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“Raising Responsible Children, Part 4”

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Proverbs 3:11-12

**11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction;
12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.**

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our continuing subject has to do with the academic achievement gap between children in our community and those in the majority community. We are discussing methods of preparing our children to bridge this achievement gap, bringing our academic achievement level up to par with that of the larger culture.

In previous sermons, I have made the point was that children actually need two parents, one male and one female, in a hands-on relationship, and children are best served if the two parents are actually married to one another. **Hebrews 13:4** tells us:

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

I have also made the point that infants and toddlers do better with a hands-on supervisory parent than they do in an institutional setting, such as a day care center. Children younger than school age are simply not emotionally prepared for an institutional setting; the design of God is that a child be raised by a hands-on parent that can devote their primary attention to the child when attention is needed. God makes the point rhetorically, in **Isaiah 49:15**, in which God tells us:

15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

The point that I wish to develop today is that in order for children to succeed academically, children need character development prior to and in parallel with academic development. Our text, **Proverbs 3:11-12**, says:

**11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction;
12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.**

The Lord corrects errors in character development. In His Word, God gives us objective principles for behavior that He expects us to follow. The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes,

found in Matthew chapter 5, and the New Testament epistles have nothing to do with academics, but describe to us the character with which we are to live our lives.

Academic success has to do with the ability to remember objective facts: character development has to do with applying objective Biblical principles properly in order to live in the way that God has ordained. Character development allows us to know whether or not it is proper to do that which we desire to do.

It is relatively easy to obtain knowledge; God equips us with a brain that can retain any information acquired through simple rote memorization. Neither of my parents have any musical aptitude, but when my two brothers and I were toddlers, my mother decided that we would learn to play the piano. My brothers and I started taking lessons when I was four years of age, and although we had no hereditary talent, all three of us became skilled musicians through rote memorization and persistent practice.

I am of the opinion that any person of average intelligence can learn any skill if given enough exposure to the techniques required and enough practice. Desire to learn a skill plays a certain role when we become old enough to decide whether or not we want to learn, but if a child's training is started before they have reached the age of willfulness, spaced repetition will allow the child to learn the skill by the simple training of muscle memory. If any person of average intelligence repeats information enough times, they will memorize the information. In the Methodist church in which I grew up, the communion liturgy involved reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah responsively. On the first Sunday of virtually every month from the time I was six until I was fourteen, I read this chapter of Scripture along with the rest of the congregation in the church. I memorized the 53rd chapter of Isaiah by simply reading it in a liturgical setting once a month for eight years, and I still know it today, some 40 years later, because of that early training.

Both physical training and information retention are matters of persistent practice, so the question of how our children can match the academic skill level of those of the larger community is not really a mystery. All it requires is sufficient exposure to academic subjects.

In the mid 1950's, when my brothers and I were starting school, my parents bought a home in a subdivision on the far south side of Chicago. One of the major expressways in Chicago divided the neighborhood; the new subdivision to the south of the expressway was a predominantly Black community, while the older, established subdivision to the south of the expressway was predominately White. My father picked this neighborhood because the neighborhood school was in the White community, so that we could go to school with White children. My father told me that the important thing was for me to be in class with them. Dad used to tell us, "If you are in the class with white kids, you'll get the same books and you'll hear the same things that they do. If you're in the classroom, the teacher can't teach around you."

Children in the African American community by and large have the intellectual ability required to match the learning level of those in the majority community, given similar circumstances. If we are in the room with them; if we have the same books and listen to the same lectures, we cannot be taught around, and we will have the capacity to remember the same information as anyone else in the class.

In my opinion, a lack of intellectual ability in our community is not the reason for the achievement gap. We seem to have no problem learning whatever we want. So, if we fix the problem of character development, the academic problem will virtually fix itself.

Proverbs 3:11-12, says:

**11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction;
12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.**

Chastening and correction has to do with creating respect for authority in the person being chastened. The key to a successful learning environment is that the learner show respect for the authority of the teacher, without which the learner will tend to not be receptive to the lessons being taught. Long before I reached the classroom, my parents provided a learning environment for me. I was born into a home in which my parents were married, provided me with a stable environment, and disciplined me to be respectful, to listen and to learn. Since my parents had the objective of developing character in me, they made sure that I was chastened and corrected if I chose to treat someone disrespectfully, which motivated me to deport myself properly. Once my character development was in place, I saw the benefit of disciplining myself to acquire the information that the adults in my environment were trying to import to me.

