Discipleship Groups — Level 8
WEEK 4

Wisdom for Living: Parenting Older Children and Young Adults

Welcome to Level 8 of our discipleship small groups. For this level, we have drawn from the Book of Proverbs and titled this series *Wisdom for Living."

> Proverbs 4:7 (NLT) tells us: *"Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment."*

The Book of Proverbs reminds us that God's wisdom was given so that we might know it and live it out. It is a comprehensive book. Proverbs invites us to go beyond mere knowledge and to cultivate a life guided by God's wisdom. We are at class four, and today we will study what the Book of Proverbs teaches us about parenting older children and young adults.

As parents, we know that raising children—whether they are young children, teenagers, or young adults—presents a great challenge. I have two children: a son who is 34 and a daughter who is 24.

In other words, a young woman, and a young man who is already married. To relate to them effectively, I need divine wisdom.

I believe that to approach this topic of parenting, we must consider several realities:

- We live in a rapidly changing culture.
- The influence of social media is growing by leaps and bounds.
- Drug use, anxiety, and depression are affecting this generation.
- Every day, the world drifts further away from Christian values.

Teenagers and young adults desire independence, even though many still depend on their parents emotionally or financially.

Another factor affecting the parent-child relationship is a lack of time. We live such busy lives that communication becomes difficult. Parents speak, but children do not listen; children express their struggles but feel their parents do not understand them.

Faced with this reality, we ask ourselves:

- To what extent should I intervene? When should I correct?
- How can I guide my children without controlling them?

We need more than knowledge: we need divine wisdom. The good news is that the Bible offers us firm principles for every generation. Proverbs teaches us that children need more than just material provision; they also need instruction, guidance, a good example, love, and wisdom.

Proverbs 22:6 (NLT) tells us*: "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it."* The challenge lies in raising young people who fear God, develop a personal relationship with Him, and are prepared to live responsibly.

When our children reach adolescence and then adulthood, a question arises—What is my role now as a parent?

Let us look at three pieces of advice found in biblical wisdom.

1. INSTRUCT WHILE YOU HAVE INFLUENCE

Proverbs 1:8 (NLT) tells us: *"My child, pay attention when your father corrects you; do not neglect your mother's instruction."*

As a pastor, I have met with parents whose young children are involved in drugs, alcohol, or a life far from God. Many desire an instant solution: they want someone to pray for their children or speak to them, hoping everything will change immediately.

However, when we examine how they arrived at that situation, we sometimes discover a lack of positive, consistent influence in the home. Perhaps the parents were consumed by work, while other environments and friendships ended up shaping their children. This is very sad.

This does not mean that every bad decision a child makes is the parents' fault. Each person is responsible for their own choices. But it does remind us not to waste the years when we can exert direct influence. The key word here is instruction.

Spiritual formation begins at home. While our children are under our roof, we have a unique opportunity to shape and instruct them. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Moses told the people of Israel that God's Word must remain in their hearts and that they should continually teach it to their children. Teaching about God should not be limited to Sundays. As parents, we must teach and live out the Word continually. Often, what our children see in us speaks louder than what they hear from us.

It is not just about reading Proverbs to them constantly, but about applying what we read so that they see a living example.

Our children need to see:

- How we seek God when facing problems.
- How we treat others, especially our family.
- How we manage money and fulfill our responsibilities.
- How we react when we are angry.
- And how we ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes.

In **2 Timothy 1:5**, the Apostle Paul recalls Timothy's sincere faith—a faith that first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Timothy became a great coworker with Paul, but behind that young man was a family that had sown and lived out the Word of God.

Question for reflection:

What are our children learning about God when they observe the way we live?

2. CORRECT WITHOUT DESTROYING THE RELATIONSHIP

Proverbs 15:1 (NLT) tells us: *"A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare."*

Correction is necessary, but the way we correct matters just as much. Some parents correct without wisdom, repeating the violent or hurtful methods by which they were corrected themselves. We may be right in what we point out, but Proverbs teaches us that we must communicate it in the right way.

Correction delivered with violence, anger, insults, or humiliation triggers a negative reaction and can deeply damage the relationship. The purpose of correction is not to vent our frustration, but to shape our children's character.

Ephesians 6:4 (NLT) tells us: *"Fathers, do not make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord."* In other words: correct them with divine wisdom. As our children grow, the way we relate to them must grow as well. A teenager needs boundaries but also needs to be heard. An adult child needs advice but also needs us to respect their decisions. That is why we must ask ourselves: Am I trying to shape my child, or am I simply trying to control him?

3. AS THEY GROW, OUR ROLE CHANGES

One of the most difficult stages for some parents arrives when their young children make decisions with which they do not agree.

As parents, we can offer advice, issue warnings, and express our opinions but we must also allow our children—especially when they are adults—to make their own decisions and live their own lives. That does not mean we stop loving them or that we call wrong things right. It means recognizing that they are now accountable to God for their own decisions.

Sometimes we want to force them to be like us or to live exactly as we do. But our responsibility is to guide them with love, not to control them or constantly make decisions for them. A parent who uses control as a parenting strategy may end up damaging the relationship with their children.

As they grow, our role changes. When they are children, we direct them and set boundaries. When they are teenagers, we continue to shape them, but we listen and explain more. When they are adults, our influence depends largely on the relationship we have built with them: we offer counsel, pray, walk alongside them, and respect their decisions.

A successful parent is not one who controls every outcome, but one who shapes their children at every stage using the discipline and instruction that come from God, and who learns to trust in God's work in their lives.

CONCLUSION

As our children grow, we too must grow and adjust our role. As parents, the best thing we can do is gain wisdom. Let us be the parents our children need:

- Parents who live out what they teach.
- Parents who instruct and correct with wisdom.
- Parents who know how to both advise and listen.
- Parents who pray for their children and strive to maintain a good relationship with them.

Remember: Instruct while you have influence and correct without destroying the relationship.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Gather in your small group and answer the following questions:

1. What has been one of the greatest challenges of raising children in this generation?
2. What is the difference between shaping and controlling?
3. How can we maintain a good relationship with an adult child who is making poor decisions?
4. What can our children learn simply by observing our lives?
5. Is there anything we need to change in the way we relate to our children?

CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK

- Identify one concrete action you can take this week: Listen more. Criticize less. Ask for forgiveness. Offer affirmation.
- Have a conversation you've been putting off. Pray daily for your children.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give me wisdom to shape my children. Help me know when to speak, when to listen, when to correct, and when to wait. May my life be an example that draws them closer to You. Give me the grace to love without controlling and the conviction to guide them in Your truth. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

That concludes today's lesson.
We hope that everything we have shared proves truly beneficial to your life.

See you in the next lesson.
Blessings!