

How to Bring up Children – Build Strong Foundations – Proverbs 6:20-35

INTRODUCTION

Foundation is the most important part of any building project. Without a strong foundation, the building will collapse and fall; maybe not be soon but it will fall some time in the future. Once the weak foundation decays and crumbles into dust or slips into the underground stream, the building will collapse easily. It does not matter how beautiful the building is; the beauty of the building with all its expensive facades and trimmings cannot do the job of the foundation. These beautiful trappings are merely decorations and are not meant to support the load of the heavy building. The marble columns with their Corinthian crowns coated with 24 carat gold leaf look very good and strong but they too will collapse like a house of cards once the foundation is destroyed.

How much more valuable are the lives of our sons and daughters? If they do not have firm foundations, they will be destroyed before our very eyes. Can we stand by helplessly and witness the foundation of our children's lives crumble into dry dust because of the onslaught of the world bombarding against their hearts and minds, demanding that they embrace their cries of carnality? It is a no brainer that the world is a very attractive place. It draws us like bees to honey and rain flies to lamps. Our mortal flesh depends on this earth for survival. The things of this world affect all our five senses. The cold and the heat, the hard and the soft, the tasty and the bland and many other such phenomena draw us in and capture our minds and hearts in ways that all of us have experienced. What must be done in the lives of our sons and daughters in order to ensure that these push and pull factors of this wicked and deceptive world do not ensnare them? A strong foundation is the answer to this life long struggle and problem.

The foundation of buildings is invisible to the naked eyes even though it carries the weight and height of the entire building. No matter what the load of the building is, the strong foundation must be able to take it with strength to spare. Likewise the foundation that we build in the lives of our children will also be invisible to our spiritual eyes. It is the most important part of our children's lives when it comes to battling against the manifold temptations of this sin-sick world. How strong our children's foundation is will be revealed in the years to come when they face the onslaught of the wicked world as adults.

What are the foundations that our children must possess?

I. Fearful Foundation – 14:26-27

Proverbs 14:26-27 (KJV) "In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. **27** The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Fear came into our lives when Adam sinned against God. The Bible says that Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard the voice of God in the garden (Genesis 3:8). Fear that causes us to sin is the negative or bad kind of fear that every believer must learn to overcome. Similarly, the fear that prevents us from doing what is right must be removed from our hearts. All of us have experienced fear before. But not everyone has experienced the fear of the LORD.

The fear of the LORD is the good kind of fear. It is the fear that saves. It is the fear that guards and protects us from sinning against Him. The Bible says here that "in the fear of the LORD", i.e. having the fear of the LORD inside, there is strong confidence which means assurance and safety and security. God's children shall have, i.e. possess, a place of refuge. The world's onslaught against him will be fierce and incessant. The only protection for life is the fear of the LORD that

he keeps in his heart. As long as this fear of the LORD remains in the hearts of our children, the LORD will keep them safe. No matter how strong the world's lures and temptations, this fear of the LORD will be potent enough to strengthen God's children against all of them.

The only way anyone can have this fear of the LORD in him is through salvation in Jesus Christ. There is no other way. That is why the name used here is "the LORD" and not just "God". This person already knows God who is his LORD. A covenantal relationship has already been established through Christ! This understanding is confirmed by the way that God calls such people "His Children." It is a father-son relationship that is the basis for this relationship. Hence, the LORD affords to all His children a place of refuge against the storms of life! Verse 26 is written using synthetic parallelism whereby the second line adds to the thought mentioned in the first line.

