

**Text: Pr 23.26**

Pr 23.26 Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways.

One of the major themes of the book of Proverbs is simply the voice of the father (and mother) calling out instruction and warning to their son. We see the phrase 'my son' repeated ... over and over ... I did a search on the phrase and found 23 verses where the father (or mother) calls out 'my son...'

One of the great joys of parenthood is watching your children (and then grandchildren grow). From those first tottering steps to launching out in life on their own, every step of progress is a great joy.

The most crucial step for "my son," though, is to follow in the ways of wisdom as revealed in the Bible, especially Proverbs.

In the New Testament, one of the images we are given about spiritual life is the image of shepherd and sheep. In Proverbs it is father and son (or sometimes mother and son). It is in this concern of the father for spiritual life that we are mostly occupied in the book of Proverbs.

We could say it is the theme of Proverbs.

**I. The call of father and mother**

Pr 1.8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching;

Pr 2.1 My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you,

Pr 3.1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments;

Pr 4.10 Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many.

Pr 4.20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.

Pr 5.1 My son, give attention to my wisdom, Incline your ear to my understanding;

Pr 6.20 My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;

Pr 7.1 My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you.

Pr 23.15 My son, if your heart is wise, My own heart also will be glad;

Pr 23.19 Listen, my son, and be wise, And direct your heart in the way.

Pr 23.26 Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways.

Pr 24.13 My son, eat honey, for it is good, Yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste;

Pr 27.11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, That I may reply to him who reproaches me.

#### A. What the father calls the son to follow

1. Father's instruction/mother's teaching x 2 [father's commandment]
2. My words x 2
3. My commandments x 2
4. My sayings x 2
5. My wisdom
6. My understanding
7. My ways

#### B. What these instructions imply

1. The father is wise and experienced in the ways of life
2. The father is a good example
3. The father speaks with the voice of authority (although he is not dictating)
4. The son is of an age to make a choice for or against the father and his ways

#### C. The focus of the calls

1. Be wise
  - a. In Proverbs, this means 'in the fear of the Lord'

b. The skill to do God's will – not merely skill to live, but “*skill for living in the fear of Yahweh*”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Give the heart

a. Let your heart keep my commandments (3.1)

b. If your heart is wise (23.15)

c. Direct your heart (23.19)

d. Give me your heart (23.26)

The overwhelming focus of the call to the son in Proverbs is the spiritual life.

It is in this that the father's heart is made glad...

- Not wealth
- Not worldly success
- Not many grandchildren
- Not care of the old man in his old age

But this: that the young man's heart belongs to God.

This is a *spiritual* emphasis: this is a *pastoral* emphasis.

John said, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” (3 Jn 4)

Truly this is the pastor's desire for you and for the church as a body: we are not trying to reproduce come kind of ‘church culture’ here – we want our church to be more than just ‘church’; we want it to be an assembly of saints living each day in the fear of God.

## II. The warning of the path of death

Pr 1.10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.

Pr 1.15 My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path,

<sup>1</sup> Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* (Kress Christian Publications, 2011), 39.

Pr 5.20 For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress  
And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

Pr 6.1 My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, Have  
given a pledge for a stranger,

Pr 6.3 Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; Since you have come  
into the hand of your neighbor, Go, humble yourself, and importune  
your neighbor.

Pr 19.27 Cease listening, my son, to discipline, *And you will* stray from  
the words of knowledge.

Pr 31.2 What, O my son? And what, O son of my womb? And what, O  
son of my vows? <sup>3</sup> Do not give your strength to women, Or your  
ways to that which destroys kings.

#### A. Dangerous aspects of sinners

1. Their **enticement** (1.10)
2. Their **way** (1.15)
3. Their **lusts** (5.20)
4. Their **entanglements** (6.1, 3)

#### B. The father warns of **straying** from the father's wisdom (19.27)

#### C. The mother warns the king about **unbecoming** behaviour (31.2ff.)

#### D. Implications of the warnings

1. The wisdom to which the father calls the son is not merely  
comprehensive Biblical knowledge
2. The way to fail of wisdom is to walk (act) in disobedience to wisdom's  
precepts
  - a. Note: mere obedience is not enough, remember "the heart"
  - b. But: failure of wisdom follows from simple disobedience
  - c. The heart does not belong to the father (or to God) if the son will  
not follow the way of wisdom
3. The way of wisdom is a higher standard than mere public morality

- a. The mother of King Lemuel reminds her son that certain behaviour is not appropriate for him
  - b. Others may be considered good citizens and behave in such a way, but if you are among the wise, it is not for you
  - c. Christians shouldn't be satisfied merely by public morality: whole-hearted devotion to God is the goal
4. The way away from wisdom is pitifully simple; the way to wisdom involves disciplined effort

### III. The hand pointed to God

Pr 3.11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof,

Pr 3.21 My son, let them not vanish from your sight; Keep sound wisdom and discretion,

Pr 24.21 My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those who are given to change,

- A. The father's call to wisdom is a call to a **relationship** with God and his laws
- B. The call that focuses on the Lord emphasizes God's **majesty** and **power**
  1. The call is a loving call
  2. But the Lord is a strong and mighty Lord
  3. The heart that belongs to the father, to wisdom, and to God, is one that walks in the fear of the Lord

### Conclusion:

When we come right down to it, ultimately the voice of the father in Proverbs is not Solomon and it is not David. The father is God.

It is God who appeals to you to respond, to walk the way of wisdom, to shun the ways of the wicked.

It is God who delights to see his saints walk with him in the way.

The relationship between man and wisdom is the family relationship between man and his God.