(page 38 of Standard Edition)

Wise Words for Families



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Prov. 5:3–14; Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Prov. 13:22; 14:26; 23:13, 14; 17:22; 31:10–31.*

Memory Text: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (*Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV*).

hatever phase of life we are in now, we all, of course, started out with a mother and a father, regardless of the kind of relationship, if any at all, that we had with them after our birth. On the other hand, some people, other than having siblings or other relatives, never have a family of their own—other than the one they grew up in.

Whatever our situation, whatever our phase of life, the book of Proverbs contains a combination of instructions, poems, questions, and wise sayings. Family relationships are directly addressed, and other words of wisdom can be applied to the home. Proverbs is, in fact, cast as a family document, in which keys to a godly life are handed down from parent to child. Just as parents might write a letter of advice to a son or daughter going to college, setting up their separate dwelling, or taking a job away from home, so Proverbs is addressed from father to son: "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother" (*Prov. 1:8, NKJV*). Deuteronomy directed parents to share their convictions with the next generation. This is what Proverbs does. In the father's summons, we hear the voice of our heavenly Father calling us to learn.

^{*} Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 4.

Love the Right Woman

The godly person reserves (if not married) and preserves (if married) his or her deepest affections and sexual intimacy for marriage. Men are specifically addressed in Proverbs, but the same idea as it relates to women is expressed in the Song of Solomon (compare Song of Sol. 4:12–15). The powerful attraction of illicit love must be weighed against the horrific consequences of this sin. Casual sexual liaisons lack commitment and, therefore, fall far short of true intimacy. Material, physical, and emotional resources are squandered. Most important, one must answer to God for the choices made in life. Sexual intimacy, one of God's greatest gifts to humans, is a privilege of marriage only (Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Heb. 13:4). In Proverbs, the imagery of nourishing, plentiful water is used as a delicate symbol of the pleasure and satisfaction a married couple bught to obtain in their love together. This is contrasted with the waste that results when there is unfaithfulness. The expression "the wife of your youth" (Prov. 5:18, NKJV) indicates that even when the two grow older, their commitment is to continue. A husband is still ravished ("intoxicated" [Prov. 5:19, NIV]) by his wife's charms. In the human fallen condition, sexual instincts can lure individuals away from the divine design for sexuality. However, God also has given humanity the power to reason and to choose. These temparations, if not continually suppressed, can become overwhelming. A firm commitment to the divine design for sexuality in marriage can prevent the development of illicit sexual relationships. The choice of lifelong faithfulness to God's design for sexuality in marriage not only is prudent but carries its own bountiful rewards.

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A Call to Fathers

Note the character qualities of fathers described in Proverbs that can have long-term consequences for children:

Prov. 13:22; 27:23, 24	
, , ,	
Prov. 14:26	
Prov. 15:1, 18; 16:32	
Prov. 15:27	
Prov. 29:17	
104. 22.17	

The characters of fathers have a direct impact on their children and the legacy they pass on to them. Children look to their fathers for support, devoted affection, guidance, and modeling. Proverbs lauds those fathers who are reliable providers and wise managers of family resources. Many are the ways in which "the greedy bring ruin to their household" (Prov. 15:27, NIV); fathers must be mindful to give priority to family over work. Godly fathers seek to be patient and in command of their emotions. They respect their children's dependence upon them. They discipline their children but are careful not to abuse their position of authority. Most important, dedicated fathers want to follow God, to be controlled by His love and by the teaching of His Word, that they might guide the feet of their children in the right way.

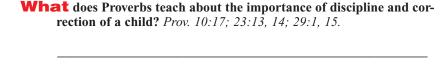
In the end, the most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. His faithfulness and continuing affection for her, or the lack of these, have a telling effect upon children's well-being even into adulthood.

In Proverbs, loyalty to God, commitment to marriage and family, and integrity in one's personal and community life are key themes. Success in everything depends upon the condition of the individual heart. The attractions of sin—whether sex, sloth, wealth, or power—abound, but the wise husband and father looks to God for help to make right choices continually.

How are the moral principles expressed here important for anyone, whether or not a father? How have your actions, either for good or bad, impacted others, especially children? In what ways might you need to be more careful?

