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All Children Have Problems Paying Attention, Not Just Yours

By David M. Tyler

<https://www.davidtylerresources.com/>

A child's inexperience, naivety along with a fallen nature prone to pride and self-deception is a challenge for parents. Children resist listening and being taught. They naturally want to do what interests them. They want to go their "own way" (Isaiah 53:6). To overcome a child's resistance a father and mother will say, "listen, my son" or daughter. In other words, *pay attention*.

A proverb is a principle stated in concise terms. It is instruction that is brief, to the point making it easy to remember. The Book of Proverbs is a compilation of succinct and wise statements. It is an inspired book. It is a book of truth that fathers use to impart "wisdom and instruction" to their children. The word that dominates Proverbs is *wisdom*. Other words such as understanding, discernment, and instruction and so on may appear however, these are all elements of wisdom.

Wisdom's Foundation: Begin At the Beginning.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7, NASB).

It is assumed that parents will instruct their children. They love their children. The father and mother know them best. They know the subtleties of their son or daughter's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. The mother and father know the ways of God and His Word. They understand the pressures, disappointments, and temptations of living in a fallen world. And so, they strive to put their children on a firm footing of biblical knowledge and wisdom.

“Fools despise wisdom and instruction” (1:7). There is a well-defined contrast between a wise and foolish child. The wise child builds his wisdom on a solid foundation. He fears, reveres, and obeys God. The foolish child does not fear God. He does not have a foundation on which to build true wisdom. A wise child pays attention to his father and mother's instruction. A foolish child despises instruction. He is wise in his own eyes (26:12).

Parents that desire their children to grow in true knowledge and wisdom must teach them “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10). That is the starting point and wisdom's foundation. All other approaches to wisdom presuppose naturalism. Naturalism is the belief that nothing exists beyond the natural or material world. There is no God. Acquiring knowledge and wisdom can be done in a wholly secular way. However, true wisdom is built upon the knowledge of God. “In the beginning God...” (Genesis 1:1). Consequently, the first lesson a child must learn is to fear God.

Immediately, parents recognize a distinction with respect to other views about paying or not paying attention. All other views begin and end with the child; the child's behavior, assumed psychiatric disorder, and treatment. The Bible, in order to understand a child, begins with God.

The Bible is not detached and theoretical. The Bible says to parents, “I want to talk to you about your son or daughter”. Parents, mistakenly, want to start with their child’s problem and in doing so they fail to see the larger picture. They fail to put parenting, and childhood problems in a biblical *context*.

Parents must not jump ahead but begin at the beginning. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning...” Help your child to understand he or she will fear and worship someone or something. It is not a matter of *if* but *what* a child will fear and worship. He will either fear God or idols. A child must be told how unreasonable and senseless it is to worship something lesser than God. The fear of the Lord is the best and biblical place to start. It is the best means of creating within a child an awareness of God. Awareness that will be seen in the choices the child makes.

Once again, it is crucial that parents not jump ahead and bypass the subject of the fear the Lord. Neither should they hurry through it. The details, repetitiveness, and examples give the impression the father in Proverbs took his time. He did not rush his words. He was thorough and mindful that his aim was not just at his son’s intellect but his heart (4:20, 21).

Give your child examples. Help them to have a functional and practical understanding of what it means to fear the Lord. A real-life example will help a child recognize his idols. An idol can be a bicycle, video games, or a sport like baseball and so on. A child’s peer group can be an idol, the fear of man. The child worries and frets about what his friends think of him or her. They make decisions, talk and act based on what their friends think, say, and do. It is fear-based. Show the child how he is

expressing a fear of man instead of fear of God. Give him examples of the choices he has made based on what his friends think rather than on what God says.

To Hear or Not to Hear: The Problem Is Selective Hearing.

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction, and do not ignore your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8, NASB).

Those are the opening words of a father’s passionate plea for the wellbeing of his son. This does not exclude girls. The fact that the mother is not mentioned after this verse does not exclude her from participating. It only means the example throughout Proverbs is a father and his son.