

Part 2: Exposed Hearts and Open Traps

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How well did your parents prepare you for life?

Whether you had good parents, bad parents, absentee parents or divorced parents, we all know either by positive or negative experiences that the job of a parent is not only to provide us with the essentials to live, but also to teach us how to live.

That's why cultures throughout history have had specific rites of passage for men and women. There was a goal in raising children where at one point a parent could have confidence that they equipped their children with the knowledge they need to survive and hopefully thrive in life.

In our modern world a lot of these rites have been taken out of the hands of parents and put in the hands of others. Driver's Ed teachers prepare our kids to drive. Teachers prepare them to learn and qualify them for life as a functional member of society. Therapists and counselors help them express and understand their experiences.

And while there's nothing insidious about any of these things, parents ought to recognize their unique responsibility in these areas for one key reason: no one loves their kids like their parents. No one is more invested in the safety and success of their children than a good mother and father.

Today in the book of Proverbs, Solomon is going to place all of us in the seat of a child who is about to transition to life in the world. He is going to prepare all of us, regardless of our age for a rite of passage. What is this rite of passage? What is the test that he wants you to pass so badly? The test of wisdom.

In this passage a father is preparing his son who is about to leave his home by reminding him of wisdom. Yet this father also knows that as soon as the child leaves the door, gangs of sinners await who want to lead the child astray: fools who entice with false joy and dangerous promises.

In the face of this rite of passage, Solomon wants us to hear his plea so that we might have true joy and not painful disaster.

Today we are going to be in Proverbs 1:8-19 and the big idea we are going to see today is this: **The wise person hears the counsel of grace and runs from the call of the sinner.** Our passage today is a monologue from a father to his son and in it we see three parts.

In verses 8-10 we are going to see **The Loving Appeal of the Father**, in verses 11-14 we see the, **The Violent Call of the Sinner** and lastly in verses 15-19 we see **The Wisdom of a Better Way.**

With that said, let's look at our first few verses today as we unpack our first point today: **The Loving Appeal of the Father.**

Read with me **Proverbs 1:8-10.**

So here we see the opening address from the father to us, his children and we can see that the father is doing three things with us in this text. First he calls us to remember what we've learned, then he offers the reward if we endure in it, and then in verse ten we see him appeal directly to our hearts.

He opens up by basically saying: "Your whole life has been building up to this, don't forget what you've learned." Like a coach before a big game or a commander before a battle, he's saying, "You've been trained for this."

The word for "hear" in Hebrew doesn't simply mean to listen, but to obey. In other words he doesn't just want us to hear for the thousandth time dad's anecdote on life, but instead he wants us to follow the instruction that he has given us up unto this point.

He does something pretty remarkable in this to in that he brings mom's voice into the teaching as well. You see it was common in wisdom literature at this time for the father to teach their sons but it is unique to Christian scripture that mom would participate as well. While God gives unique roles to both fathers and mothers, his goal is that both of them work together to train their children in the wisdom of God.

Both parents together are seen as issuing a warning but also an encouragement, they are saying, "If you remember what you've been taught, you're going to do great things."

As you Freshman in college start your first year, as you new parents begin a new stage, as you enter a political and economic culture like we've not seen before, remember that you've been given all you need to survive in the teaching of this father.

Now Solomon is assuming that we know what has been taught at this point. While there are lots of things that were probably taught, there was one central point of teaching that all Israelite households prioritized.

In the book of Deuteronomy we see Moses reminding God's people of God's grace to save them and the way in which that grace should lead them to trust and obey God. Time after time Moses reminds parents that they are to teach their own children of this deliverance as well. This culminated in what is called, *the Shema*. Shema is the Hebrew word for *hear*, the same word used in verse 8. This teaching was prayed each day in every Israelite home and look at the content of it: **Deuteronomy 6:4-15**.

What is the main thrust of all these parents have taught? That God alone is worthy of all of our love and obedience. Why? Because it's only God who can save us, and it's only God who actually promises to bless us. The constant teaching and instruction was this: Don't forget the God who graciously delivered us out of slavery and who called us to a land of blessing. Remember the joy that comes in obeying this God and all he has for us in this life.

The wisdom Solomon assumes isn't simply wise decision making and good career choices, it is preeminently the idea that God alone is our source of life and God's people are bound to him in a joyful reliance.

For us today we get the privilege of looking beyond the Exodus and the Promised Land, and we get to see how Jesus is the full and final redemption of God. Look at the faithfulness of this redemption in **1 Peter 1:3-4**.

The instruction and the teaching which we ought to hear and not forsake is that Jesus has proven his love for us in taking our sins and bringing us all the way back to God. We see the immense joy of not being brought into the Promised Land by the grace of the law, but brought back to God himself by the grace of the cross.