(page 41 of Standard Edition)

Correction With Love



Parents sometimes discipline their children to impress upon them what is socially unacceptable behavior, to punish for disobedience, or even to express their displeasure when embarrassed. But what is God's intention regarding discipline for these young members of His family? Proverbs sets discipline in the context of hope for the future (Prov. 19:18). Godly parents know that children have a sinful nature. Only one power can help them with this, and this power is Christ (see Ellen G. White, Education, p. 29). The mission of Christian parenting, including discipline, is to lead children to God.

Supporting a tender plant. Through Christ discipline is seen not as punishment, nor as an expression of authority, but as redemptive correction. God's plan is that loving parents, knowing the strength of sin, guide their children's footsteps to Christ. Caring parents correct kindly and firmly, restraining and guiding children through the early years much as a horticulturalist provides support to a newly planted tree, until self-control emerges and a youth comes to trust in God and cooperates with the divine plan for salvation, growth, and maturity.

Wha	t message	for parents	s is found i	n Proverbs	13:24; 23:13	3, 14?
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All told, just a few verses mention the "rod" (Heb. shebet) in the context of disciplining children. Popular within Christian parenting literature is the notion that parental use of the rod should be like that of the heavenly Shepherd who uses it to guide His flock (Ps. 23:4). Elsewhere, Scripture points to patient teaching, consistent modeling, good communication, and close relationships for influencing change in children (Deut. 11:18, 19). The child's feeling of being loved by his or her parents is vital if discipline is to have its desired effect of being corrective and redemptive (Prov. 13:24).

When discipline has missed its intended purpose by being too harsh or misunderstood, how can parents set matters right with their children?

Is Life Better on a Rooftop?

ln	irritation	tic living? P		on some of the 16. What effect

A number of the proverbs consider the ways we treat each other in close relationships. They make their point with a light touch and a flash of wit, like the ones about the insensitive friend who "sings songs to a heavy heart" (*Prov. 25:20, NKJV*) and the early-rising family member who "blesses" sleepers "with a loud voice" (*Prov. 27:14, NKJV*). Wives reading these verses about contentious women may want to add some "proverbs" about men! They may retort that such sayings perpetuate the very problem of these proverbs by targeting only women when husbands, who share responsibility for the home atmosphere, are equally capable of contentious behavior. (Imagine what it must have been like living in the home of Caiaphas or Annas!)

A merry heart helps. Having a sense of humor in family living is a good thing. Humor lubricates the machinery of living, helping to reduce stresses and strains. "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22, NKJV). Proverbs takes some of its own medicine throughout the book and gives us permission to chuckle at a few of the behaviors that annoy and irritate. Perhaps when we have smiled (or smarted a bit if the joke is on us), we are in a better place to talk about habits or behaviors that irritate or annoy us. On the other hand, humor should not be used to minimize or bypass issues that need serious attention.

A low-grade fever may be symptomatic of a chronic infection. Quarreling, nagging, and complaining may signal that there is suppressed anger in one or more family members, perhaps related to difficulties with mutuality or communication in the relationship. The complaining partner tries to offset the perceived power, control, and unwillingness to communicate of another. If the infection is cleared up, the symptoms will go away. In families, rather than avoiding the problem or one another, members build on their love for the Lord and their commitment to one another by communicating their needs and feelings, getting to the root of their anger, and clearing it up.

Why is laughter so important for the home? How can it be used for good, or how can it be perverted and used for evil? Bring your answer to class.

A Truly Wealthy Wife

31:10-31.	ie characteristic	es and qualities	that are is	auded.
31.10 31.				

The woman described is special, and so is the poetry. Each of the verses starting from Proverbs 31:10 begins with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. One senses from this tribute to a worthy wife that even the whole national alphabet barely provides a sufficient framework to extol her properly!

Proverbs' emphasis on marrying a good partner is reflected in a dictum of the rabbis: "A man's home is his wife." "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones" (Prov. 12:4, NIV). Here, at the end of the proverbs, rolled idealistically into a portrait of one, are many varied skills: clothing manufacture, buying real estate, agriculture, home and financial management. Meanwhile, she cares well for her family. They love her and praise her.

These extensive talents are not to be expected in every woman, nor are they a blueprint whereby husbands should measure their wives. Rather, through describing these capabilities and qualities, Proverbs conveys what is most important and universally relevant for women, as well as for men: the traits of trustworthiness, compassion, reliability, faithfulness, kindness, and industry. The secret of such a life, according to Proverbs 31:30, is that she "fears the LORD" (NKJV).

