

**Text: Proverbs 22:6**

**Title: “Street Smarts ... For Children”**

Well, we've been digging in the gold mine of wisdom known as the book of Proverbs where it says that wisdom is like a person crying out in the streets and paths of life, calling people to seek “Street Smarts” ... the wisdom of God for everyday life. We're not talking about the advice you get from a Chinese fortune cookie. We're talking about truth that comes from the very mouth of God.

**MEMORY VERSE - Proverbs 2:6 - For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

Most of the Proverbs were composed by King Solomon. The Bible says that Solomon was perhaps the wisest man on the face of the earth in his time. Kings from all the nations sent their wise men to learn from Solomon's wisdom. But if you read Bible history you discover that Solomon didn't always follow his own advice. Eventually his heart turned away from the Lord and he died a disillusioned man. But as our memory verse reminds us, true wisdom comes from the mouth of God and it was perfectly revealed in a human body in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus said in ...

**Matthew 12:42 - The Queen of the South ... came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.**

So the Proverbs bring us face to face with Christ because He is the embodiment of all wisdom. If you want wisdom ... if you want your life to be right, then you need to be right with Christ.

Open your Bibles to Proverbs 22:6. God's Word has wisdom for every imaginable sphere of life, including family life and particularly how to raise our kids. Proverbs 22:6 is one of the best known verses in Proverbs about parenting.

**Proverbs 22:6 - Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.**

I don't know about you, but I am troubled by the world where our kids and grandkids will live out their lives. We got a taste of that this past week right here in our own city where the FWISD administration handed down regulations supporting and reinforcing the transgender lifestyle in children and teens. We'll be sending out some information to you to help you know how to respond to this. We need to do everything we can to preserve our religious freedoms and the protection of our children from what is a perversion of God's creation. But we have to do more than that. We have to raise our kids not just to be good little, respectable boys and girls. We can't predict what kind of world awaits our kids, but we can raise them up to be strong in the Lord and leaders who will take the Gospel to this lost world and who will not be intimidated by the rising tide of evil.

Proverbs 22:6 gives us wisdom for raising our kids to live godly lives.

## 1. **THE COMMAND ... “Train up a child...”**

This word “train” isn’t what we usually take it to mean. The word means to dedicate or start out something or someone. It’s the picture of setting aside, narrowing or hedging in.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Maybe you watched the Kentucky Derby a couple of weeks ago. The jockeys walk the horse around the track to warm them up. When it’s time for the race to begin the horse is led into the starting gate ... they are pointed and hedged in by the gate so they start off at the right time and in the right direction. That’s the picture this word “train” paints for us. A child’s way is dedicated to and channeled in the path of God’s wisdom.

That is the command. Next there is...

## 2. **THE COURSE ... “In the way he (or she) should go...”**

This is the path, the way, the road they should take in life. Now generally speaking the Lord has a single way that all children should go. It is the path of wisdom, righteousness and fear of the Lord. The only other path is the path of foolishness.

**Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

We want our kids to stay off of that path and to find what Jesus called the narrow way.

**Matthew 7:13-14 - “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

And our job as parents is to use every tool at our disposal to help our children get started on this narrow way of God’s will. The verse literally says, “Train up a child in *his* (the child’s) way...” So we must help our kids get on the righteous path of God’s will for their lives. But here’s the huge challenge in parenting. Children are sinners, just like their parents.

**Proverbs 22:15 - Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.**

The fact is that left to our own way we will look for the broad path of sin, not the narrow path of righteousness. We will look for the easy path of godlessness, not the hard path of godliness. And that’s why we need Gospel-centered parenting. Gospel-centered parenting understands that the only thing that can change a sinful heart is the grace and mercy of God displayed on the cross of Calvary. So a parent’s greatest and most urgent assignment is to lead their children to Christ ... to repent of their sins and put their trust in the One who alone can save them and transform them.

So there's the command and the course. Next is ...

### **3. THE CONSEQUENCE – “when he is old he will not turn from it.”**

Here's the principle: When you train up a child in the way they should go you are starting them off in the right direction. And when you start them in this way they will have the best shot at fulfilling God's will and living on God's wise path in life.

I say “the best shot” because there are no guarantees. This principle is addressed to parents not children. Children then become responsible for the choices they make and the course their life takes. And sometimes they choose the wrong path. Many parents read this verse and it crushes them because they have done their best to train up their child in the way he or she should go, but when they grew up they turned from that righteous path. And parents feel guilty and wonder where they went wrong. Maybe today your heart aches for a son or daughter, a grandson or granddaughter who grew up in a Christian home but they have chosen to depart from the path their parents started them on. We never give up praying for them and we never give up hope that God can turn them back to the way they should go.

