

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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SUBJECT: WISDOM IN THE FAMILY

TITLE: WISDOM IS FAMILY- FRIENDLY

TEXT: PROVERBS 3:33b.

INTRODUCTION. The family is in trouble in America today. A number of years ago a pastor called me and after we exchanged greetings, he said, "I am going to meet with a couple in a few minutes. They are having trouble in their marriage and the young man has persuaded his wife to come with him to talk with me. I thought I had better call you before they come. You are our family ministries director for the association and you have worked with Ray Wells on a state conference or two. I would like to ask you what I might say to them."

I tried to think of something positive, but chose honesty over tack: "Jim (not his real name), I wish I could say something positive, but to be perfectly honest, if this man's wife has left and her only reason is that she 'just doesn't want to be married,' it really does not matter what you say to them, because it is not going to make any difference."

I went on to explain my reason for the statement. When I began my ministry - actually, the Lord's ministry - it was not uncommon for a young wife to come to my home or to the study asking for help. "Will you go talk with my husband. He packed up and moved out and I don't know what to do. We have three children and I don't have a job. I worked to help him get through college, and now I have no training in anything that will enable me to pay the bills."

She would give a little information about the problem: "He accuses me of nagging about his drinking." Or maybe she would say, "He ran off with my best friend." Through out history, there have been a lot of sorry men who have abandoned their wives and children, often leaving them destitute, frightened, and alone.

Twenty-five years later, it was often the young man who came asking for help. His wife had told him that she simply didn't want to be married. Or, she wanted "to find herself." She wanted her freedom.

I went on to share my observation with my friend: "If that husband had been willing to come with his wife to talk with a pastor you might have talked with him. But today, when the wife walks off and leaves her husband - and even her children - it really doesn't matter what you say. They are not going to listen to you. Some of these young women can be harder than any man." Of course that does not mean that we do not try to help. We share God's Word and trust the results to the Holy Spirit. However, from the comments my fellow pastor made I suspected that the wife agreed to go with her husband to talk with the pastor, not because she wanted a reconciliation, but because in the

divorce and custody hearing that might follow she could say she had gone with him to seek counseling.

I may have overstated the case, but not by much. In addition, there are many young people who enter marriage under the romantic fallacy that physical attraction will see them through all their problems. The post-Christian culture in which we live has conditioned many young people to reason that “if it doesn’t work out, you can always get a divorce.”

We must preach and teach the Word of God with the conviction that the One Who instituted the home has the answers for the home. Those answers are not always easy, but if honor God and we follow His Word He has promised to bless us - and those blessings include the family. Great emphasis is placed on the home in the Book of Proverbs. The wisdom that begins in the fear of the Lord will transform the home from a battlefield into a little corner of Heaven on earth.

I. GOD BLESSES THE HOME OF THE RIGHTEOUS, 3:33a.

A. God Instituted the Home In the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:18-24.

*“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him,’ (v. 18)... ‘The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ **For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.**”*

God’s plan for the home is one man and one woman for life. Any deliberate violation of His plan displeases Him and brings problems to the lives of the individuals involved. According to some reports the Gay/Lesbian Lobby has now been expanded to include bi-sexuals and trans-sexuals. It is ironic that those who adopt a homosexual lifestyle not only defend it, but often aggressively attack those who do not approve of their lifestyle. Because of the power of this ungodly lobby, false information is consistently fed to the American people. The so-called experts have never told people that following God’s plan for the family is the best protection against sexually transmitted diseases. They do not tell people that if they follow God’s plan for the home they can live without fear of AIDS, especially now that blood donors are screened more carefully.

The media seems especially protective of homosexuals and their organizations. For months, they have kept the horrible scandal in the Roman Catholic Church before the nation. A number of priests have been indicted for sexual abuse of children. I spend an hour with a friend, a Roman Catholic priest, who assures me he is a born-again Christian (we’ll save that for another day!). I said, “John, the media is not telling people that this is a homosexual issue.” John said, “That is absolutely right. Ever one of those children has been a little boy, not a little girl.” Why will Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Peter Jennings not tell America the truth? I won’t even ask about CNN!

B. The Home Comes Under the Protection of the Law, Exodus.

The Ten Commandments form the foundation for all the Law of God. While we might search the Mosaic Law to see how God provided protection for the family, we only have to look to Exodus 20:14: “You shall not commit adultery.” God demands fidelity in marriage.

In Oliver North’s novel, *Mission Compromised*, Marine Lt. Colonel Peter Newman meets with a Russian General in his office at the UN. After an attractive female Russian officer serves them, the general asks Newman if he would like to have a meal with her. Newman’s responded, “No, Sir. For me, *Semper Fi* applies to everything.”

Many people are placing their home at risk by breaking God’s Law. Do we need to be reminded that they are Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions? How are they placing their families at risk? Let me mention a few of the dangers, and trust both your common sense, and the Holy Spirit to make the right application of this.