In Proverbs 31:10 the word for "virtuous," or "of noble character" (NIV), means "strength," "might," or "wealth." It is translated as "riches" in Psalm 62:10 and describes Joshua's "men of valour" (Josh. 1:14; emphasis added). Boaz commends Ruth with the word virtuous (Ruth 3:11). In Proverbs 31:10 there is a play on the concept of "wealth." True wealth lies in character, integrity, and the fear of the Lord. This vastly exceeds the worth to be found in precious stones.

Who are some of the women of valor and virtue who have influenced your life? How would you expand the list of character qualities, virtues, and capacities of godly women?	

Further Thought: *Keeping the heart in heaven.* "Christians should be careful that they keep the heart with all diligence. They should cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion. Many seem to begrudge moments spent in meditation, and the searching of the Scriptures, and prayer, as though the time thus occupied was lost. I wish you could all view these things in the light God would have you; for you would then make the kingdom of heaven of the first importance. To keep your heart in heaven, will give vigor to all your graces, and put life into all your duties. To discipline the mind to dwell upon heavenly things, will put life and earnestness into all our endeavors. . . . We are dwarfs in spiritual attainments. . . . [Eph. 4:13]."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The* SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1157.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Many Christians find a support group network helpful as they seek to "guard their hearts" against temptation. In what way might this augment prayer, Bible study, and reliance on the Holy Spirit? In some cases, why might it be a good idea to seek professional help if someone really struggles with temptations that do lead them into sin, and they seem unable to stop?
- 2 As a class, read your answers aloud to Wednesday's final guestion. Discuss the implications of your various answers. As with so many of the wonderful things that God has given us, how can laughter and humor be perverted and twisted into being something actually harmful?
- **10** In contrast to Proverbs 31, what qualities does contemporary culture tend to exalt in women? How can we as individuals protect ourselves from partaking of that same degrading attitude?
- 4 In general, what are some of the cultural attitudes about family life in your society that directly conflict with biblical principles of family life? On the other hand, are there some cultural attitudes that parallel biblical principles? If so, what are they, and how can they be used to strengthen our families?

INSIDE Story

Baby Is Coming!

By ANDREW McCHESNEY, Adventist Mission

A physician praying to be used by God after hearing a Sabbath sermon about mission work in the cities unexpectedly delivered a baby in the parking lot of the Seventh-day Adventist world church's U.S. headquarters.

Dr. Yvette C. Ross Hebron delivered a healthy baby boy in the car of the parents, who had been rushing to the hospital but pulled into the church's parking lot in Silver Spring, Maryland, after getting lost.

Ross Hebron said she believed God arranged the events.

"The most wonderful opportunity in response to our prayers was orchestrated by the Master," she said.

Ross Hebron began praying about how to do more to serve God after hearing Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson preach during the 2017 Annual Council business meetings at the church's General Conference headquarters. The church leader had appealed for a renewed effort to reach people in the cities and spoke of the need for physicians and other healthcare professionals to reach city residents.

Five days after the sermon, Ross Hebron and her husband were driving past church headquarters when they saw a man pull into the parking lot, frantically jump from his car, and run around it. Rolling down the window, she heard him crying and screaming, "The baby is coming!" Then she heard the screams of the expectant mother in the car.

"My husband and I immediately pulled into the driveway," she said.

Moments later, the baby was born. As Harold Hebron telephoned the paramedics, the new father removed his shoelaces from his tennis shoes and found a pair of scissors in the car. Following Ross Hebron's directions, he tied off the umbilical cord and cut it.

Ross Hebron wrapped the baby in a blanket from her car and made sure that he was comfortable and breathing fine. General Conference security arrived and fostered a calm environment. After a short time, the paramedics took a healthy and stable mother and baby to the hospital.

Later that day, Ross Hebron visited the mother in the hospital and again held the baby in her arms.

The mother excitedly told the nurses that God sent an angel to help her in the parking lot.



"I don't know where she came from," the mother said. "I just looked up, and she was there."

Ross Hebron said she has no doubt that what happened in the parking lot was an answer to prayer.

"My husband and I attribute all to God's plan," she said.

Part I: Overview

Family life is tricky. We need all the help we can get. The memory text for the week implies that we must swallow our pride and "lean not unto [our] own understanding" (*Prov. 3:5*). Let us be honest and admit we need outside input from the Lord if we are going to be good mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters. Proverbs is a treasure trove of insight into family life; so the lesson "wisely" looks for guidance in its pages.

