

# Proverbs: The Bible's Parenting Manual

## Ten Lessons Kids Need to Learn

### INTRODUCTION

"[Proverbs is a] fitting textbook for parents . . . It is an inspired book of wisdom from the wisest father who ever lived, a vital compendium of the sort of practical wisdom *all* parents need to pass on to their children" (John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 70).

**1. Proverbs are truisms, not inviolable promises.**

**2. Proverbs should not only be verbally repeated; they should be lived out.**

"A wise person is cautious and turns from evil, but a fool is easily angered and is careless" (Prov. 14:16).

"A fool's way is right in his own eyes, but whoever listens to counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15).

**3. Proverbs is a demonstration that words matter.**

"My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings. 21 Don't lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. 22 For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body" (Prov. 4:20–22).

### TEN LESSONS KIDS (AND ADULTS) NEED TO LEARN

**1. We must teach our children to fear their God.**

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov. 1:7).

"You have not satisfied the responsibilities of parenthood when you have made your children submit to you. . . . My goal as a father was not merely to have my children being chastened by their father. I wanted them to fear being chastened by their God" (John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 79).

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### **2. We must teach our children to guard their minds.**

“Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life” (Prov. 4:23).

“Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

### **3. We must teach our children to obey their parents.**

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction, and don’t reject your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8).

“As for the eye that ridicules a father and despises obedience to a mother, may ravens of the valley pluck it out and young vultures eat it.” (Prov. 30:17).

“The words of King Lemuel, a pronouncement that his mother taught him” (Prov. 31:1).

### **4. We must teach our children to select their companions.**

“My son, if sinners entice you, don’t be persuaded” (Prov. 1:10).

“The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov. 13:20).

Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33).

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### 5. We must teach our children to control their lusts.

“It will rescue you from a forbidden woman, from a wayward woman with her flattering talk, 17 who abandons the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; 18 for her house sinks down to death and her ways to the land of the departed spirits. 19 None return who go to her; none reach the paths of life” (Prov. 2:16–19).

“Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, 4 in the end she’s as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death; her steps head straight for Sheol” (Prov. 5:3–5).

“Now, sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words from my mouth. 25 Don’t let your heart turn aside to her ways; don’t stray onto her paths. 26 For she has brought many down to death; her victims are countless. 27 Her house is the road to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death” (Prov. 7:24–27).

### 6. We must teach our children to enjoy their spouses.

“Drink water from your own cistern, water flowing from your own well. 16 Should your springs flow in the streets, streams in the public squares? 17 They should be for you alone and not for you to share with strangers. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth. 19 A loving deer, a graceful doe—let her breasts always satisfy you; be lost in her love forever. 20 Why, my son, would you lose yourself with a forbidden woman or embrace a wayward woman? (Prov. 5:15–20).

“Better to live on the corner of a roof than to share a house with a nagging wife. . . Better to live in a wilderness than with a nagging and hot-tempered wife. . . An endless dripping on a rainy day and a nagging wife are alike” (Prov. 21:9, 19; 27:15).

“A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD. . . Who can find a wife of noble character? She is far more precious than jewels. 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will not lack anything good” (Prov. 18:22; 31:10–11).

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### 7. We must teach our children to watch their words.

“Don’t let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don’t let your lips talk deviously” (Prov. 4:24).

“No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear” (Eph. 4:29).

“Lying lips are detestable to the Lord, but faithful people are his delight” (Prov. 12:22).

“When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent” (Prov. 10:19).

### 8. We must teach our children to pursue their work.

“Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. 7 Without leader, administrator, or ruler, 8 it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. 9 How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, 11 and your poverty will come like a robber, your need, like a bandit” (Prov. 6:6–11).

“Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring riches. 5 The son who gathers during summer is prudent; the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful” (Prov. 10:4–5).

“A door turns on its hinges, and a slacker, on his bed” (Prov. 26:14).

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### 9. We must teach our children to manage their money.

“Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; 10 then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (Prov. 3:9–10).

“One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor. 25 A generous person will be enriched, and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water. 26 People will curse anyone who hoards grain, but a blessing will come to the one who sells it” (Prov. 11:24–26).

“The one who profits dishonestly troubles his household, but the one who hates bribes will live” (Prov. 15:27).

“My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor or entered into an agreement with a stranger, 2 you have been snared by the words of your mouth—trapped by the words from your mouth. 3 Do this, then, my son, and free yourself, for you have put yourself in your neighbor’s power: Go, humble yourself, and plead with your neighbor. 4 Don’t give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids. 5 Escape like a gazelle from a hunter, like a bird from a hunter’s trap” (Prov. 6:1–5).

“Anyone trusting in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage” (Prov. 11:28).

“Don’t wear yourself out to get rich; because you know better, stop! 5 As soon as your eyes fly to it, it disappears, for it makes wings for itself and flies like an eagle to the sky” (Prov. 23:4–5).

“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is a slave to the lender” (Prov. 22:7).

“Better a little” passages (Prov. 15:16; 16:8; Ps. 37:16)

### 10. We must teach our children to love their neighbors.

“When it is in your power, don’t withhold good from the one to whom it belongs. 28 Don’t say to your neighbor, “Go away! Come back later. I’ll give it tomorrow”—when it is there with you. 29 Don’t plan any harm against your neighbor, for he trusts you and lives near you” (Prov. 3:27–29).

“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, 22 for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you” (Prov. 25:21–22).

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### CONCLUSION

“Parents, if you fail to teach your children to fear God, the devil will teach them to hate God. If you fail to teach them to guard their minds, the devil will teach them to have a corrupt mind. If you fail to teach them to obey their parents, the devil will teach them to rebel and break their parents’ hearts. If you fail to teach them to select carefully their companions, the devil will choose their companions for them. If you fail to teach them to control their lusts, the devil will teach them how to fulfill their lusts. If fail to teach them to enjoy their own spouses, the devil will teach them to destroy their marriages. If you fail to teach them to watch their words, the devil will fill their mouths with filth. If you fail to teach them to pursue their work, the devil will make their laziness a tool of hell. If you fail to teach them to manage their money, the devil will teach them to squander it on riotous living. And if you fail to teach them to love their neighbors, the devil will teach them to love only themselves and the next. We have a great responsibility to this generation and the next” (John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 103–104).

### PREPARATION FOR NEXT LESSON:

- Read “Public, Private, Online, Homeschool?” by John Piper at [desiringgod.org/interviews/public-private-online-homeschool](http://desiringgod.org/interviews/public-private-online-homeschool)
- Read “What I’ve Learned About School Choice” by Winfree Brisley at [thegospelcoalition.org/article/learned-school-choice/](http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/learned-school-choice/)