Proverbs 22:6 instructs parents that the job of developing a learning environment before the child reaches formal academic training, is the job of the parents. It says:

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

That first training should be spiritual character training rather than academic training.

2Timothy 3:14-17 tells us:

**14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

Spiritual character training prepares us for every good work, including academic training. We learn both the techniques of learning and reverence for learning as we initially learn about God, and the character development that our spiritual training gives us prepares us to pay attention to the academic training that is to come later. It is important to remember that academic training is a matter of rote memorization, but we develop the wisdom and the discipline to perform the tasks required to succeed academically as a function of our parental guidance, which is inspired by God.

God is the one that prepares us by giving us the ability to succeed on the intellectual level. An excellent example of this preparation is given in the Old Testament by the example of the great King Solomon. Solomon, one of eighteen sons that David fathered, was David's son by Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David conspired to have Uriah killed in battle in order to marry Bathsheba, which was a great sin before God. The sinfulness of the union notwithstanding, David's faithfulness to God in repenting of the sin that he committed made Solomon one of God's favorites. **2Samuel 12:24-25** records:

24 Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she

bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, 25 and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Jedidiah, in the Hebrew, means “Beloved of the Lord”, which Solomon certainly was. When Solomon became king after the death of his father, there was a great deal of intrigue involved in the kingship of Israel. David, after forty years, was used to all of the plots and counterplots involved in keeping control of the Kingdom, but Solomon was an inexperienced neophyte in matter of state. Solomon had many enemies within the kingdom, including some of his brothers, that want his throne and were willing to overthrow him. So Solomon used the character training that he received from his father, who was a man after God’s own heart. **1Kings 2:1-4** records:

1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying:

2 “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

3 And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;

4 that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

David told Solomon that God gave the instructions that a King would need to be successful in His Word, and in addition to instructions, the Lord also gave a promise to intervene in matters of state on behalf of kings that were faithful to Him. Since Solomon had the charge from his father to call upon the Lord, he took advantage of the instructions and did so. **1Kings 3:3-9** records:

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

4 Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?”

6 And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.

8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.

9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

Solomon recognized his need and asked for the ability to understand, to judge, and to discern the difference between good and evil. When our children go to school, this is exactly the

ability that they need. In secular institutions, some of the information that our children have to learn in order to succeed academically is not Biblically or spiritually accurate, and will not lead them to success in later life. As well as the ability to absorb information, our children need understanding and discernment.

Our children also have pressure from their peers to forsake the path upon which the Lord wants them to travel. To keep from being adversely affected by either inaccurate information or peer pressure, our children need understanding, judgment and discernment. Our children can receive these attributes by submitting to the discipline of Godly parents. **Ephesians 6:1-3** says:

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:

3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

Whether we are children or adults, we are blessed to have a God that we can ask for wisdom when we need the ability to discern between good and evil, to judge right and wrong, to understand whether we are walking on the path the He has ordained or not. Solomon asked God, in **1Kings 3:3-9**, for the wisdom which he needed to rule well. God responded, in **1Kings 3:10-14**:

10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

God gave Solomon His objective Word, His statutes and commandments, so that Solomon would know what to do. Before and as we ask God for wisdom, it is intelligent to consult the wisdom that God has already given us. Along with the instructions from the Word, God gave Solomon an understanding heart to apply the Word properly to the situations to which his kingship would lead him. Solomon immediately exhibited the understanding that God gave him, in adjudicating the problem presented to him in **1Kings 3:16-22**:

16 Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him.

17 And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house.

18 Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house.

19 And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him.

20 So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

21 And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne.”

22 Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son.” And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son.” Thus they spoke before the king.

Do you remember the scripture that I quoted earlier, in **Isaiah 49:15**, in which God tells us:

15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

The principle that God gives us in *Isaiah 49:15* is that a mother generally has compassion for her nursing child. There are some cases in which a mother may lack compassion, but the Scripture indicates that that is not the normative case. Solomon was faced with two women arguing over the maternity of a child, and to settle the argument, Solomon developed a test to ascertain which woman would show compassion to the child in accordance with the Scripture.

1Kings 3:23-25 records:

23 And the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’ ”

24 Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword before the king.

25 And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other.”

Solomon’s test is on point. Because of guilt and grief cause by her loss, the dead child’s mother would be unlikely to have compassion for the living child or the living child’s mother. She was already trying to take her housemate’s child from her. Solomon concluded that if he offered to deprive them both of the child, the woman that had already lost her child would vote to deprive her housemate of her child. The women reacted as Solomon anticipated, as **1Kings 3:26** records:

26 Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!” But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him.”

