



BUILDING A STRONG FAMILY

PROVERBS 14:26

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Introduction:

In 1947, sociologist and historian Carle Zimmerman compared the deterioration and ultimate disintegration of various cultures with the parallel in the decline of the family unit in America. His study identified specific patterns of behavior that typified the final stages of the disintegration of each culture. Just before each culture fell into total disarray, certain conditions became prominent. Dr. Zimmerman traced those elements that led to the demise of the family unit. There were eleven in all and among those eleven were:

- ♂ Increased and rapid, easy, “causeless” divorce.
- ♂ Decreased number of children, population decay, and increased public disrespect for parents and parenthood.
- ♂ Elimination of the real meaning of the marriage ceremony.
- ♂ Breaking down of most inhibitions against adultery.
- ♂ Revolts of youth against parents so that parenthood became more and more difficult for those who did try to raise children.
- ♂ Rapid rise and spread of juvenile delinquency.
- ♂ Common acceptance of all forms of sexual perversions.

Domestic deterioration is happening. We must now focus not on how bad things have gotten, how weak and needy our families are, but rather on how we can build strength back into the home. What specifically can be done to break the tide, to get our families back on course, and build strong families.

I. Leadership

- ♂ A godly home should provide leadership.
- ♂ Each day of our lives we make a deposit into the memory bank of our children.
- ♂ This deposit should be a positive example of godly leadership and we do that by...

A. Fear of the Lord

1. Proverbs 14:26 says, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and his children will have a place of refuge.
2. When parents place great trust in God’s power and have a great respect for Him and His word. When they follow this guideline for their lives and their family, “their secure fortress will be a place of refuge for their children.” (Our children are in need, today more than ever of secure refuge!!)
3. “Godliness puts beauty in the home and protection around the house.”

4. Fearing God provides protection for believers and for their children who are influenced by their parents to fear God.

B. Faithful Example

1. The leadership in our homes should provide a faithful example for our children. You and I must lead by example.
2. British statesman Edmund Burke called example “The school of mankind,” and its first lessons are learned in the home when the children are very young.
3. Benjamin Franklin said that example was “the best sermon,” which tells us that the way we act as parents in the home teaches our children more about God than what they hear in Sunday School and in Church.
4. Listen to what Proverbs 20:7 says, “The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him.” A person who consistently behaves right and is blameless has children who are blessed. They see their example of integrity and are encouraged to be the same kind of people. It describes the parent who believes in the Lord and lives out their faith.
5. When parents set a godly, faithful example for their children, they provide a rich, lasting heritage that will impact their children for the rest of their lives.
6. So How do we Provide this faithful example?
 - a. We make God’s word the standard by which we live. We must accept it as the sole authority for our lives and the lives of our children. It must be the standard. God’s word must be our source of truth.
 - b. We must live what we say we believe. You and I must be diligent and energetic to do what is right. Our children must see a concern on our part to be consistent in what we say we believe, and in what we do. **Our children will probably respond to us in the same way that we respond to God.**
 - c. We must be real.
 1. Our children need to see us be real in our faith. They need to see us struggle and work on our relationship with God.
 2. Our children need to see us fail and in so doing learn how to deal with failure from us.
 3. Our children need to see us learn, laugh, cry, and show emotions.
 4. Our children need to see us have fun.
What they see is what you will get!
 - d. We need to teach our children about life.
 1. We need to teach them values.
 2. We need to teach them how to make good decisions.
 3. We need to teach them how to handle finances.
 4. We need to teach them how to make the simple, everyday decisions in life.
7. All of this and so much more is involved in being a faithful example.
8. We cannot do it on our own, we need God’s DAILY grace and God’s DAILY guidance.

Illustration: Anonymous Poem

There are little eyes upon you;
And they are watching night and day;
There are little ears that quickly
Take in every word you say.

There are little hands all eager
To do everything you do;
And a little child who's dreaming
Of the day they'll be like you.

You're the little dear one's idol;
You're the wisest of the wise;
In their little mind, about you
No suspicions ever rise.

They believe in you devotedly;
Hold that all you say and do,
They will day and do in your way
When they are grown up just like you.

There's a wide-eyed little child
Who believes you're always right
And their ears are always open,
And they watch you day and night

You are setting an example
Every day in all you do;
For the little child who's waiting
To grow up to be just like you.

Application: What kind of example are you setting for your children? Do as I say and not as I do will not cut it.

II. Learning

To build strong families, learning and instruction must take place. The Book of Proverbs is primarily the record of a father's instructions to his children, instructions that they were to hear and heed all of their lives. Prov 19:27 says, "Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." We can never come to the place in our lives where we stop learning. When you stop learning, you stop growing. When you stop growing it is difficult to teach or lead someone else, especially children.

A. The Responsibility

1. There is a great responsibility in raising and instructing children.
2. The bible says in Proverbs 1:8 "My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother."
3. In this verse, the Bible tells us that parents are responsible for training and instructing their children. The church, girl scouts, little league or any other organization is not responsible for the training and instruction of children, the parents are! Churches and other organizations are there to help, support, encourage, and reinforce what the parents are doing at home.
4. Notice that this verse tells us that is the responsibility of both parents to train and instruct their children.

