



The book of Proverbs is classified by biblical scholars as “wisdom” literature. According to the opening chapter, Proverbs was written for the purpose of “attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; and for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life.” The pursuit of wisdom is a value highlighted throughout the scriptures. As an earlier verse in Proverbs 4 instructs, “Wisdom is supreme. Therefore, get wisdom.”

*How is the establishment of healthy boundaries connected to our pursuit of wisdom? What boundaries do you have in place that are specifically designed to “guard your heart”? Are there areas of your life where you might be vulnerable right now?*

*Who stands out in your mind as a person of wisdom? If your heart truly is “the wellspring of life,” what changes might the wise person suggest you make to protect that source of life?*

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## GPS for Families

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Expect frustration when setting clear boundaries for your children. Kids will get frustrated by the limits you place on them and act out emotionally. They may become sad or angry or throw a fit. Here is where you have to be clear on your values. Are they guided by the emotional reactions of a child, or are your values based on clear principles that are meant to raise an adult with character who loves God and others?

Always decide ahead of time what you are trying to achieve. Then prepare yourself for the emotional reaction that is certain. People change when the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of change. Athletes suffer through rigorous and painful training so they can get better, not stay the same. Your job is not to help your children avoid pain but to learn to use that pain to become stronger, wiser, better. This means you will experience pain as well. It is not fun to watch your children suffer, but we do it out of love for them and a desire to help them grow into healthy adults.

Re-read Galatians 6:7-10 from earlier this week. Pray that God will help you to not grow weary in doing the right thing for your children. When you are at your weakest, remember that where you are weak, God is strong. And He is big enough, even for your parenting.

MESSAGE “The ‘D’ Word (Disciplines)”

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

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**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness . . . and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22,23)**

1. The truth is your friend!
  2. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not for the lazy!
  3. Accepting the principle that I cannot live without God at the center of my life
  4. Finding pleasure in self-sacrifice rather than sacrificing to self
- Praying for the purpose of spending uninterrupted time with God
  - Reading the Bible to engage the voice of God
  - Stretching spiritual muscles through giving
  - Serving in an area outside your zone
  - Journaling life with God
  - Fasting

### PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*Holy and loving God, we confess that we sometimes live with more faith in ourselves than we place in you. The assumptions that we make about our own strength sometimes lead us to take risks that we should not take and live in ways that we should not live. Forgive us for our prideful and rebellious ways and teach us that healthy boundaries not only protect us from destruction but direct us in the way that leads to life. AMEN.*

In his book *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas writes, "Christianity involves believing certain things, to be sure, but its herald, its hallmark, its glory is not in merely ascribing to certain intellectual truths. The beauty of Christianity is in learning to love." Paul's words in I Corinthians vividly illustrate what it means to love like Jesus loved.

In these verses, Paul clearly defines what Christian love looks like by identifying the activities that love inspires, as well as those that love prohibits. Take a moment to list out what Paul says love does and does not do in the context of our relationships with one another.

*As you review this list, how would you evaluate the way you are currently living out the love of Christ in your life? What do you need to start doing? What do you need to stop doing?*

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**Matthew 5:33-37**

Having the courage to say "yes" and the wisdom to say "no" is an essential part of developing healthy relationships. Often we find ourselves being coerced and manipulated by others because of our own insecurities and fears. Sadly, we often do the same thing to others. Jesus seems to be teaching that we should "say what we mean and mean what we say."

*Have you ever found yourself being pressured into saying "yes" when you really wanted to say "no"? How would you describe the damage that can cause? What do you think Jesus means when he says, "Anything beyond this comes from the evil one"?*

*Take a moment to consider what insecurities and fears might be preventing you from making the best decisions. Confess those to God and ask for help in letting your "yes be yes and your no be no."*

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**Matthew 18:15-17**

There are no relationships that are immune to conflict and misunderstanding. One of the clearest side effects of the sickness of our sin can be found in the fracturing of our relationships. Forgiveness is essential because of this shared condition. We are all sinners in need of grace from God and each other. In Matthew 18, Jesus lays out a process for the pursuit of reconciliation.

*In verse 15, Jesus advocates direct confrontation with the person who has sinned against you. Why would Jesus suggest this course of action? How would you define what it looks like to directly confront in a healthy and "grace-filled" way?*

*What do you think Jesus means when he says, "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over"? How can the achievement of reconciliation lead to an even deeper relationship with others?*

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**Galatians 6:7-10**

The principle that Paul teaches here to the church at Galatia is found throughout the scriptures. Jesus says it this way in the Gospel of Matthew, "Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."

This concept of "reaping what we sow" is often misunderstood. Some suggest that it should be understood as "God blesses the good and punishes the bad." In reality, both Jesus and Paul are pointing out that there are natural consequences to our actions that are revealed over the course of our lives.

*Can you think of an example of someone who "did not become weary in doing good" and eventually brought in a wonderful harvest? What have you learned from their example? Are you "sowing to please the spirit"?*

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