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INTRODUCTION



When my wife and I set out to educate our children at home, we were confused by the hundreds of theories on the education of children that were presented at homeschool conventions. Parents who love their children really want to find the best *paideia*, or education, for their children, and we were no exception to that rule. So it was always with some frustration that we would attend the next seminar on another philosophy or technique of education. Eventually, we turned back to the Word of God.

Our first assumption, of course, is that God is very smart. Assuming that it is He Who is behind the marvelous design we call the “human being,”—and anyone that can create things like human beings has to be, well, *smart*—we turned to His Word. Thankfully, He didn’t leave us without operating instructions. But, like most fathers who try to assemble a toy on a child’s birthday and usually turn to the manufacturer’s instructions as a last resort, most people do the same thing when trying to figure out how to operate a human being. So finally, I picked up the Word of God and looked up the word “education” in the concordance. Naturally, the Bible doesn’t have much to say about things like schools and education. But I broadened my search to “knowledge,” “understanding,” and “wisdom,” and found that God has actually dedicated an entire book of the Bible to the subject of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, and understanding to a child. This is Education/Knowledge/Wisdom 101, authored by God and conveyed by Solomon, who was endowed with supernatural wisdom by God Himself. This gives us both the method and content of a child’s education. It is a textbook for young men (and young

women), and provides the basic corpus of knowledge God requires of young people.

Now one of the things that takes many educators by surprise is that the book of Proverbs does not have a great deal to say about geography, geometry, or geology. So why would the Creator of the Universe—Who, as I mentioned, is very smart—neglect something as important as the Pythagorean Theorem in His textbook? I submit that it is because geometry is, in the grand scheme of things, not all that important. When it comes to the education of a child, it is faith and character that are primary in God's estimation. These are the warp and the woof of the *paideia* of a child if we are speaking of the Lord's nurture and admonition (Eph. 6:4). They constitute the foundation, the studs, and the drywall in the "construction of a child." And geometry, geography, and geology are only the wall papering. To attempt to teach geometry apart from character is akin to trying to place wallpaper on walls that do not exist, and that would be a prime example of "an exercise in futility."

As you read this book, you will learn God's basic truths, addressing the classical philosophical divisions of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. You will grapple with the tensions of determinism and human responsibility. You will find an entire system of priorities for life's ethics and purposes. You will find the basic constituents of a biblical social system, as well as principles for sound economics, government, and general business management. The book gives insight into the proper views of theology, anthropology, and human psychology. Any education program will give you a categorical system by which you can understand life, history, truth, ethics, and reality. Some systems have a semblance of truth, but all will fundamentally be compromised if they do not begin with the book of Proverbs, and the fear of God (Prov. 1:7).

Having taught in public and private schools, and seeing myself as an academic of sorts, I was at first uncomfortable with the book of Proverbs. A pastor once told me that there are those who teach the fear of God, faith, and character, and then there are those who teach reading, writing, and arithmetic; and according to his viewpoint, those who teach the book of Proverbs are not the same as those who teach chemistry and mathematics. But as time went on, I became convinced that Christians must not tolerate this dualism. This separation of the fear of God from the chemistry class has produced an ungodly, secular science, and yielded science's terrible destruction in our "brave new world." The separation of the fear of God from social studies and political science has undermined the Christian foundations of this country and created tyranny (Prov. 28:2, Neh. 5:15). I place the blame for the failure of the Christian faith in the West, the widespread apostasy, and the breakdown of our Christian institutions, at the feet of those who separate the knowledge of chemistry and political science from the fear of God. Christian teachers who teach chemistry should be less interested in their students learning chemistry as they are in their students *learning the fear of God through chemistry* (Prov. 1:7, Prov. 23:17). Thus, we do not separate discipleship from education, or the fear of God from "academic subjects." The same principle applies to Christian parents.

The book of Proverbs is presented by "Solomon the son of David, king of Israel. . . to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion" (Prov. 1:1–4). Therefore, every teaching college in America—and certainly every Christian teaching college—should require its students to memorize the book of Proverbs, because it is God's book on the education of every young person. It is God's theory on education, presenting both content and methodology in living color. If teaching colleges took up this theory, they would effectively be training future fathers and mothers to teach their children the lessons of life. Reading

through the book of Proverbs, you can practically hear the writer's exhortations, warnings, and instructions filled with urgency, tenderness, severity, passion, and love. It may not fit in well with the professional teaching methodology you will learn in teaching colleges, but those theories have incorporated more from men like Dewey, Rousseau, and Plato than they have from the Christian God.

