

Wisdom and family (lessons from Proverbs, no. 8)

Proverbs is all about the family. It is written from a father to a son (1v8) - "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching." The family is the place where we first learn wisdom - or fail to learn it! Families matter. A son can bring shame or honour to his parents: "He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father" - 28:17. "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him." - 23:24

In families, parents must teach and plead with their children. "4:1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. 2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. 3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, 4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live."

Proverbs warns against the danger of adultery, which destroys families. "5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, 2 that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. 3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; 4 but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave". Rather, it teaches us to be satisfied and rejoice with our own spouse, v10-15.

Proverbs warns against nagging and making our homes unpleasant places "a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping" - 19:31. "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand." - 27:15-16. "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." - 25:24

Proverbs tells young men to marry carefully, and wives to make the home a busy and fruitful place (12:4, 18:22, 19:14, 31:10-31)

"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. ... Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."