

# lesson five

APRIL 27–MAY 3

## Wise Words for **Families**

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*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths”  
(Prov. 3:5, 6, NKJV).*



A family walks towards the cross. The Bible says the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and there is no better place to receive this type of wisdom than the cross of Christ. It is there we see the height of love.

Prov. 3:5, 6

## Introduction

# *What Family Is About*

Our favorite family activity is to go snorkeling. Over the past five years, our family has had the privilege to serve as missionaries in the Philippines. So when we have a free day, we like to go to the beach, put on our fins and snorkels, and discover amazing sea creatures. I love looking for “clown fish” (made famous by the movie *Finding Nemo*), about which I’ve learned that there are many different varieties. What is consistent about them is that they always live near sea anemones.

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### **Together they protect one another; they help each other.**

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Anemones are actually quite dangerous—they sting and can even kill other fish. But the clown fish is immune to its poison, and in fact, seems to thrive within its tentacles. Together they protect one another; they help each other. In fact, they remind me of the distinct roles that each person has within the family according to the book of Proverbs. Each member of the family has a responsibility to look out for, listen, care, and nurture the precious relationships that make up a family.

This week we will look at the many different ways to have healthy, thriving families that we can learn from King Solomon. Whether we are young or old, single or married, we each have a distinct role to play in our familial relationships. By learning from these wise words, we can fulfill God’s plan for our lives. Of course, many people will reflect about not only their own family (perhaps their parents or grandparents) but, at this stage in life, the suitability of a life partner. This lesson has helpful words of wisdom about character traits to look for in a godly spouse. As you reflect upon the lesson this week, think about not only those traits you would seek in a spouse (for those who are single) but how you can strive for those things in your own life.

This week is an invitation, as you study the lesson, to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. As we grow closer to Jesus, we grow closer to one another in our familial relationships. All human relationships, for that matter, become much richer when Jesus is the foundation of the relationship—most important, in the home.

*Learning by Contrast*

Prov. 5:3–14; 10:15;  
13:24; 14:26;  
15:1, 18, 27;  
16:32; 29:15

***Loving the Right Woman (Prov. 5:3–14)***

In Proverbs we read about wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which all begin with fearing God. The “strange” woman of Proverbs 5 has lips that drip honey, and her words seem to be extremely attractive (verse 3). Nevertheless, all that apparent beauty and attractiveness ultimately leads to bitterness and remorse (verse 4). Men should keep themselves away from such women. In Proverbs 5:3–14 Solomon further explains the bad things that can happen if one falls into such temptation and reiterates, “Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave” (verse 5, NIV). Such a temptation should be viewed with

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extreme caution. The advice becomes an imperative in verse 8, “Keep your way far from her” (ESV), which means to stay away so that you don’t live with any regrets the rest of your life.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, a God-fearing woman can bring happiness to a wise man who follows God’s advice. This is especially obvious in Proverbs 31:10–31 where, throughout the description, the ideal is presented as “a wife of noble character” (verse 10, NIV).

***Life on the Rooftop?***

Proverbs not only counsels avoiding mingling with strange women but cautions against living with a “quarrelsome wife” (Prov. 21:9, 19; 27:15, 16, ESV). Getting stuck in a dysfunctional relationship is extremely uncomfortable. One would rather sleep on a rooftop alone (Prov. 21:9) or dwell in a desert with the possibility of being devoured by wild animals, or still yet in a place where someone might die from starvation or dehydration rather than live with a fretful woman (verse 19). The choice of a life partner is something that must be made carefully through prayer. Proverbs provides principles that apply to both men and women in selecting whom to marry. Character traits including gratitude, peace, and joy are important in considering a life companion.

***The Ideal Woman to Marry***

The ideal woman to marry is described in Proverbs 31:10–31. Here are ideal characteristics that should not be overlooked. The description covers many different facets, including being diligent and hardworking,

having foresight and discernment, and most of all, having a personal relationship with God. What is especially noteworthy is that these traits come from a time when a woman was not usually recognized for such attributes. This section was so important that Proverbs ends with this chapter. It is divided into three parts: (1) her value (verses 10–12); (2) her activities (verses 13–27); and (3) praise for her actions that result in blessings upon both her family and all within her sphere of influence (verses 28–31). The woman who fears God and brings good upon all around her is praised by all. Proverbs thus describes and contrasts the consequences of living with a troublesome person versus being in a relationship with someone who fears and obeys God’s commands.

### **Fathers Matter (Prov. 14:26; 15:1, 18, 27; 16:32)**

Wise words for families include the importance of fathers and how they raise their children. Proverbs also emphasizes the vital trust God gives to those who bring children into this world. Parents should be a “refuge” for their children (Prov. 14:26). What does this look like? Someone who fears God will not do anything against those entrusted to them as a part of God’s love. A Christian must protect the next generation in a way that the world simply cannot. Fathers should thus be “slow to anger” (Prov. 15:18). They should also refrain from a wrathful spirit by showing restraint (Prov. 16:32, NKJV). Such discipline must recognize the weak spots that might lead to their downfall, such as an impulsive character. Family relationships should always be in the context of love.

