

The Instruction Of A Father

Ryan Goodwin

"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" (Proverbs 4:1-2).

"I give you sound teaching" – No one needs to guess what is the right way to live. What Solomon is telling his son is from the word of God. It is sound, true, honest, right, and able to work wonders on the heart. This is an echo of David's sentiments in Psalm 19:7-11. Also, it is interesting to note that a father does not have to be perfect in order to pass on perfect advice. A lot of us, however, consider our own faults and do not believe we are qualified to teach anybody. "Who am I to tell my son how to live?" ends up being the attitude a lot of parents have. To the contrary, though, it is because of our sins and bad experiences that we are uniquely qualified to train up our children. We can say, "Since I have experienced sin first hand, and have made bad choices, I can tell you the honest truth about temptation."

"Do not abandon..." – Kids, remember what happens to people in the Bible who abandon their parents' wisdom. It is never pleasant, and always leads to the ruin of souls with so much potential.

- Noah and Ham;
- Gideon and Abimelech;
- One generation to the next in Israel (Judges 2:10);
- Samuel and his children (1 Samuel 8:1-3);
- David and Absalom;
- *"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it'" (Jeremiah 6:16).*

"When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live! Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth'" (Proverbs 4:3-5).

Nobody is born innately knowing how to live wisely. This component of the saintly demeanor does not come without effort and assertion. As a parent, do not feel like you have to know everything right away, because that is impossible. As a child, do not feel like you are a total disappointment just because you are not as far along as your father or mother. We are all born with the need to grow, learn, and mature – which is what makes us human! If we have failed to realize this, then we deny ourselves the rich pursuit of self-improvement and education.

"Acquire wisdom!" – Wisdom does not come naturally, friends! It must be acquired, sometimes with great effort and determination. The opportunities exist all around us, though. I can acquire wisdom:

- When I look for the positive side of my suffering;
- When I listen to my father's lectures, instead of roll my eyes and ignore him;
- When I swim against the current, and follow God's path;
- When I decide to put away the video game and catch up on Bible reading;
- When I babysit and learn responsibility for another life;
- When I hold down a summer job, and handle it responsibly;
- When I sell everything I have for the pearl of great value (Matthew 13:45-46).

In these verses Solomon is reminding his own son of something very important: he was loved by his parents, cherished and nurtured. The influence of his parents made him the godly man he was. As a result of this environment, Solomon was impressed with the examples of David and his mother, Bathsheba. But a great lesson to observe is that even good and loving parents can produce dangerous, sinful people. Solomon was tender and wise because he chose that life, whereas Absalom was wicked and cruel because of his own self-determination. David loved Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33), so that impetuous young man had nobody to blame but himself! Beware of making the mistake of believing that your personal failures are your parents' fault, or, on the other side of it, that you were a terrible parent because your children abandoned soundness.