Verse 27 is also written in the pattern of a synthetic parallelism. The Bible says that the fear of the LORD is a fountain of life. This fear will bring forth life. This is a reference to both the spiritual and physical lives. Once the person is born again, he has life everlasting which is spiritual life. The journey of salvation always begins with the fear of God which leads inevitably to the acknowledgement of sin. In this sense, it is a fountain of life. But the continuous presence of the fear of the LORD in the heart of the child of God will also save the physical life of the believer. It keeps the believer from sinning against God. He knows that the LORD will chastise him if he sins. The LORD is no respecter of persons. Even the great Moses was chastised by the LORD when he committed a grievous public sin. He was barred from entering the Promised Land even though he led the people for 40 years. For Moses, a high standard of holiness was required of him. He sinned; he had to pay the price. The life of the believer is what Christ calls an abundant life. The abundance is not measured in terms of material things but spiritual. His life is a life of holiness. He seeks after eternal things, not carnal. His words are seasoned with salt. He knows where he ought and ought not to go. His relationship to things owned is healthy and godly. He relates well to all people including his enemies.

This enables him to "depart from the snares of death." He eschews evil. The entrapment of the evil one will be useless against him. He has the mind of Christ. He sees through the seductions of wicked women. He walks the straight and narrow path at all costs. He will not be bought with money. He is no lover of money. He flees from the traps that Satan sets for him, for he knows that at the end of it is death!

Verses 26 and 27 are in synthetic parallelism with one another. The foundation of the fear of the LORD protects and guards.

II. Righteous Foundation – 10:1-5

Proverbs 10:1-5 (KJV) "The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother. **2** Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. **3** The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. **4** He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. **5** He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame."

(Verse 1-antithetical parallelism) -- We all wish that when our children grow up, they would be wise and make us glad. Wisdom is the application of the right knowledge to all the various circumstances of life so that the result brings glory and honour to God. Using antithetical parallelism in verse 1 to demonstrate his point, Solomon declares that conversely, the foolish son is heaviness to his mother. The father is head of the house; he leads and guides the spiritual

direction of his house. Therefore, when the son is wise the father will be pleased, which also implies that the mother and all at home are also very pleased. When the son is foolish, i.e. not one with low I.Q. but one who sins and ruins his life by sinning, he brings pain and sorrow to his mother. The reason the mother and not the father is mentioned here is because mother's love is stronger than father's love. The mother carried the baby in her womb before he was born. The intimate relationship between mother and child is inexplicable and can never be fully comprehended. She will feel the greatest hurt when the child that she carried inside her has now sinned so greatly and without repentance. It is also true that all in the family will weep for him when he falls in sin but none more so than mother.

Who wants a wise son? Who wants a foolish son? It all depends on what foundation you lay in his heart as you bring him up!

- a. Building on top of the fear of the LORD is the life of righteousness. True treasure cannot be held with our hands. True treasure is called righteousness. It cannot be bought with money. It is a gift from God. (verse 2—antithetical parallelism)
- b. With righteousness in the child of God, the LORD will take care of all his physical needs. The LORD will not allow the child to suffer hunger. The LORD will cast away the substance, i.e. the perverse things of the wicked. This ensures the life of holiness in His child. (Verse 3—antithetical parallelism)
- c. If you want your child to be rich, then teach him to be diligent. In other words, the child of God will always be diligent. The wealth described here is more than just material. In the case of Israel, they were blessed with both spiritual and material. But in the church today, it is only spiritual wealth that is most important and material blessings are secondary. In the case of Israel, when the LORD blessed them spiritually, the physical blessings followed (see Deu 28). Hard work keeps the child of God from sinning because he does not have idle time to sin and do mischief. (Verse 4—antithetical parallelism)
- d. Summer time in Israel is the time of harvest. This is the only time. The life of a farmer depends critically on perfect timing. Once it is time to harvest, the crops must be harvested the moment they are ripe. If there is delay, the crops could be lost by wild animals, storms, flash floods or any other unforeseen calamities. The wise son knows the timing well and the urgency that comes with the perfect timing. He will not allow other events or activities to side track him from doing what is needful and right. After all the hard work of tilling the ground and then planting the seeds and then watering the field, and to not do the harvesting is foolishness. It is like throwing everything away after all the hard work has been put in. The foolish son cannot even think properly. He sleeps at the wrong time. He brings shame to the family by his foolish behaviour and slothfulness. (verse 5—antithetical parallelism)

III. Discerning Foundation – 19:27

Proverbs 19:27 (KJV) "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

Discernment is a rare virtue nowadays. The son is commanded to stop listening to instruction that will lead him astray and from obeying the Word of God which is described here as words of knowledge. There are no words of knowledge outside of God's Word. The word "knowledge" is not a reference to the knowledge of this world like science, arts, maths, etc. There is nothing wrong with the words of man as long as they do not cause the child of God to sin by departing from God's Word.

