all an innocent victim, but was instead a boy without any control over his emotions, and his emotions dictated his actions, and his actions revealed a rebellious boy who had no respect for authority, even the authority of the police. My guess is that young Michael Brown refused to obey his parents when he was younger, and when he grew older and larger, he began telling his parents what to do and since he had no respect for them, he therefore had no respect for his teachers, or his bosses if he worked, and now no respect for the police officers who are trained to preserve the peace and safety of law-abiding citizens. That lack of respect, his failure to "listen" to his parents and do what they told him to do, led to his being fatally shot while fighting with a police officer.

Are you getting what I am saying? The Bible says, "Listen to your parents and live. Disobey your parents and die." I am not saying that one act of disobedience will make you a Michael Brown and you will end up like him, but I am saying that continued rebellion against parental authority leads to all kinds of death, not just physical death. It will lead to the death of your friendships if you fail to listen to what mom and dad have to say about loyalty. It will lead to the death of your career if you don't listen to what your mom and dad have to say about humility and the importance of taking instruction in a humble manner. It will lead to the death of your future marriage by divorce if you fail to listen to what your parents have to say about treating one another with love and respect. It will lead to the death of your relationships with your future children if you fail to listen to the wise advice from your parents about the need to discipline your children with firmness and kindness.

So no, one act of disobedience will not make you a Michael Brown who was shot dead on a city street near St. Louis MO, but many acts of disobedience will lead you down that road that led him to his untimely and early death.

In a nutshell, this is what the Book of Proverbs is all about. It is about wisdom. That's a word that speaks about knowing how to live to get the most out of life and to live a long time. And this is what I want to pass along to you from God's word. I want to pass along wisdom that I have gained from listening to God's advice and wisdom I have gained from not listening to God's

advice. In other words, I don't want you to make the same mistakes I did growing up and I want to save you from a lot of heartaches once you are in your grown-up years.

To start with, let me talk to you a little about the verse in Proverbs that says *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching* (Proverbs 1:8). The word "hear" in Hebrew, that's the language the Old Testament was written in, does not mean simply turn off the T.V. or your kindle and pay attention to what your father is trying to say because he is trying to get your attention. It means first of all, hear so that you understand what he is saying, but more importantly, hear attentively for the purpose of obeying. The word is Shema in Hebrew and the most famous verse using that word in the Old Testament is called the Shema. It goes like this: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ESV) Moses didn't say this to Israel so that they could get the answer right on a school test. He pleaded with them to take this most important truth about life to heart and to never forget it, never ignore it, never live as if it were not true, because if they ignored the fact that their God was Yahweh, the one who made the heavens and the earth, they would begin to worship something else, like computer games or soccer.

So the word "hear" in this verse of Proverbs means to take what is being told you to heart. It means making it more important to you than anything else in life. It means not treating it like lecture notes from your teacher, like facts that will be forgotten as soon as the mid-term exam is over. But instead, listen to the air traffic controller like you were sitting in the co-pilot's seat of a Cessna airplane and the instructor fainted or had a heart attack and all you had was this voice coming to you over the radio telling you how to lower your airspeed and point the nose down just slightly and aim it for the runway and make sure the flaps are down all the way. Believe me, if that happened to you, you would hang on every word the air traffic controller was telling you and you would be asking him to repeat it again and again. Why? Because your life depends on getting it right.

That's what hear means in this verse. Hear and obey because your life depends on getting it right.

But hear who? The verse says *hear your father's instruction*. You are to listen to your father's instruction and your grandfather's instruction, because our instruction comes with love. We care about you. The man who wrote this is King Solomon, the son of King David, the two greatest kings in Israel's history. How did Solomon know what to tell his son? Because he had a father that cared deeply about him enough to instruct him about life and what matters most in life. The truth is I love a lot of kids, but I don't love them as much as I love you, because you are my grandkids and I love you more. Just as I never dropped you when you jumped into my arms from the dock into the lake, and you learned to trust me through little things like that, so even now I am not dropping you into the stormy seas of life with bad advice just to see you sputter and cough and nearly drown. Evil people do that, not parents or grandparents.

