



April 23rd through 29th

## What are you doing to influence your child's relationship with people outside your home?

Proverbs 1:8-9; 3:3; 13:20; 21:21; 22:6; 23:26

Our lives are influenced by our relationships, experiences and decisions. Therefore our priority as parents should be to advance our child's relationship with God, enhance our child's relationship with us, and influence our child's relationship with those outside the home. This parenting series will encourage us to look at the relationships in our child's life and ask the following questions:

- \* **What am I doing to advance my child's relationship with God?** Nothing is more important than centering them in their relationship with God which will enable them to weather the storms of life.
- \* **What am I doing to enhance my relationship with my children?** It is important that we not economize on our time with them because our influence will determine the direction of their life more than any other relationship.
- \* **What am I doing to influence my child's relationship with people outside our home?** We can control certain relationships in our child's life that will influence them for years to come.

Among the major causes of personal stress and family crisis are changes in family relationships. The loss of a strong relationship, whether through death, divorce or children leaving the nest, is among the most difficult adjustments anyone ever has to make. The longer and deeper the relationship has been maintained, the more difficult it is for a person to deal with the loss.

Even positive changes take their toll on a person's emotions. The addition of a new relationship, whether through marriage, birth, adoption or having

Aunt Ethel come for a prolonged visit, calls for major adjustments in patterns of living and, as a result, creates stress. Even though the addition may be warmly welcomed, no one can absorb a significant new relationship without experiencing a measure of tension.

Strain also results when a relationship is altered in some significant way. When Mom takes a job outside the home, she, Dad and the kids will all experience a certain amount of frayed nerves while they adjust to new routines. A child starting school, a parent retiring, a teenager gaining access to the family car—all these milestones of life carry their own load of inner turmoil.

Rather than convincing us life would be easier if we avoided possible upsets by not emotionally involving ourselves with people, these stress-causing events are powerful evidence that significant relationships with other people are important to us. Our physical and emotional well-being depends, not just on vitamins and aerobics, but on our ability to nurture strong, healthy relationships with people, especially the people who live around us.

Unfortunately, our society sometimes appears to place more value on developing biceps and a strong serve than on improving the depth and quality of relationships within our families. But fortunately for us, Proverbs provides a great deal of help on this topic. Woven throughout its pages is a continuing stream of wisdom about the attitudes and actions that contribute to positive relationships.

Proverbs touches factors that impact all human interaction. Since the family is a microcosm of society, these insights apply directly to the familiar situations we parents face in seeking positive relationships for our kids.

# ***Observation***

What do you see?

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## **Proverbs 1:8-9**

<sup>8</sup>Listen, my son, to your father's instruction  
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

<sup>9</sup>They will be a garland to grace your head  
and a chain to adorn your neck.

## **Proverbs 3:3**

<sup>3</sup>Let love and faithfulness never leave you;  
bind them around your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

## **Proverbs 13:20**

<sup>20</sup>He who walks with the wise grows wise,  
but a companion of fools suffers harm.

## **Proverbs 21:21**

<sup>21</sup> He who pursues righteousness and love  
finds life, prosperity and honor.

## **Proverbs 22:6**

<sup>6</sup> Train a child in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not turn from it.

## **Proverbs 23:26**

<sup>26</sup> My son, give me your heart  
and let your eyes keep to my ways.

**Record your first impressions from what you read.**

# ***Interpretation***

What does it mean?

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## ***Points of Interpretation***

**Proverbs...** The proverbs are short, pithy sayings which express timeless truth and wisdom. They arrest one's thoughts causing the reader to reflect on how one might apply divine principles to life situations. Proverbs contains insights both in poetry and prose; yet, at the same time, it includes commands to be obeyed.

**1:8...*Listen, my son*** A wise teacher is addressing his pupil with a view to obedience.

**3:3...*neck, heart*** The virtues of love (the Hebrew word for lovingkindness) and truth that come from God are to become part of us—outwardly in our behavior for all to see as an adornment of spiritual beauty, and inwardly as the subject of our meditation. Such inward and outward love and truth is evidence of New Covenant salvation.

***Points of Interpretation continued ...***

**13:20...walks, companion** This speaks of the power of association to shape character.

**21:21...righteousness** Those who pursue “righteousness” and “mercy” receive more than they see (see Matt. 5:6,7; 6:33)

**22:6...way he should go** There is only one right way, God’s way, the way of life. That way is specified in great detail in Proverbs. Since it goes without saying that early training secures lifelong habits, parents must insist upon this way, teaching God’s Word and enforcing it with loving discipline consistently throughout the child’s upbringing.

## ***Application***

### **What do I do?**

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#### ***Questions of Application***

1. If you could pick friends for your kids, who would you pick and why?
2. How does your children’s choice of friends vary from your choice? Why?
3. How does the company your children keep affect them?
4. How could you influence the choices your child makes with regards to choosing friends?
5. What positive role models are you encouraging your child to spend time with?

# Correlation

## How do we work this into our life?

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**Core Competency:** Giving Away My Life

**Creed:** I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

**Key Verse:** Romans 12:1-2 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will."*

Use the Assessment Statements to help you evaluate how you are doing at applying this creed in your daily life.

- \* I am living out God's purposes for my life.
- \* I give up what I want to meet the needs of others.
- \* I give away things I possess, when I am so led by God.
- \* I serve God through my daily work.

### Commentary:

"What doth it profit a parent to have a clean bathroom but estranged children?" Solomon did not write that last "proverb." He could have, however, for it certainly reflects a recurring theme of the Book: "People Before Projects" - also known as "Child More Than Chores," "Friendship Precedes Functions," "Caring Over Career" and other variants! The qualities of love and faithfulness are so important to a child that they are to be fastened securely, marked down at the very core of personality.

The pursuit of love is what produces "life, prosperity, and honor." Listen to the deep emotion in the father's pleas, *"My son, give me your heart..."*

Children are expected to master certain skills and knowledge by specified age or grade levels. Consequently, children who have not learned to letter their own name or cut with scissors or recognize colors and shapes will have a hard time coping in most kindergartens. The child who has not learned basic math facts or spelling rules by the time classmates have done so is at a serious disadvantage in making continuing progress in school.

Similarly, the child who has not learned very young to give and receive love and affection, who has not built solid emotional attachments with family members, is a child at risk in all areas of continued development.

A single dad who had just ended an extended romantic relationship was concerned about the impact of this breakup on his children. "The past few weeks the kids have been clinging and whining. You'd think they were the ones who just broke up!"

In a very real way they were. The termination of Dad's friendship affected them as well as their dad.

"So what should I do?" he asked. "I think they're blaming themselves, and the breakup had nothing to do with them."

The children's behavior was showing in many little and some not-so-little ways how heavily a child's well-being depends on the relationships in that child's life. When one is broken, the child wishes it were restored and tries to understand what went wrong. Since the child can only deal with the aspects of the relationship in which he or she was directly involved, imagination can run amok about how circumstances might have been altered to avoid the loss.

So, what can the dad do? Simply and consistently, he can keep nurturing his own relationship with each child, providing stability and assurance of how much the child is loved. In other words, he can make sure that "love and faithfulness never leave"; his patient reassurances and demonstrations that his kids can count on him will bind those qualities around the neck of each child, writing them on the tablets of their hearts.