The struggle of the child of God has always been to either believe in the infallible and inerrant word of God or the words of fallible and errant man. This tussle will never end until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

We must build the foundation of biblical knowledge in the lives of our children so that when they grow up, they will possess discernment that will help them to listen to and obey the voice of God and not the voice of man!

IV. Early Foundation – 20:9-12

Proverbs 20:9-12 (KJV) “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? **10** Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD. **11** Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right. **12** The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.”

Talk is cheap. Saying the right things is often not the best measure of one who is truly righteous in the sight of man. The deeds of the child of God demonstrate the importance of early grounding in the construction of a man’s foundation. Do not begin late. The moment the parents are believers, the building must begin in their children’s lives.

- a. Can anyone say that he has made his own heart clean and that he is pure from his sins? This means that by his own ability and power, his sins have been cleansed and that they do not dirty him any longer. These are rhetorical questions that require one similar answer! NO ONE! (verse 9-synthetic parallelism)
- b. Man carries with him divers weights and measures when they do business. The only kind of people who carries divers weights and measures are those who intend to cheat. They use different weights and measures according to different situations. If they were to make a purchase, then they would make sure that they are at an advantage. When they are selling, they would make sure that they get more from selling less. Both practices are an abomination to the LORD. The customer will not know and would probably be cheated by these traders, but the LORD knows that they are cheats and that they take advantage of the poor. These evil ones will be punished for their deeds. (verse 10—synthetic parallelism)
- c. Even a child is known by his doings whether they are pure or whether they are right. Look at the behaviour of children. They act and do things innocently without any hidden motive and agenda. Teach them as early as possible what is right and what is pure so that when they grow up, they will hold on to their paths of purity and righteousness. (Verse 11-synthetic parallelism)
- d. The LORD made our ears and eyes. He knows what they both need to ensure the best result in our children’s growth. The Word of God is the way to go. The foundation is revealed by the deeds of our children when they become adults. (Verse 12—synthetic parallelism)

APPLICATION

- a. The foundation of the fear of the LORD is the life built upon the Word of God which in turn means the life that is founded in Christ Jesus.
- b. Living a righteous life is the essence of one who has the fear of God in his heart. This is the outward demonstration of the inward faith.
- c. To maintain his life of righteousness, he makes godly decisions. This is discernment. Discernment comes through the study of and obedience to God's Word.
- d. The building process begins at the earliest age possible. To procrastinate is to delay the building process. The danger of procrastination is to allow the world to have free reign over the moulding of our children's mind and heart. As long as our children are alive, we need to build firm foundations. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the fear of God abide permanently in the hearts of believers? Is it the work of man or of God? Is the fear of God crippling or liberating?
2. What is the best way for young parents to build strong foundations in their children's lives today? Is it the parents' duty to instil righteous living in the lives of their children, or is it God's work alone? Please explain your answer.
3. Can discernment be gained through other means apart from the study of God's Word? Do you have discerning children? Are you a discerning parent/person? What constitutes a discerning parent/person?
4. How would you advise a parent who became a Christian when his child is already 14 years old? Is it too late for him to teach and build strong foundations in the child's life? If it is not too late, give some suggestions for how this parent could begin to teach, assuming the child is not a believer.
5. What are some ways to teach our children the importance of keeping the Lord's Day holy so that they will continue to keep the Lord's Day holy all their lives? Are you doing what you are suggesting now?