5. God considers godly instruction to be of greater value than anything else an adult child can take from the home. Prov 1:9 speaks of instruction as it says, "For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck." The phrases "ornaments on you head" and "chains about your neck" in that day were signs of wealth and status obtained through inheritance. This tells us that there is nothing of greater value than sending an adult child out into the world with a strong faith in God, as well as the ability to live a life that is pleasing to God.
6. Proverbs 1:8-9 emphasizes that parents must make instructing their children in the way of the Lord a priority.
7. We spend countless hours and money to help our kids excel in sports and other extra curricular activities which are only temporal, but how much of an effort do we make to help them excel in their relationship with God?
8. We, as parents, must recognize our responsibility to raise and instruct our children, and make it a priority in our lives.

B. The Requirement

1. Proverbs 22:6 tells us the requirement for instructing our children. "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old, he will not depart from it."
2. What is this verse telling us about training our kids?
3. "**Train up**" The original root work is the term for "the palate, the roof of the mouth the gums." It is the term used for breaking and bringing into submission a wild horse by a rope in the mouth.
 - a. The term "train up" was also used in the days of Solomon to describe the action of a midwife who, soon after helping deliver a child, would dip her finger into the juice of chewed or crushed dates, reach into the mouth of the infant, and massage the gums and the palate within the mouth to create a sensation of sucking, and a sense of taste. The juice was also believed to be a cleansing agent in the newborn's mouth. The midwife would then place the child in the mother's arms to begin nursing.
 - b. As time progressed, this phrase for "bringing into submission" and "developing a thirst" came to be known as "dedicate," or "consecrate".
4. "**Child**" The term child is broad. Throughout scripture, the Hebrew word for child is used to describe many different ages. It covers all the years the child is under the roof of the parent, every age from infancy to young adulthood. The entire time is called the period of being "trained up".
5. As parents, we are to train up, create a thirst in, build into the child the experience of submission in all ages of children in our home.
6. "**In the way he should go**" The term "in" means "in keeping with". The NAS says in the margin literally "according to his way". "Bring up a child as you see him" He is saying, "If you want your training to be godly and wise, observe your child, be sensitive and alert so as to discover his way and adapt your training accordingly."
 - a. Both Psalm 7:12 and 11:2 use the same word "way" to describe an archer with his bow and arrows. Psalm 11:2 describes the wicked bending the bow before they let the arrow fly to the target. "Bent" or "bending" the bow is the same word in verb for translated "way" in Prov. 22:6.
 - b. So the proper understanding of the verse would be: "Train up a child in the way he should go (and in keeping with his individual gift or bent), and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Amplified Bible)

7. In every child there is a bent or set of characteristics that are already established. The bent is fixed and determined before the child is ever born. As the child grows and develops his/her particular bent is able to be seen by others.
8. The parents who are wise and sensitive come to know and understand their child's particular bent, and then fit their training accordingly. They help their children discover the path in life that has been uniquely designed for him or her.
9. **"When he is old he will not depart from it"** The word "old" means "hair on the chin". It literally means "bearded one". A man begins growing a beard when he reaches maturity. So when your child reaches maturity, when he is ready to leave home he will not depart from his training.
10. It will take concentration on your child and time spent with your child to meet this requirement and make it a reality. (A study ...9 seconds per day with fathers)

C. The Reward

1. There is great reward in raising godly children.
2. Proverbs 23:24-25 says, "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice."
3. The Bible says that our reward as parents will be joy. You and I will look at our children and we will be overwhelmed with joy over what God has done in their lives.

Illustration:

The whale under pursuit turned and rammed the whaling ship with such impact that it began to sink rapidly. The life boats were loaded and lowered and managed to pull away to safety. No sooner were all the men at a safe distance than two of them jumped into the water and swam back to the ship about to go down. Only with great difficulty and at great risk did they salvage what was worth more than their lives...the compass. Whatever else was lost, they needed the compass, for it was their life to guide the way through the trackless sea.

Application:

More than anything else, our children need the compass of God's word. We must make learning and instruction a priority in our families, if we are to be a godly family.

III. Limits

If we let our children grow up without limits, boundaries, consequences, responsibilities and accountability, we are guaranteeing them a lifetime of heartache and disaster. Rather than causing your child to question your love, discipline confirms your love. A child who lives with consistent, fair correction learns that you value him or her. When you care enough to set healthy limits, take the time to enforce the rules, and model the things you expect, children grow up much happier and more secure than those who are given virtually free reign.



Numerous tests have proven that well-loved yet justly disciplined children are healthier, and they mature to be more productive, secure adults than those raised in ultra-permissive environments.