So let me show you from Proverbs ... **STREET SMARTS FOR RAISING CHILDREN:**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Think of these like Lego building blocks that are connected together. A while back Nan and I went in to Lego World over in Dallas and there was a life-size statue of Dirk Novinsky made entirely from Legos. I'm not smart enough for that so I'll use the kind our preschoolers use in their classes. Our children need...

- **Biblical instruction**

The greatest parenting tool we have is the Word of God. This Word has power for our lives as parents and for the lives of our kids. The Apostle Paul wrote to his partner in ministry, Timothy, to remind him of the power of God's Word for every area of life. The Word of God shows us what we need to know about...

**SALVATION - 2 Timothy 3:15 - From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

The Gospel teaches us that we're sinners in need of a Savior, that Christ came and died to pay the price for our sins and that He rose again unleashing the power that changes a person's life.

**SANCTIFICATION - 2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,**

God's word shows us the way through teaching. When we get off of the way it rebukes us, then it shows us the way back to God's path through correcting. Then it shows us how to stay on God's path by training us in righteousness.

**SERVICE - 2 Timothy 3:17 - so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

That's what we want for our children. We want them to be equipped for the good work God has for them. So for your child's salvation, sanctification and service to God give them biblical instruction. Also our children need...

- **Consistent discipline**

Discipline comes in many forms. Sometimes it's verbal correction when they display behavior that isn't in keeping with the word of God and the rules of the family. Sometimes it's verbal encouragement when they have done well. And when verbal forms of correction don't get their attention, sometimes punishment is necessary ... taking toys away from them, taking away certain privileges for a period of time, and, yes, sometimes physical punishment. The Bible is not opposed to physical punishment like spanking.

**Proverbs 13:24 - He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - When our girls were little and still learning how to behave we sometimes used a little wooden spoon to swat them to get their attention when other forms of discipline didn't work. Nan kept that wooden spoon in her purse. When we were out in public and one of the girls didn't respond to "the look" (how many of you remember "the look") then she gently pulled the spoon part of the way out of her purse. They got the message.

Notice this kind of discipline must be used with love. If all children get is punishment and they never hear affirmation then discipline will not be effective. However, if correction is given in the context of a loving relationship then it actually gives kids a great sense of security to know that there are boundaries. That's why our children need...

- **Unconditional love**

**This love is communicated through time, telling and touch.**

Children feel this unconditional love when we spend quality and quantity of time with them. They feel love when we tell them we love them. They feel love when we show physical affection to them. And this is important because we want to establish the next thing they need:

- **Heart connection**

## **Proverbs 23:26 - My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways,**

When you're fully engaged with your child in biblical instruction, consistent discipline and unconditional love you are forging a heart connection with your child. Your children need you to do more than just tell them the right thing to do. If your walk with God is not a heart thing, you will not be able to impress it on your children. The verse says, "Let your eyes keep to my ways." And that leads to the next thing our kids need...

- **Positive example**

There's a great illustration of that in the NT. Again, Paul writes to His ministry partner Timothy to encourage him to stay on the righteous path of the faith:

**2 Timothy 1:5 - I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.**

Notice that the faith Timothy possessed first "lived" in his grandmother and mother. We don't want to pass along a dead faith to our kids. We want to live this faith in ways that kids can see it in the way we behave and talk and relate to others.

And here's what our kids need above all:

- **Persevering prayer**

I think about the many times that parents brought their children to Jesus. On one occasion a man named Jairus had a daughter who was deathly ill. He ran to Jesus and fell at His feet...

**Mark 5:23 - and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."**

So we need to pray with our kids and teach them to pray. We have to pray for our kids ... for their salvation ... for their protection ... for their wisdom ... for the influences around them ... for their future mates ... for the choices they make ... for their forgiveness and restoration when they stray from the path they should go.

If we train up a child in this way ... with biblical instruction and consistent discipline and unconditional love and a heart connection and a good example and all covered with persevering prayer ... we can trust God to guide them and guard them and grow them and give them grace. And when they stray from the path they will hear the voice of God...

**Isaiah 30:21 - Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."**

Have you stepped on to the narrow path of following Jesus? Maybe your parents or grandparents showed you that way, but you have turned from it. Turn back to God and the life He created you to live in His Son Jesus Christ.