1. James Dobson tells us that many men and boys are addicted to Pornography. Sadly, some of them are church leaders. They find the pornography in magazines, movies, video tapes, and the Internet. May I also be so bold as to say that if those horrible pictures are not readily accessible to them, they might stop by the local swimming pool, or a local motel and take a look at the daughters of some of our church leaders who are lounging around in swim suits that would surely have shocked the temple prostitutes of Corinth. Preachers used to preach against the strapless bathing suit; now it’s the suitless bathing strap!

I find it interesting that when AFR runs an ad for a filter to filter out pornography, they stress that it is to protect men from pornography. This is important. While a homosexual predator may want to look at nude pictures of little boys, most men who become addicted to pornography are looking at pictures of nude women, and sadly, some are looking at little girls. Now, do you see the point? The main problem is not women looking at pictures of men, but men looking at pictures of women. We must remember that men are different from women, and while a mother may not understand why her daughter should dress modestly, fathers most assuredly do. When the school imposes a dress code, they can expect a number of girls to put the rules to the test, knowing that when something is said about their dress, their mothers will head for the office and attack the principal. Why is it that the girl’s father will keep his mouth shut? Why is he afraid to explain how lust can work in the heart of a man - either to his wife or his daughter? Is it possible that some had rather place their daughter at risk that to admit that they might be tempted by a young woman in immodest dress?

2. Early dating exposes young people to temptations, and a shocking number of young people are sexually active. What does that have to do with the family? It means that these young people are going to take some serious baggage with them into their marriage.

3. Social dancing will expose young people to temptation. It can be a serious problem when men or women begin dancing with someone who is not his or her spouse. It is not popular to make

a statement like that, but human nature has not changed since the church saw the wisdom in taking a stand against social dancing.

I once heard the story about a man who tried to explain his black and various cuts, bruises to a friend. He explained that he had gone to this home to try to sell an insurance policy. When he arrived the man had not come in from work. After a brief wait, the wife turned on the tape player and after listening to the music a few minutes she asked him if he would like to dance. After a few minutes, he looked up and saw a raging husband heading across the room toward him. He went on to explain that the man had given him a severe beating before he could offer an explanation. His friend said, "Well you were just dancing, didn't he hear the music?" The victim said, "No. He is deaf."

4. Music often glorifies infidelity. That includes both country music and rock music. We need to watch what our children listen to, as well as what they watch. And adults need to understand that what we hear and what we see can become a source of temptation. Furthermore, every temptation leaves a memory stored in a memory cell in the brain, and that memory can become the source of a fresh temptation.

C. In Proverbs, We See That the Wisdom of God Protects Families.

1. Proverbs warns against infidelity.

*"For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light...To keep you from the evil woman, From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.... Do not desire her beauty in your heart...For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? **So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished,**" (Pro. 6:23-29).*

2. God seeks to bless the home.

"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones," 12:4.

I am firmly convinced that an intense study of the Book of Proverbs, and a consistent application of the lessons learned from such a study would put a lot of psychologists out of business. Not all, but many of them. Let me stress up front that I am aware of a lot of problems with which psychiatrists deal on a regular basis. I am not opposed to the social sciences. I have a major in one of the social sciences and took counseling classes at a Baptist college and two seminaries.

Having said that, let me go on to say that I am deeply concerned by a lot of the pop-psychology that is so popular today. It also concerns me that much of the secular counseling taught over the past half-century is not scriptural. In fact, a lot of it was in opposition to the Word of God. Please stay

with me on this. A lot of people need help, and some of those people need Christian counseling. Even lost people would be better off with Christian counseling than counseling that is hostile to the God and His Word.

In the sixties and seventies many pastors, including seminary graduates, went to secular universities to get a degree in marriage counseling or community counseling. Many of us observed that the deeper some of these men got into secular counseling the more liberal they became in their theology and in moral and ethical issues. Of course, all ethical and moral issues are first and foremost theological. Sadly, some pastors sacrificed their ministry on the altar of Freud and Jung - both of whom were deeply involved in the occult.

The area of counseling that particularly concerns me is the family. The family is in trouble in America today and many family members are reaching out for help. Unfortunately, some of them turn to pop-psychology, call Dr. Laura, or write to a newspaper columnist.

It seems that everyone is trying to get in on the psychology bandwagon. My brother, Mike, is an attorney who has often gone to court knowing that he was going to have to question a plaintiff's psychology. He has often had to put "his" psychologist on the stand to try to refute the other side's psychologist. In private conversations, Mike has used the term "blowing smoke," in reference to the testimony of some psychologists in certain cases.

My son, John, is an Assistant District Attorney with several years experience with juveniles. He has dealt with family problems, both as an AD and as the chief prosecutor for a medium-sized city. He also serves on the board of trustees for the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home in Monroe. John has often dealt with children and teenagers from homes where there is no discipline, as well as homes where the discipline has been overshadowed by peer pressure, divorce, live-in boy friends, and - well, you name it. He cannot discuss cases or individuals but he is keenly aware of the fact that family in the Bible Belt is in serious trouble.

My wife is a teacher with thirty years experience in schools in Louisiana. She has both the practical experience and the education to give her an up-to-date understanding of what is going on with children in our society today. She has had the classroom experience, the classes in education, and a number of classes in child psychology. She has also taught children in Sunday School for more than thirty years. She has witnessed the devolution of relationships, the devolution of values, and the devolution in discipline in families in the Bible Belt.