The creation of a family begins with two people choosing to commit to each other for a lifetime. Whether children like it or not, parents are often in a good position for advising on who would, or would not, make a good spouse. Proverbs has much about whom *not* to get involved with, usually designated as the forbidden woman (*Prov. 2:16–19, 5:3–14, 7:4–27*). But it is not difficult to apply the same principles to help to avoid the wrong man, as well. Perhaps the fact that only the "forbidden woman" is spoken about, and not the "forbidden man," is counterbalanced, in part, by the fact that Proverbs ends in an homage to the "virtuous woman" (*Prov. 31:10–31*).

Parents' actions will have direct consequences on the characters of their children. How important it is then that their influence be prudent and measured (*Prov. 15:1*). Though neglecting discipline is considered ruinous for a child (*Prov. 23:14*), the context of the covenant is that parents are governed by their love for God. Under that influence, children are to be taught about the God of their fathers (*Deut. 6:4–9*).

Part II: Commentary

Theological Introduction

God is a risk taker. He willingly created free moral agents with the potential of loving Him or wanting nothing to do with Him. In a sense, God lost His own wager. His universe rebelled. He lost His angels. He lost His humans. Worst of all, His own Son was murdered by the very ones He created. Yet, for God, it was all worth it—for the sake of having a family.

Is there any institution in existence that can possess such opposing realities as that of the family? On one hand, it can provide the apex of security and love. On the other, it can breed the deepest pain and resentment, mask the most shocking violence, and disfigure the souls of its offspring. When we start our own families, we participate in the divine risk of creating relationships. We choose a spouse, initially a

total stranger to us with an unknown future, to bind our lives with forever. We have children that are "bundles of joy." But we soon realize they also are bundles of potentialities in which that initial joy is either extended or terminated in pain and heartbreak. And yet we, like God, continue to merge our lives with others to create families. Why? Perhaps the lyrics of a Bob Bennett song nail a truth worth pondering: "Love is the only risk worth taking."

When God, whose very essence is love (1 John 4:8), fashioned us in His own image (Gen. 1:26), the desire to love and be loved became indelibly etched on our natures. Though sin has wreaked such chaos in creation, even it has had difficulty erasing love as the supreme ethic within humanity. How many people on the planet could honestly say they prefer a life absent of all love? Not many. Because families are the wellspring of relational love, they are ubiquitous. God wanted it to be so (Gen. 1:28, 2:24). Familial love can lead us to hear the first whispers of God's love for us. Ellen G. White affirms that through "the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, [God] has sought to reveal Himself to us."—Steps to Christ, p. 10.

It is no wonder, then, that the family has become a target for Satan to destroy. It is for this reason we need the multidimensional familial pictures of God as a Father and Husband (Exod. 4:22, Jer. 31:32) and Jesus as a Son, Bridegroom, and Brother (John 3:16, Mark 2:19, Rom. 8:29). In fact, any insight into the character of God (who is love) provides the benchmark for us to cultivate love within our own families. The book of Proverbs is the valiant attempt of one king to hand down an inheritance of divine wisdom to his children. May his legacy result in our families reflecting God's dream for a reunited creation—a universal family, sustained by His love.

Scripture

Perhaps the single most significant lesson of the book of Proverbs is that there is a book of Proverbs. The implied message to all generations is "Parents, talk to your children!" Notice when Moses spoke to Israel the commandments of God, he said that these words need to be in our hearts. Without dipping the quill a second time, he says that these words need to be in our children, too (Deut. 6:4–7). "Teach them diligently" is the way the King James translates the Hebrew shaman, which comes from either a root meaning "to repeat" (e.g., "tell them to your children, and keep on telling them" [New Jerusalem]) or a root meaning "to sharpen" or "engrave" (e.g., to teach incisively, as in "Drill them into your children" [NAB]). Both repetition and deep engraving of the commandments with regard to teaching children can fit the context.

So how should one go about sharing with children in a meaningful way (1) the wise sayings of King Solomon, (2) the thrilling stories of Israel, and (3) the commands and principles of God's law? Going back to Deuteronomy's repetitive engraving model of teaching, the rest of the verse could likely be telling one how to do just that. You "shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (Deut. 6:7, 8, ESV). Sitting, walking, lying down, and getting up are, in a figurative sense, meant to cover all the different positions and contexts one may be in during the day. These activities also cover the whole day. So, in all the diverse experiences of the entire day, Mom and Dad are simply talking (dabar), conversing, musing out loud, or even singing about God's words. And the children listen and are changed.