After seeing the reaction of the women, the solution became obvious. **1Kings 3:27-28** records:

27 So the king answered and said, “Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother.”

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

Solomon called on God for wisdom, and God granted him his request. However, the beginning of the wisdom that God granted Solomon was found in **1Kings 3:14**, in which God says:

14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

We need to raise our children using the Godly wisdom designed to produce good character. Programs that provide our children with academic enrichment will only be effective if the child involved in the program has developed the character traits that will motivate him to study diligently and take advantage of the academic enrichment provided.

So, our real problem is not a deficiency of knowledge, but a deficiency of character. The knowledge is always available if the character can be corrected. God is fully in control of our environment, and can reverse the trend of negative consequences at any time, but His Word tells us that He will only do so when we repent of the sins that we condone.

We cannot have immorality as the norm in our society and expect that God will bless our children as He did when we lived in a time in which the moral standard of society was more to His liking. The solution for a deficiency of character is repentance, which is a fundamental shift in our thinking. This is the only solution for the problems that we have in our institutions of learning. Just as David told Solomon that adherence of the principle of God's Word is the key to having a Davidic descendent on the throne, God told Solomon that the people of the land would also need to repent in order for the Kingdom to flourish. In **2Chronicles 7:12-18**:

12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.

13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

15 Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

16 For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

17 As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments,

18 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man as ruler in Israel.'

If we examine the history of our nation, we will find that the providential hand of God was involved in the establishment of the United States of America. This one nation under God, with the ideal of liberty and justice for all, has grown great because of the prayers and the devotion to God of its' citizens. The problems that we see are the fulfillment of the rest of the passage, **2Chronicles 7:19-22**:

19 "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them,

20 then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

21 "And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and this house?'

22 Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity on them.' "

The foundation of the nation is the family.

As we move away from the Biblical familial paradigm, and no longer consider it immoral that more and more of our children are born out of wedlock, born as the products of poor

character, we can look for God to react negatively. As fornication and adultery become more and more acceptable as norms of behavior, we can expect the foundation of our nation to continue to crack. We see that the instability of the home has moved into the institutions of learning to which the illegitimate parents send their children, and then into the larger society, as the Lord chooses to uproot the nation that has forsaken Him. God's laws are not just arbitrary rules, but affect the way that we function, much like the law of gravity. We can no more discard God's laws about marriage and family life, live intentionally immoral lives and expect to have a good outcome than we can step off of the roof of a two story building and expect to fall up.

God, however, has made a provision for those of us who have come to the repentant realization that we have been living life backwards. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born of a woman, to give us a magnificent example of a perfect and sinless life that we can emulate. Then He sent His son to the Cross of Calvary to complete the great transaction of salvation that allowed Jesus to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed. Paul tells us, in **Romans 8:1-2**:

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Just as God gave Solomon a spirit of wisdom and understanding, Jesus Christ has given us a spirit that allows us to be free from the death caused by sin, as **Romans 6:23** says:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The transaction that improves us, both in the case of Solomon and Jesus, is one that changes our character, rather than our academic ability. While it is good to have programs that give us more academic opportunity, in my case, while it was good for me to go to an integrated school and sit next to white children to have the same opportunity to learn that they had, the opportunity will do us little good without the moral and spiritual preparation that we need, and that comes from the parents in the home before the child reaches school age. **Romans 8:5-6** tells us:

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Just as God gave Solomon wisdom, so God gives us access to life and peace. We have the ability that we need, but we need to turn away from the things that God forbids us to have to the things that God wants for us.

We must discipline ourselves to be spiritually minded, as unpopular as that course of action may be with our peers, and take the long term view that the benefits of walking with God outweigh the passing pleasures of sin. **Romans 8:13-18** tells us:

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Secular solutions to spiritual situations are useless, like pain medication as a permanent solution for a rotted tooth. The medication may relieve the symptom temporarily, but the pain is going to return until the cavity is repaired or the tooth is pulled. The problem with academic achievement in our community will not be fixed by more books and better programs, but only by a fundamental change in thinking from the perspective of the willful world to the perspective of the Spirit of God. Those who fail in our community do not need to be smarter; they need to be better. The change that they need can only come by the Spirit of God.

John 3:16 tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus Christ is the answer to the question. It is time for us, like Solomon, to turn to God and His Son, Jesus Christ and discipline ourselves to His Word so that He will hear us from Heaven and heal the land. **Proverbs 3:11-12** tells us:

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