A. The Concern

1. When we set limits for our children, it shows that we are concerned about them.

2. Proverbs 13:24 says “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves Him disciplines Him promptly.
3. The Bible also says that if we care for and love our children we will discipline them. The Bible also says that if you don’t discipline them, you must hate them because you are doing the worst thing in the world for them.
4. A child senses that parents care for him when they stand their ground and maintain the parameters or limits they have established.
5. The emphasis of discipline is on love, because that is the way God disciplines His own children. (Prov 3:11-12) Someone once said, “There is no love without correction, and there is no correction without love.” Love demands discipline, and discipline is carried out by love.
6. The word “promptly” in Proverbs 13:24 originally meant “dawn, early in the day”, to pursue something early in life.
7. We are to love our children and show concern for them and discipline them beginning early in life. Why? Proverbs 22:15 says “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”
8. Children are born in need of limits. The Bible says that they are bound up with foolishness. “Fools despise discipline and have no respect for authority, they are determined to go their own way. Without limits, it will only accelerate.
9. The bible says in Prov 19:18 to “chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.”
10. Correcting character faults and setting limits on children must begin when they are young. when the child is young and impressionable, there is hope for improvement. (Analogy of tree: the tree can only be bent and shaped while it is young, once it is grown, it can no longer be shaped.) The same is true for a child. If a child grows up to be a rebellious person, only the Lord Jesus Christ can produce a radical change in his nature and heart.

B. The Correction

1. Physical

- a. Once we have shown concern and love for our children by setting limits, we must teach them that there are consequences if they break those limits and we must provide the correction.
- b. Look again at Proverbs 22:15 “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”
- c. The word “rod” sounds harsh, but in the Hebrew, it literally means club. It is the same word used for scepter which signified the rule of the King and the staff with which a shepherd kept his lambs under control. Not only is this a beautiful parallel of the way our shepherd Jesus Christ cares for and disciplines us, it provides us with a vivid picture of our responsibility to “rule” our offspring righteously, and to use the “rod” only as much as it is necessary to keep our children (sheep) moving in the right direction.
- d. This verse calls for an instrument when disciplining one” children, because children connect the pain to the instrument and not to the person carrying out the discipline.
- e. In Proverbs 26:3, the bible says, “And a rod for the fools back.” That verse tells us where we should apply our instrument of discipline. The Hebrew word for the

back in that verse refers specifically to the “backside” or “seat” of the human being. The method of discipline is a brief spanking on the bottom.

- F. No form of discipline should ever do violence to a child, and discipline should not be carried out when a parent is out of control.
- G. Proverbs 23:13-14 says, “Do not withhold correction from a child for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die, you shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.” This passage recognizes that punishment can be a form of love and that parents who refuse to discipline their children may ruin them. Refusing to discipline our children is like setting back and watching them head for destruction. Discipline provides deliverance from hell (sheol) the place of death or the grave. It delivers them both physically and spiritually.
- H. When the rod of discipline is used in God’s way with the right motive, firmly and briefly, no permanent damage will remain. Instead, it will drive the foolishness out of a child.

2. Verbally

- a. There must be verbal correction alone with physical correction.
- b. A child needs to know why they are being disciplined. Physical correction without instruction from God’s word is a waste of time.
- c. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, “My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction. For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.
- d. Verbal correction is not a tongue lashing or a speech, the Hebrew word for correction means “to prove, to convince.” We use God’s Word as a basis and convince our children verbally that wrong is bad, it cannot be tolerated, and it must be punished.
- e. The word “delight” means to “approve of someone, to respect’. It means “to admire or affirm.” Does your child know you admire them or affirm them? Affirmation works wonders.
- f. Not only does your child need physical correction, they also need verbal correction and instruction. They also need parents who will love them, encourage them, and affirm them, so that every interaction with the parent isn’t negative.
- g. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 29:15, 17 that if we maintain a proper balance between physical correction and verbal correction, we will experience a great reward. Listen to these verses. Proverbs 29:15 “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” Proverbs 29:17, “Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight in your soul.”

C. The Consistency

- 1. For our limits to work, there must be consistency in carrying out those limits.
- 2. To be consistent we must:
 - a. Establish the rules, the limits, and let the child know what is expected.
 - b. We should carry out our discipline in private. The discipline is between the parent and the child, not the entire world.
 - c. After we carry out the discipline we should have the child and show expressions of love.
 - d. We should be reasonable. We cannot demand perfection with our children.
 - e. We must not bring up past wrongs, instead we should show love and grace.

3. A home that sets limits, and carries out the correction needed when those limits are broken in a consistent manner will make an unforgettable impression on every child in that home.

I had the meanest mother in the world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs and toast. When others had a Coke and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my dinner was different from other kids.

My mother insisted on knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing. She insisted that if we said we'd be gone for an hour, that we would be gone one hour or less.

I am ashamed to admit it, but she actually had the nerve to break the child labor law. She made us work!! We had to wash all the dishes, make beds, learn to cook, and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she lay awake nights just thinking up mean things to do to us.

She always insisted on us telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. By the time we were teenagers she was much wiser, and our life became even more unbearable.

None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us to no end by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. I forget to mention, while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 and 13, my old fashioned mother refused to let date until I was 15 and 16.

My mother was a complete failure as a mother. None of us has ever been arrested, or beaten by a mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of his country. And who do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother.

Look at all of the things we missed. We never got to take part in a riot, burn draft cards and a million and one things that our friends did. She made us grow up into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my children. I stand a little taller and am filled with pride when my children call me mean. You see, I thank God He gave me the meanest mother in the whole world.