The Core Curriculum

As I considered these things, I became deeply convicted that my children were better educated in Saxon Math and the laws of grammar than they were in the book of Proverbs. They did not know the many lessons found in the book of Proverbs. So over the subsequent ten years, I set about the task of expositing, illustrating, and applying every verse in the book of Proverbs four times through. I assembled those lessons in this Family Bible Study Guide on the Proverbs with the hope that others might benefit from my efforts.

In our education program for our children, this book is the core, and sets the stage for all other academic subjects they pursue. It will prepare them well for any and all of their economic and "career" pursuits. But it will give them far more than this. It will prepare them for their own family discipleship program, for relationships within the church, and for a living, vital walk with God. By the time my children leave my home, I would like them to be familiar with every verse of this book.

God's Book on Life is for Everyone

Genesis is God's history book of the world, the book of Psalms is God's book on worship, the Gospels are God's autobiography of the Savior, and the book of Proverbs is God's book on life. Every child raised in a Christian family should be thoroughly versed in this book before

leaving home. But also, when discipling any person into the Christian church for the first time, after teaching them the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Genesis, I would recommend a complete study of the book of Proverbs for the catechumen, or disciple. The Great Commission requires teaching others to observe and to practically apply every command of Christ to their lives. God's book of wisdom and life must never be neglected in this task.

Using this Study Manual

This Study Manual includes modern day applications and illustrations to help illuminate the meaning of the text. It also provides helpful family discussion questions to open up more shepherding opportunities for dad and mom. Of all of the books of the Bible, the book of Proverbs will lead to the most family discussions on the application of God's truth to everyday situations and problems.

I recommend reading the Bible text in unison as a family before dad or mom reads the exposition and application questions. It is also a good idea to end each lesson with another reading of the text, in order that everybody will remember the lesson. Each proverb is packed with weighty considerations, and is worthy of careful thought and meditation throughout the day.

You may also wish to memorize the verse together, as our family does. First, we repeat the verse three times together. Then, each person has an opportunity to say the verse, with dad or mom correcting as they go. Each time a new family member recites the verse, the others should be encouraged to recite it silently in their minds. By the time everybody has recited the verse, everyone should be able to say it together in unison, without error. We have used this method of memorization since we first learned it

from Pastor Henry Reyenga about five years ago, and it has worked marvelously for our family.

For the biblical text I have used the classic King James Version with only minor changes, replacing “thee” and “thou” with “you” and “your,” and changing the older verb forms, for example, changing “seeketh” to “seek.”

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PART 1 ~ INTRODUCTION

Proverbs 1:1–6

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of
understanding;*

*To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;
To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and
discretion.*

*A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of
understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*

*To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise,
and their dark sayings.*

The purpose of this book is to help a young man to know wisdom, instruction, justice, judgment, and equity. Gaining the wisdom found in Proverbs will help you to make good, just, and right decisions in your life.

A person who is wise will listen to others. He is quick to hear and slow to speak, and when he listens to others, he increases his knowledge. Much of education is a waste of time because the people listening are not interested in what is being said, and their hearts are not humbled to receive the words. So the character of the person who is being educated is important if he is going to be taught.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What is the purpose of this book?
2. What is the definition of a wise man?
3. Do you listen to the teaching at church and during family devotions when your father teaches you the Word of God? Are you interested in increasing your knowledge and gaining wisdom?

PART 2 ~ THE FOUNDATION OF ALL KNOWLEDGE

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The foundation, or starting point, of all knowledge is the fear of God. We will not have a right understanding of anything without first learning the fear of God. Before we think rightly about the American civil war, amoebas, marriage, gravity, mental illness, abortion, or even proving the existence of God, we must first fear God.

The idea of fearing God may bother some people because it does not sound much like love. But it should make sense that a father be both respected and loved at the same time. In a similar way, the perspectives of love and fear towards God are not contradictory but complementary. Moreover, there is no way that anyone will love God for the love He demonstrated at the cross of Christ, unless he has first come face to face with the magnitude of his own sins against God. For it was our sin that drove those nails into the hands and feet of God's only begotten Son. Even the atonement of Christ is meaningless to anyone who does not first fear the God who brings severe punishment upon those who violate His law. If one does not first fear God, he will never love God.

If the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of God, then one should never teach something without either clearly expressing or assuming this foundational truth. What, then, would constitute a good science class, for example? Picture the instructor describing the order, the beauty, the complexity, the expanse, and the glory of the universe, the human body, or the animal kingdom. Then, he lifts his arms and says in a whisper to the class, "Silence