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# **WISDOM: LIVING SUCCESSFULLY IN A TREACHEROUS WORLD**

## **Raising Children, Pt 2**

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“He who thinks it easy to bring up a family never had one of his own. A mother who trains her children aright had need be wiser than Solomon, for his son turned out a fool!”

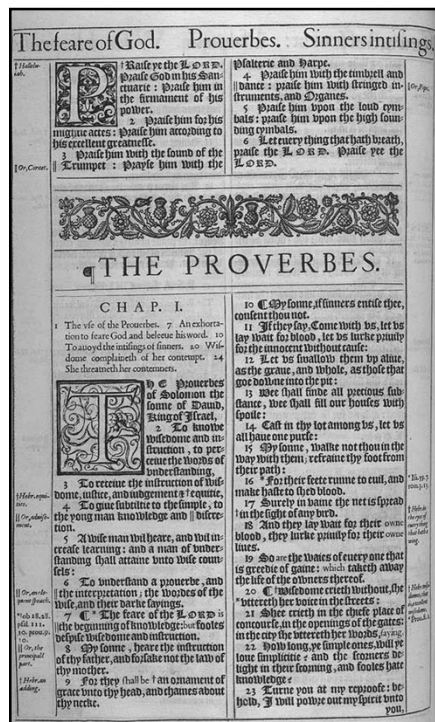
—C. H. Spurgeon

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“The only safe guide is the Bible. It is the revelation of God who has infinite knowledge and can therefore give you absolute truth. God has given you a revelation that is robust and complete. It presents an accurate and comprehensive picture of children, parents, family life, values, training, nurture, and disciple—all you need to be equipped for the task of parenting.”

—Tedd Trip, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, xvii

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# Ten Lessons on Raising Children from the Book of Proverbs

## Part 2

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## Raising Children, Part 1 Review

### Lessons from the Book of Proverbs

1. A father's successful leadership begins by instilling in his children the need to fear God.
2. A father's successful leadership assumes the depravity of his offspring.
3. A father's successful leadership disciplines his children for foolish behavior.

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#### 4. A father's successful leadership trains his children in the practical skills of wise living.

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- Repeatedly in the first segment of Proverbs (chapters 1-9), Solomon beseeches his son to "Listen!"
- The verb implies much more than an auditory recognition of words, and can be translated as "*Obey!*"

**HEY,  
LISTEN!**

- These commands reflect the father's effort to *persuade* his son.

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- **1:8** – "Hear, my son, your father's instruction."
- **1:10** – "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."
- **1:15** – "My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path."
- **2:1** – "My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you."
- **3:1** – "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments."
- **3:11** – "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof."
- **4:1** – "Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding."
- **4:10** – "Hear, my son, and accept my sayings."

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- **4:20** – “My son, give attention to my words; include your ear to my sayings.”
- **5:1** – “My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding.”
- **5:7** – “Now then, my sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.”
- **6:1-3** – “My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor . . . do this then, my son, and deliver yourself . . .”
- **6:20** – “My son, observe the commandment of your father.”
- **7:1** – “My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you.”
- **7:24** – “Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth.”

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- **19:27** – “Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.”
- **23:15** – “My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart will also be glad.”
- **23:19** – “Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.”
- **23:26** – “Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.”
- **24:21** – “My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those who are given to change.”
- **27:11** – “Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may reply to him who reproaches me.”

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- Common topics of instruction for wise living in Proverbs:



1) *How to relate to women* (e.g., 5:1-8; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 23:26-28; 31:2-3).

2) *How to relate to the world* (e.g., 1:10-16; 23:19-21; 24:21; 28:7).

3) *How to relate to work* (e.g., 10:1-5).

4) *How to relate to wealth* (e.g., 6:1-5).

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“He who does not teach his child a craft teaches him to rob.”

—Ancient Jewish proverb



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“The father in Proverbs prepares the son for adulthood and independence by telling him how to restrain his tongue, manage his career, handle his money, avoid sexual immorality, and choose a wife. He seeks to encourage qualities of honesty, self-control, generosity, diligence, and respect for authority. . . . Parents hope to build wise convictions in their children so that they will make wise choices even when no one is looking or forcing them to comply.”

—Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs*, 154

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## 5. A father’s successful leadership builds upon the model of godly behavior.

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- While children have foolishness—depravity—bound up in their hearts (22:15), few things will exacerbate this condition more than the example of a hypocritical father.
- Successful fatherhood requires an unbreakable commitment to personal godliness.
- It embraces the *law of assimilation*—that we become like those to whom we are most exposed—and uses it for the child’s good.

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“He talketh of prayer, of repentance, of faith, and of the new birth; but he knows only to *talk* of them. I have been in his family and have observed him both at home and abroad; and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savor. There is there neither prayer nor sign of repentance for sin . . . . Thus say the common people that know him: ‘A saint abroad and a devil at home.’ His poor family finds it so . . . . For my part, I am of the opinion that he has, by his wicked life, caused many to stumble and fall; and will be, if God, prevent not, the ruin of many more.”

—*Christian*, speaking to *Faithful*, about their travelling companion, *Talkative*, in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*



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“To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.”

—John Tillotson

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- **20:7** – “A righteous man who walks in his integrity—how blessed are his sons after him.”
- **1 Corinthians 7:12-14** – “But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

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“Precept without patterns will do little good; you must lead them to Christ by examples as well as counsel; you must set yourselves first, and speak by lives as well as words; you must live religion, as well as talk religion.”

—*Eleazar Mather*

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## 6. A father's successful leadership depends on marital unity.

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- One of the greatest obstacles to successful parenting is a conflict-ridden marriage.
- Marital strife . . .
  - distracts a father from his paternal duties;
  - saps a father of the energy to invest in his children;
  - disheartens the children;
  - conditions the children to a “norm” of quarrelling; and
  - teaches children to respond with anger.

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- Ultimately, the foolishness bound up in the child's heart will capitalize on this discord and use it as a pretext for sin.
- Proverbs grants no legitimacy to marital discord; it always assumes that fathers and mothers will work in unity.

“Though she never speaks [in Proverbs], it is clear that the father often speaks on behalf of both parents as he instructs his son.”

—Longman, “Family in Wisdom Literature,” 84

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- **1:8** – “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”
- **6:20** – “My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother.”
- **23:22** – “Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”
- **31:10-12** – “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

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“The best way to be a good father to your children is to be a good husband to their mother.”

—Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, 53



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## 7. A father's successful leadership creates the potential for incomparable joy.

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- While Proverbs recognizes several sources of joy, it most frequently identifies *children* as this source.
- “In Proverbs, this word [‘joy, gladness’] describes the feeling of personal satisfaction that parents have as they reflect on the growth and maturity of their child. It is a wholesome emotion that rewards parents who have devoted themselves to the development of their child” (Steveson, *Proverbs*, 465).

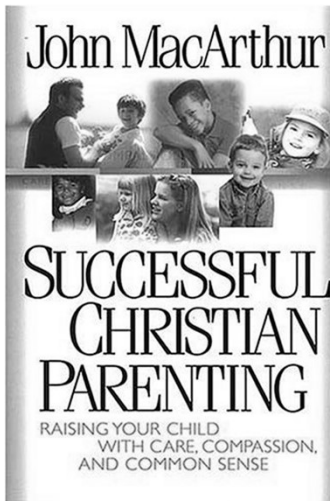
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- **10:1b** – “A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.”
- **15:20** – “A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.”
- **23:15-16** – “My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be glad; and my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.
- **23:24-25** – “The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.”

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“Parents, ours is a solemn and awesome responsibility, but it’s a wonderful privilege. One of the most fulfilling experiences in all the world is to have children committed to the Lord, no matter what the cost, because they have seen the same commitment in us.”

—MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting*, 233

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- Conversely, nothing creates *grief* in the heart of parents like a child who refuses their instruction and continues in folly.
- **17:21** – “He who sires a fool *does so* to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.”
- **17:25** – “A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.”
- **19:13** – “A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.”