You will get advice from people your own age about cheating and lying and being cool. Guess what? Those kids do not love you and never will. They are only trying to manipulate you. But the advice that comes from mom and dad and grandma and grandpa is loaded with love. They want to see you succeed and win, not suffer and lose. So, listen to them.

You may say to me, "But Grandpa, not everybody has a mom and dad that love them." Boy is that true, and they will often get bad advice or worse yet, no advice from a parent who doesn't care, but that's rare. Most parents do love their children and want what is best for them,

and for your friends who don't, they have a heavenly Father who is actually the source of the advice you are about to hear, and they can always go to Him.

The second part of that verse tells you to not forsake your mother's teaching. To forsake something is to leave it and ignore it. When you were little I told you to take my hand in the parking lot and when we crossed the street, and I heard your grandmother say the same. When some of you pulled your hand away, or refused to put your hand in ours, you were forsaking our instruction, and therefore doing what was dangerous. It is the opposite of the "hearing" that we talked about before. This time however, the king told his son not to forsake his mother's teaching. I don't know the name of the mother Solomon was referring to but I know his mother's name. It was Bathsheba. And Bathsheba had a lot to teach Solomon about life. She could teach him about the stupidity of being enamored with a person of power like when she was seduced by King David and saw her own husband killed in battle as a result. Fathers have much to teach their children, but so do mother's. That's because God wired fathers and mothers differently and children of both sexes have much to learn from both parents. Think of it this way, your grandmother is very sensitive to people and can read them much better than I can and she has an ability to see through them and their real motives far better than I. I would listen to her advice about dating boys if you are a girl and dating girls if you are a boy because she has a way of seeing the good and bad in them almost immediately and listen to me when I talk to you about not dating at all and waiting to court someone until you are 21.

So, moms and dads have your best interests at heart and the advice they give you is for your happiness long term. But, that is not what your friends will tell you. They will tell you that your parents are too rigid, they are too strict, they are too old-fashioned, they are against having a good time and so will keep you from smoking marijuana and drinking beer, when everyone else is doing it and it doesn't really hurt anything or anybody. Believe me, that is what you will hear, if you haven't already. The problem with that is your friends are believing a lie and even if their grades are nose-diving and their licenses are suspended for DUI's they still believe that gratifying their immediate desires is worth it regardless of the long-term consequences. Remember when you were 2? Of course you don't but you thought you knew better about when to go out in the street than I did even though you were only 30 inches tall and couldn't see past the decorative planter on the sidewalk to see the semi coming down the highway that I could see, and you had no idea the difference between a green light and a red light. I did and because I was taller than you, I could see dangers you couldn't see. The same is true about all of life. The years I have lived make me taller than you in terms of wisdom even though at some point in my life and yours you will look down on me if you grow to be 6 foot 1.

I bet you want more examples of how parents are wiser than you don't you? That's easy, because we've lived longer, we have many more experiences of what not to do to speak to you authoritatively. There was a time when I first got a paper route. I made a ton of money for a 10 year old. A neighbor boy talked me into buying everyone a full civil war uniform so that we could play North and South in the woods behind our house. I wanted to be cool and well-liked so I said yes without asking my mom, and spent my entire cache on funny looking hats that were either blue or grey. It was a lot of money, and we only played the game once. Guess what, I forked over handfuls of dollars to buy friendships and favor and all I got was to be picked last. I am still learning that most people don't care about you and you can buy for them and do for them and they will just take without gratitude. It was a hard lesson then, and they are hard lessons now. Better to use your money on the poorest kid in the neighborhood who can't afford his own uniform and don't worry about impressing the others. It's not worth it.

Will you do this for me? Will you stop reading this and turn to Proverbs chapter 4 and read all 27 verses? The entire chapter is all about how smart it is to listen to your parent's advice because as parents, we know better and we want your life to be a total success. When you read it, notice all the benefits Solomon talks about that you will get if you listen to your mom and dad and your grandma and grandpa.