I have drawn from my own experience as well as family and friends in an effort to remain current on issues involving children and young people. When I was getting a double major in Bible and Sociology, I wondered if the Lord might have been preparing me to work with juvenile delinquents. I was going to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson, MS every Thursday afternoon and to the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman every Sunday morning at 8:00 A.M. At the jail, I gained some practical experience with some troubled teens.

I am convinced that there is a need for Christian counseling today. The family is in trouble in America, and the Bible Belt has not been spared. Now let me stress one thing: the best counseling for the masses is preventive counseling, and the most effective preventive counseling is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the pulpit every Sunday, supported with the teaching of the Word of God. Abuse of Scripture from the pulpit can create some serious psychological problems. Years ago, the chaplain at the Mississippi State Mental Hospital at Whitfield, held up a Bible before a group of students at Mississippi College and announced that this Book had put more people in Whitfield than anything else. Of course, he meant the misuse of the Book.

There is a great need today for Christians, both in the pulpit and the pew, to return to a strong view on the preaching of the Gospel. When the Gospel is faithfully preached, people are saved, and saved people find answers that help them make decisions. Decisions made by individuals and families can lead to blessings, or they can be disastrous.

D. The Wisdom of God Blesses the Relationship Between Husband and Wife.

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD,” 18:22.

“House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD,” 19:14.

E. The Curse of the Lord Is on the House of the Wicked, 3:33b.

II. PROVERBS OFFERS HELP FOR EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

A. There Is Help for the Husband and Father.

1. First, there is a continuous emphasis on righteousness, 15:6.
2. “The house... of the upright will flourish,” 13:11.
3. A father should instruct his children, 3:1; 13:1.
4. A wise husband appreciates his wife, 31:10-31.

B. There Is Help for the Wife and Mother.

“The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish tears it down with her own hands,” 14:1.

1. A godly wife is not contentious, 25:24.

*“A constant dripping on a day of steady rain And a contentious woman are alike;
He who would restrain her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right
hand,” 27:15-16.*

2. A godly wife and mother is a virtuous woman, 31:10-11.
3. A godly wife and mother is industrious, 31:12ff.
4. A godly wife and mother is a good business person, 31:16
5. A godly wife and mother is concerned for the poor, 31:20.
6. A godly wife and mother plans ahead for her family, 31:21a.
7. A godly wife and mother should be refined and dignified, 31:21b-22.
8. A wise wife honors her husband, 31:23.
9. A godly mother is blessed by her children, 31:28.
10. A godly wife is praised by her husband, 31:29.
11. A godly woman will be blessed by the Lord, 31:30-31.

I preached a revival in Sledge, MS, my hometown, some twelve years after the death of my mother. It was not my home church. Our church was located eight miles west of Sledge in another county, but I had graduated from Sledge High School. I had spoken at the Baccalaureate service when my sister, Linda, graduated. I know the people would remember me, but I was really surprised when person after person told me how much my mother had meant to them. A business man said, “Your mother was the best woman I have ever known.” Others told me things she had done for them or for someone else. One lady said, “Your mother was the best friend I have ever had.” It took me a little while to recall Mother mentioning this lady.

If you had asked a lot of people to give you an example of a Christian they might well have pointed to my mother. I don’t know anyone who has ever yielded “self” to the Lord the way she did. She was teaching a Sunday School class when she suddenly lost her voice. It was a brain tumor. But even that did not stop her from witnessing. Physically, she was never the same again, but spiritually she just grew deeper. She struggled with surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation before going home to be with her Lord some eight years later. At the visitation in the funeral home I was amazed at the people who share with the family what she had meant to them. Mark, who was about ten years old at the time, was standing by her casket when a lady walked up and stood there for several minutes before saying anything. Mark will never forget what she said: “She loved me when I was good, and she loved me when I was bad.” That was my mother.

I thank God that for the privilege of living almost my entire life with two women = let me hasten to add that I mean my mother and my wife. Becky has many of the qualities Mother had - many, but not all. Becky has some gifts that Mother did not have, but she shares my appreciation for Mother.

C. There Is Help for Children and Young People, 2:1-5.

1. Godly children pay attention to the instructions of their parents, 2:1; 7:1.
2. Godly children seek wisdom, 2:1ff.
3. Godly children learn from discipline, 2:1ff.
4. Godly children obey their parents, 3:1-2.
5. Godly children learn from their parents, 4:1.
6. Godly children seek wisdom and discernment, 5:1
7. Godly children honor and bless their parents, 31:28.

CONCLUSION. While it is true that the family in America is in trouble today, it is also true that the godly home is a haven for weary souls. There are lost people who have good homes, but only in Jesus Christ is there wisdom to make it a home that pleases God. Jesus is the greatest expression of the wisdom of God, both in time and eternity. Trust in Jesus Christ for God's salvation. Yield to Jesus Christ as Lord in your life. Then:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight,” Proverbs 3:5-6.

INVITATION