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“Successful and unsuccessful rearing affects society spatially from the nearest social sphere, the home, to the community at large, and temporally from generation to generation.”

—Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15*, 451

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## 8. A father's successful leadership does not guarantee a successful result.

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- 22:6 – “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
  - “Train up” = “dedicate.”
  - “Child” = not an “infant” but a young male, “lad.”
  - “In the way he should go” = “according to his way.”

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- **22:6** – “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
  - “The way” = best understood as “the way of wisdom.”
  - A positive view of the *cause-and-effect* nature of parental instruction and discipline.
  - “Dedicate a youth according to his way in wisdom, and even when he is old he will not depart from it!”
  - An emphasis on *conditioned behavior*, not heart transformation.

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- But 22:6 is just one of many *true* statements that must be considered when developing a comprehensive understanding of parenting outcomes.
- For example, note the *conditional* statements:
  - **2:1** – “If you will receive my words. . .”
  - **2:3** – “If you will cry for discernment . . .”
  - **4:8** – “She [wisdom] will honor you if you embrace her . . .”
  - **23:15** – “If your heart is wise . . .”
  - **24:14** – “If you find it [wisdom], then there will be a future . . .”

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- **13:1** – “A wise son *accepts his* father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”
- **15:5** – “A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible.”
- **15:20** – “A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.”
- **30:11-13** – “There is a kind of *man* who curses his father and does not bless his mother. There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness. There is a kind—oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised *in arrogance*.”

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- It is in the sphere of childrearing where the *law of cause and effect* collides with the *law of personal responsibility*.

### CAUSE AND EFFECT      Vs.      PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Fathers must operate according to the hope of the former but accept the reality of the latter.
- Good parenting does not eliminate the parents’ vulnerability to the child’s personal choices.
- Proverbs holds children fully responsible.

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- **20:20** – “He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness.”
- **30:17** – “The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”
- **Deuteronomy 24:16** – “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.”

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“If we measure our success as parents solely by what our children become, there is no inviolable guarantee in Scripture that we will experience absolute success on those terms . . . .The true measure of success for Christian parents is the parents’ own character. To the degree that we have followed God’s design for parenting, we have succeeded as parents before God.”

—MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting*, 17

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## 9. A father's successful leadership can establish a powerful legacy.

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- In light of Proverbs 22:6, a father committed to raising his children according to wisdom is the only one who has the potential of establishing a legacy of successful living.
- This is the long-term effect of *sowing and reaping*—cause and effect—that fathers are to consider.
- What a father does today affects future generations.

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- **4:1-4** – “Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding, for I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction. When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, then he taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live.’”
- God gave Solomon wisdom *directly* (1 Kings 4:29).
- But He gave it also through a legacy of faithful fathers.

Boaz → Obed → Jesse → David → Solomon

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- **Psalm 78:5-8** – “For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

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- **2 Timothy 1:5** – “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well.”

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- Not *ancestral traditions* but *biblical wisdom*—the application of unchanging divine revelation to concrete life situations.
- A distinct weakness of children = lack of experience in God's law of cause and effect and how it operates in a treacherous world.
- They easily succumb to the enticements of sin and foolishness.
- But biblical wisdom passed down from parents and grandparents instructs them from both immutable truth and real life, long-term experiences.

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- **4:6-9** – “Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you. . . . Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace; she will present you with a crown of beauty.”
- **17:6** – “Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of sons is their fathers.”