And that's where Solomon points out the reward: **Proverbs 1:9**. They, that is the wisdom of God's grace towards sinners in his covenantal love, will adorn those who obey them. Trusting God's salvation frames our head with a crown and our neck with beauty.

To continue to faithfully trust the salvation of this God is to be provided with a visible adornment of beauty and provision. The family heirlooms will always be there for you.

It's from this promise that Solomon begins what I think is his strongest plea: **Proverbs 1:10**.

What does Solomon assume here? He assumes that the call of mom and dad will not be the only call you hear. There will be the call of sinners. Their desire will be to entice you.

We have a very social five year old daughter. And at one point this summer we couldn't find her. I was running around the back yard, in the house, under the beds calling for her and she wasn't answering. Until finally I went next door where our neighbor was doing a construction project and she was over there chatting with the construction workers.

We also found out that it wasn't the first time she slipped out of the backyard and hung out over there. They had actually given her rules to keep and she knew when to cover her ears when they turned on certain equipment.

By God's grace, she wasn't in any danger, but my wife and I knew that this habit was dangerous for her. We knew that even though her heart wants to go out and explore the world, that there are people who do not want to care for her, but want to harm her and hurt her.

So we began to plead with her, "Addley you cannot do this." Why did we do this? Not because we didn't want her to not meet new people but because we love her and want her to be safe.

Notice what Solomon says, "when sinners entice you, do not consent." Both of those words, entice and consent, are heart words. He's not saying, "don't do it." He's pleading with us that when we leave the house and the gangs of sinners begin to persuade our hearts that we would want nothing to do with it. Meaning not only that we would not do it, but that we would want to not do it because we see it's danger.

But these sinners seek to entice us, they speak to our hearts offering the same joy as the Father. So if we want to not want their enticement, we must be taught to understand the nature of their call.

My wife took Addley and she explained to her the danger of what she was doing and she gave her this test. She said at the end, "Addley, if a man pulled up in a van and said that you should come inside because he has puppies, would you go?"

Addley replied, "I love puppies of course I would."

Now we laugh at this, but it reveals the need each of us have for this proverb. Why would Addley hear Sarah's lecture on the dangers of strangers only to run into the van of stranger? Because of puppies. Why would we consent when sinners entice? Because of puppies. You see both loving parents and enticing sinners offer the promise of joy to their children. Both seem to fight for the joy of the child. But one is rooted in love and the other is rooted in evil desire.

This is what the world offers. But Solomon, as a good parent, wants you to see the reality behind the call of the world so that you are wise enough to refuse it.

This is exactly what he's going to do next in our second part today: **The Violent Call of the Sinner**. And here we see again the benefit of wisdom literature. Wisdom literature wants us to have knowledge before we need it. It is preventative as well as prescriptive.

And I love what Solomon does here because he actually shows us the true message behind the words of those who call us to sin. Read with me our next section: **Proverbs 1:11-14**.

I've never watched it, but I've seen commercials for a show called, "Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist." The description of the show reads like this: "After an unusual event, whip-smart computer coder Zoey Clarke magically begins to hear people's innermost wants and desires through popular songs. Suddenly, strangers, friends, co-workers and family are unknowingly singing their feelings -- just to her. At first, Zoey questions her own sanity, but after some guidance from Mo, her musically attuned neighbor, and making a breakthrough with her ailing father, Zoey soon realizes this unwanted curse may just be an amazing and wonderful gift --as she now connects with the world like never before."

Why is this interesting to us and how does it allow her to connect to the world like never before? Because instead of just hearing what people are saying, she actually hears the intentions of their hearts. Wouldn't that change your life?

What if you could hear the true thoughts behind the seller of what might be a suspect good on Craigslist? Or you could hear the true desire behind the mechanic who says you need a whole new engine?

What would you do with such information?

Well here Solomon gives us a window into the true desire of those who come to us and promise us joy, and peace and satisfaction not in obeying God, but in choosing to live life apart from God.

What you might hear is your friends calling you to blow off steam after work with a few drinks, what you might hear is a co-worker saying "it's just a kiss," or the portrayal on TV that everyone does this to feel content, but what they are actually communicating is the violent intent and false hopes of those who refuse to see God's grace as what satisfies.

Who in listening to this appeal would actually believe these sinners? Who would actually think that those who violently ambush the innocent will actually keep their promise to share their wealth with you?

None of us! But wisdom is saying here as we will see in verse 19, that this is the language of all who are greedy for gain apart from God.

Behind the call of the world is the predatorial heart of sin. Sin is always violent. Sin always reverts to stealing the plunder of others. How so? Because sin is stole worship.