But parents don't just talk about God and His words for the kids' sake. Remember, all the words commanded are *first* to be "on your heart"; that is, the heart of the parents. The idea that these words are to remain in the mind "as frontlets between [their] eyes" reinforces the heart imperative. It is what the parents are thinking about already.

But even having them in mind is not enough. If parents want their religion, and respect for the God of that religion, to be passed on to their children, then His laws need to be bound "as a sign on [their] hand." Parents' actions need to showcase what God's laws look like when expressed through human life. Otherwise all the God talk will be counterproductive. As a consequence, children will sit back and appropriately be repulsed at the pageant of parental hypocrisy before their eyes.

Scripture

When the Lord commands the Passover to be kept in the new land, He takes the long view and desires the parents to be prepared when the children inquire about the ceremony (Exod. 12:26). Perhaps that is the purpose of ceremony in the first place—to generate such curiosity from our children that they start doing what every God-fearing parent hopes they will begin doing: asking questions about God and His ways.

In addition, the question the children ask may not simply be "What does this ceremony mean?" but "What does this ceremony mean to you?" (Exod. 12:26, NIV). If the latter is the case, then parents aren't off the hook by simply giving some theoretical answer or quoting another Bible text. Children can't see or hear God firsthand, but they watch and listen to their parents. For Mom or Dad to share experientially

what God and His laws mean to them can add gravity to their answers and perhaps make for a memorable family moment. Perhaps this model is the ideal for transferring the corpus of biblical knowledge to the next generation. "What does it mean?" must ideally be followed up with an answer to the question "What has this ceremony meant for me in my life?"

Part III: Life Application

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an information-rich community. We place a premium on general biblical knowledge, prophecy, and the innumerable counsels of Ellen G. White. The church, in the spirit of Solomon to his children, is providing this week's lesson to give insights into how to have the best family possible. Lest one feel overwhelmed with even more counsel, the scriptural sections in the Teachers Edition have been concerned with *how* the Bible itself gives clues to communicate godly wisdom as a heritage. It has used passages that relate primarily to children, but the principles are beneficial for all members of the family. In addition, there are texts that make similar points but say nothing of children or family (e.g., "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it "[Josh. 1:8, ESV]). Be sure to emphasize this point for singles and parents without children, lest they feel these lessons do not apply to them.

Here are some ideas on how to integrate Proverbs into family life:

l.	Notice there are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs—one for each day of the month. Instruct your students to read a chapter a day for their morning worship and invite everyone to share his or her favorite proverb.		

TEACHERS COMMENTS

2.	Encourage your class members to convene their own family council in which each person in their respective families is invited to share any struggles or concerns about events in his or her life. Given that Proverbs touches on such a wide variety of topics, advise your students to see if there is a proverb or two that is related to one of the struggles shared in their family councils Suggest that the family together might memorize a pertinent proverb.

United by Mission



What do a 12-year-old girl in Brazil, a missionary baby whose parents work in a closed country, and a 3-year-old girl in Argentina have in common? They are united by mission in the South American Division, which will receive this quarter's Thirteen Sabbath Offering.

Read more in the Youth and Adult Mission Quarterly (bit.ly/adultmission) and the Children's Mission Quarterly (bit.ly/childrensmission).

Thank you for supporting Adventist Mission with your prayers and Sabbath School mission offerings.



KAY KUZMA

Gold for My Girlfriends

Kay Kuzma

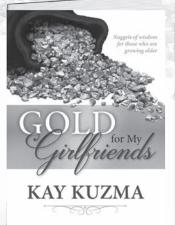
Life should not be measured by the number of breaths we take but by the number of moments that take our breath away. Once you start living by this standard, you'll find yourself really living regardless of the date on your birth certificate. So forget about spending time trying to mask your age with glitter and glamour or pushing yourself to achieve more fame and fortune.

These things are just temporary. Instead, focus on creating breath-taking moments that can never be taken away from you, never lost, and never devalued. If you do that, then every age can be "golden."

ISBN 978-0-8163-6377-3 • US\$17.99



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