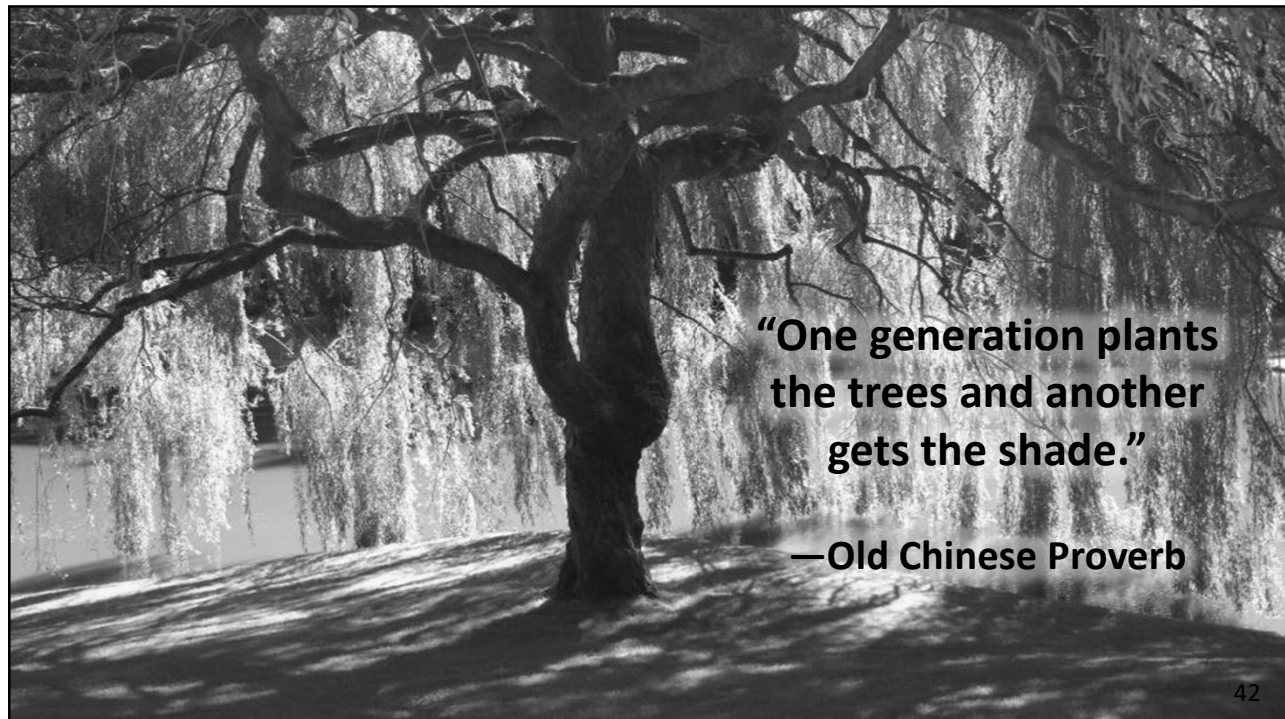
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<b>A COMPARISON OF LEGACIES (A. E. Winship, <i>A Study in Education and Heredity</i>)</b>	
<b>Jonathan Edwards</b>	<b>Max Jukes</b>
<b>18<sup>th</sup> century Puritan pastor-theologian; married to Sarah; raised 11 children.</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> century man known for his idleness, heavy drinking, and irreverent lifestyle.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 U.S. vice-president</li> <li>• 3 U.S. senators</li> <li>• 3 governors</li> <li>• 3 mayors</li> <li>• 13 college presidents</li> <li>• 30 judges</li> <li>• 65 professors</li> <li>• 80 public office holders</li> <li>• 100 lawyers</li> <li>• 100 missionaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 murderers</li> <li>• 60 thieves</li> <li>• 50 women of debauchery</li> <li>• 130 other convicts</li> <li>• 310 paupers, who, combined spent 2,300 years in poorhouses</li> <li>• 400 physically wrecked by indulgent living</li> <li>• The Jukes descendants cost the state in their time more than \$1,250,000.</li> </ul>

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## **Raising Children: Lessons from the Book of Proverbs**

- 1. A father's successful leadership begins by instilling in his children the need to fear God.**
- 2. A father's successful leadership assumes the depravity of his offspring.**
- 3. A father's successful leadership disciplines his children for foolish behavior.**
- 4. A father's successful leadership trains his children in the practical skills of wise living**
- 5. A father's successful leadership builds upon the model of godly behavior.**
- 6. A father's successful leadership depends on marital unity.**
- 7. A father's successful leadership creates the potential for incomparable joy.**
- 8. A father's successful leadership does not guarantee a successful result.**
- 9. A father's successful leadership can establish a powerful legacy.**

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