Did you do it? If so, you are listening to wise advice just like we have been talking about. If you didn't, you are rushing through this like a textbook preparing for an exam. Go back and do it now.

You did it? Great. Here is what you heard: Listening to your parents and heeding their advice brings you all kinds of things including this list:

- Verse 1 - Insight, which means you will understand the way things work and why people do what they do better than almost everyone else.
- Verse 4 - A long and good life, (remember Michael Brown?)
- Verse 6, you will be kept and guarded. That speaks about physical, financial and emotional safety.
- Verse 8, exaltation and honor. That means you will get promoted faster, you will have friends who will speak highly of you, you may even become homecoming king or queen, but that would be good only if you didn't want it.
- Verse 9, you will get a garland and a beautiful crown. What is it that they put around the horse that win's the Kentucky Derby? I think it's a garland. That means that you will come out first in almost everything you attempt to do if you listen to wisdom. The crown refers to something we would compare to blue ribbons today. Want to come in first? Listen to mom and dad.
- Verse 10, a long life. You know sometimes wisdom is as simple as never picking up a cigarette because wise people know you subtract 10 years from your life if you smoke. Wisdom also says eat right and get plenty of exercise and stop worrying and guess what, you'll live longer.
- Verse 12 & 13 say that your way will not be hampered and if you run you will not stumble. That's not referring to a track event. It's talking about the marathon of life. There are a lot of ways people stumble and ruin their lives. I think pornography and adultery come to the top of this list.
- Verse 14 through 19 talk about the path of the wicked versus the path of the righteous or wise. Solomon seems to say to me that the path of the wicked is darkness which means to me they are always living under a cloud of guilt and are afraid they will get caught and their life is consumed with satisfying their evil intent. But the righteous, they live with clean consciences and are as happy as can be. It's like they are living emotionally under a cloudless sky all the time.
- Verses 22 & 23 seem to say that if you live with a clean conscience and obey your parent's advice that your spirit will be light and happy and a happy and light spirit makes for a healthy and energetic body. In other words your faces should radiate with joy. I should see smiles and laughter on your faces five times as often as sadness or tears.
- Verse 26 sums it all up. It says if you keep your eyes looking straight ahead and you ponder the path of your feet your way will be sure. This means so many things but perhaps the main thing is this, go in the direction God has called you to go. Keep your eye on the end goal. If it's the ministry or missions, don't give up early by saying the cost is too great. If it is homemaking be a home-maker meaning you are

making a home as a mother and creating an environment where you will have the greatest influence on your children's future. Essentially this verse is referring to thinking long term and planning long term and not being distracted by the many temptations this world has to offer. Stay the course and you will arrive at your destination safe and sound.

This chapter is all about listening to your parents because they know more about life than you think they do. That is generally true 99% of the time. However it does not mean that your parents know all things or that they are infallible. Sometimes they may even give you wrong advice. To them, it was wise advice but it was still wrong. Their motivation was pure, but their advice was lousy. Give them grace. Let them learn from their own mistakes with you even now. Sometimes your friend's parents don't know any better and that is especially true of non-Christian parents. All they had for advice was the world's advice and in that case when your friend goes to her mom for advice about boys all she gets is a prescription for birth control pills. You are blessed. You don't have parents like that.

I remember my mom arguing with me about going to movies. To her, they were all evil. When I asked her why I couldn't see "Gone with the Wind" or "Fiddler on the Roof" her answer was that any money those companies made making good films was used to make bad films. She may have been right but so was I when I argued that if we only watched good movies studios would be inclined to only make good movies. My logic was sound but my tone was discordant and it did not make for good harmony in my home. We argued about a lot of things even later in life, but one thing I could never accuse her of, and that was any lack of love for her husband or her children. Her motives were pure, even if her reasoning was slightly illogical. And wonder of wonders, God changed her heart so that when she hung up the phone on me when we lived 1700 miles apart, she called two weeks later to tell me she was wrong and I was right. So you see, parents can admit they are wrong and they can apologize and they can be humble. That's because they are wise.