

HOW TO BE SMART

A STUDY OF PROVERBS



Discussion Guide Week 7 “Wisdom for Parenting”

1. Proverbs speaks often on the subject of parents teaching children. (See, e.g., Proverbs 4:3-4, 22:6) Reflect on your parents’ teaching as you grew up. Was it formal? Informal? By example? Verbal? Passionate? If you are a parent, what is your style of teaching your children? How about in matters of faith—do you accept and act upon your responsibility for teaching your children or can you defer this responsibility to church educational programs?
2. What are some good examples of exemplary parental teaching that you have observed in others? Does teaching your children in matters of faith hold the priority it should in your family? If not, how can you as a parent get to where you need to be?
3. What are some of the challenges that Christian parents face as they raise families in contemporary American culture? Are the challenges we face today really that different from the challenges faced by parents in other generations? Or is it simply that our modern lifestyles have thrown up new roadblocks that encumber our ability to effectively deal with the same challenges? How can the wisdom of Proverbs be applied to these specific challenges?
4. Read Luke 14:25-27. What do these words of Christ say about being a Christ-follower and life priorities? How might your attitude toward parenting be tempered by these words? Does allegiance to Christ take precedence over allegiance to family? Could there ever come a time when you have to choose between the two? Does there have to be a choice between the two? What might we do to give ourselves some assurance that we won’t have to make that choice?
5. Read Proverbs 20:7, 22:11. These verses speak of the importance of integrity in the role of parenting. How do you define “integrity”? Is the opposite of integrity “hypocrisy”? If we walk without integrity are we being hypocrites?
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.” Have you ever witnessed someone teaching a child one thing with his words but teaching a much different lesson with his actions? In a spirit of transparency, give some examples of parenting either with or without integrity (e.g. admonishing your children to refrain from cheating in school while you “bend the rules” as you complete your taxes.) According to Proverbs, what are the consequences of parenting with or without integrity?
7. In raising children, is it important to be an example? Does the “do as I say, not as I do” approach to teaching a child work? Are we guilty of this? Do the parents who send their children to

Sunday School telling them that it's important but who then engage in no Christian education themselves contradict their own teaching? Can children see this lack of integrity? An unknown speaker once said, "Your life may be the only Bible some people read." What about your children/grandchildren? Does how you live your life project the Bible for them?

8. Proverbs also speaks often on the subject of parental discipline. (See Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15). Pastor Aaron spoke of the importance of discipline and further emphasizing that the correction and nurture of the heart should be the focus of discipline. With this thought in mind, how can parental discipline go wrong or be misdirected?
9. If you are a parent, where are you on the continuum that ranges from lax parenting on one hand, to excessive discipline and control on the other? How can the wisdom of Proverbs help you find a balanced place to be on that continuum?
10. Consider the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-31. Is there some practical parental wisdom to be gained from this parable? Based on this parable what attitudes should be encouraged or avoided in parent-children or other family relationships?
11. Someone once said, "Your religion is what you do when the sermon is over." Is that true? Pastor Aaron made a point in his sermon of saying that a way to be a better parent or grandparent is to be one whose faith colors everything that you do. Do you do this? Does your faith inform your decisions you make at work and at home? Does talk about God and faith come naturally at the dinner table? Can your children/grandchildren see your faith in action? Can they tell from your words (backed up by your actions) that your faith infuses every part of your life?