Sin looks to people and to things to provide what only God can provide. Which means sin sees those around them as tools they can use for their own salvation and satisfaction. In the name of comfort sin turns us into cannibals.

That's what Solomon is getting at isn't it. Look back at **Proverbs 1:12-14**.

Why will we sin against others and against God, so that we can take what is theirs and have it for ourselves? So come and join our spoil. Share this purse with us.

Just like the good parent, the sinners offer the adornment you want. The parents offer the simple and satisfying adornment of grace with garland and pendants, but these sinners want you to think that mom and dad are being cheap. There's far more to enjoy in the world. We will find what's ours and take what's not.

This is the same problem Adam and Eve ran into in the garden. The problem with sin isn't that we want satisfaction. The problem is that we believe the lie that God can't actually satisfy us. But God created us because he wanted us to be satisfied in him.

And if this restorative relationship to God is where we are finally and fully made whole through faith and repentance, then we can finally see that the calls of the world to plunder and precious goods are really calls for our own bloodshed.

In warning his own church of these gangs of sinners, Clement of Alexandria warned in the third century of a death. A death not that "severs the soul from the body, but that which severs the soul from the truth." To hear these sinners and to listen to them might not kill you in the moment, but to believe their lie is to be swallowed up in your own death eventually.

So what do we do? The father continues: **Proverbs 1:15-19**.

You don't even take a step on the way with them, you don't let your foot even go down that path. Why? Because why would you? Their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed blood.

If you can truly see the false promise of sin who is foolish enough to give it a try?

And it's here in these final verses we see our last point: **The Wisdom for a Better Way**. This father is going to continue to shed light on the lives of these sinners so that we would long to find a better life.

Proverbs 1:17-18.

Solomon pulls out all the punches here. Those who seek to call you into sin are those who seem to project that they have finally figured out the secret to joy. They are the modern philosophers who have cracked the meaning for life, only a fool would think that this life is not a life of joy!

But Solomon shows their absolute and biblical stupidity. He says this: If you were to lay a net out unconcealed, even the dumbest of all birds would have the natural inclination to avoid the trap. But here these sinners, boasting in their ability to find life, waltz into a neon trap.

Hunting season is starting up and people are putting on camouflage clothes, walking downwind of their prey, and spraying themselves with animal urine in hopes that they can sneak up on an elk. They do so because they know that any elk worth his antlers doesn't need to see the hunter, or hear the hunter, but only to smell the hunter before they realize they need to run.

Solomon here has fanned the scent, stripped the camo, and tripped the air horn of sin but how many of us still refuse to run.

Because God loves us, he gives us this wisdom so that we might run. Look at the parallels this proverb gives regarding those who live this way: **Proverbs 1:11, 1:18**.

You see it is the sinner who will ultimately be ambushed by his own folly. It is the sinner who will be surprised at his own judgment. It is the sinner who in thinking they've lived their best life now who will find themselves at loss of their own life.

And here is what the father closes with, will you hear his wisdom: **Proverbs 1:19**.

To be greedy for gain by the worldly standards is to have your life taken away by the very thing you possess.

You see you'll run into people who will offer you the thriving life. They will say, cast your lot in with us and we will all have one purse. You might get to keep all the money, keep all the accolades, keep all the affirmation, all the sexual partners, all the success, but those things cannot keep you.

But look at what **Ecclesiastes 7:11-13**.

Worldly wisdom promises preservation and precious good, but it's only godly wisdom which can preserve your life. So where do we look? Where can the crooked schemes of men be made straight? The work of God.

You see here's the beauty of a God like our God. Not only do we hear passages like Deuteronomy 4 which promise the divine provision of God in our lives. Not only do we read about the future reward an inheritance provided for us in Jesus.

But we see that Jesus loves us so much that he tripped the trap for us.

On the cross Jesus took the punishment of sin's trap so that you might see it and live differently. To not see the cross as God's wisdom revealed is to be as shortsighted as these men running headlong into an open trap. But to see Jesus' and the cross is to see the wages of your sin and the promise of his mercy. You get the privilege of seeing the lie of life exposed so that you might repent and choose life.

If you've never seen the grace of Jesus in tripping the trap for you, today is a great day. Today you get to realize that everything you needed in this world is freely given to you in Jesus. In him you are delivered

from the blood guilt of your own sin. In him you possess the only thing which gives life instead of taking it.

For those of you who have seen the wisdom of the cross laying bare the schemes of men, if sinners entice you, do not consent. Look carefully and constantly upon God's love for you in Jesus and choose to trust yourselves to the grace of the Father and not the gangs of the sinners.