### **Correction With Love (Prov. 10:17; 13:24; 29:15)**

Finally, correction must always be done in love. As it says in Proverbs 29:15, “Correction and discipline are good for children” (GNT), and those who love will discipline with diligence (Prov. 13:24). Just as a potter whose vase has a defect must continue to mold it (Jer. 18:6), in the same way, parents should both model for their children a Christlike character and mold their characters for God’s kingdom. Discipline should be implemented only in a redemptive way that leads toward salvation.

### **REACT**

1. Is it possible to identify a troublesome person before marriage?
2. What character traits should a Christian look for in a life companion?
3. How can you show redemptive discipline when dealing with a child?

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1. For more on the “strange woman,” read Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1978), 3:953.

**Testimony**  
*Little Things*

Luke 16:10

“He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.’ By unfaithfulness in even the smallest duties, man robs his Maker of the service which is His due. This unfaithfulness reacts upon himself. He fails of gaining the grace, the power, and the force of character, which may be received through an unreserved surrender to God. Living apart from Christ he is subject to Satan’s temptations, and he makes mistakes in his work for the Master. Because he is not guided by right principles in little things, he fails to obey God in the great matters which he regards as his special work. The defects cherished in dealing with life’s minor details pass into more important affairs. He acts on the principles to which he has accustomed himself. Thus actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.

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“Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. . . .

“. . . In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

“The voice and tongue are gifts from God, and if rightly used, they are a power for God. Words mean very much. They may express love, devotion, praise, melody to God, or hatred and revenge. Words reveal the sentiments of the heart. They may be a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The tongue is a world of blessing, or a world of iniquity.”<sup>2</sup>

“I love you” is a common phrase among young people today. However, it carries a much deeper meaning with far-reaching consequences and repercussions. “I love you” is such a special phrase when shared between two people who are in love. A relationship has to be more than just words. The Bible compares Christ’s love for the church to that of the love between a husband and wife. That is how profound the love between spouses ought to be. We can learn to trust God and choose to honor Him with our lives, especially in the details about how we express our love and affection.

**REACT**

1. What guidance does Ellen White offer for how to choose a life partner?
2. How can our attitude shape our speech?

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1. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 356, 357.

2. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 40*, 1896.

Prov. 6:23–29;  
13:24;  
31:10–31

## Evidence

# Family First—Keeping It Together

Family should be where one finds emotional bonding, unconditional acceptance, and physical nurture. In Proverbs, three areas present themselves as fruitful for developing a happy home.

*Discipline.* Proverbs 13:24 says, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (ESV). It is possible to misinterpret this verse in order to justify a liberal dose of corporal punishment upon a child. The rod here is simply the instrument of discipline, and a thoughtful consideration of the text reveals that it merely symbolizes discipline. The Hebrew word for “rod,” *shebet*, can refer to a shepherd’s staff, which protects and guides a wandering sheep. An occasional whack on the back is meant to guide rather than harm, even for the “black sheep” of the family!

### Cultivate the characteristics that you want to look for in a spouse.

*Chastity.* Again and again Solomon advises avoiding the seductive adulteress. This was not just meant for men, either. It is important to note that Proverbs was written by a king to his son, the heir to the throne. This narrative style was a literary device used in the ancient Near East. The intent was to caution the heir to the throne rather than vilify all women as potential seducers. Two main ideas stand out in Proverbs 6:23–29. First, sexual infidelity causes family discord and breaks up marriages. Second, the temptation to sexual infidelity is dangerously alluring. No matter how beautiful the person may look at the time, if you succumb to this temptation, it will destroy you and your family!

*Virtue.* Proverbs 31:10–31 praises the idealized virtuous woman. She is loyal, hardworking, industrious, prudent, generous, respectful, caring, and God-fearing. In picking the right life mate, one must keep in mind characteristics that contribute toward a happy family. Proverbs 31:30 advises, “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (NIV).

So how do we keep things together within the family? Discipline children redemptively so that there is order in the home. Maintain chastity in order to have a happy marriage. And finally, cultivate the characteristics that you want to look for in a spouse so that there will be enduring peace, love, and joy in your home.

### REACT

1. What does redemptive discipline look like in the home?
2. How can both men and women keep themselves sexually pure?
3. What characteristic do you most desire in a spouse? Do you possess it yourself?

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*Karan Kenneth Swansi, Cavite, Philippines*

## How-to *Fruits of the Family*

Prov. 11:30

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30, NKJV). My family loves to eat fruit every day! We have all kinds of tropical fruits available. Fruit is good for us as a healthy form of sugar, and honestly, my family has a bit of sweet tooth anyway. Many of these tropical fruits grow on trees in our garden.

What is the spiritual fruit we can bear in our lives? Here are some of them:

*Hospitality.* This is an important spiritual fruit. The Bible teaches that everyone must be hospitable, especially to strangers (Isa. 58:7). When we are hospitable, we share our blessings with others, expecting nothing in return. When we invite others into our homes, we often become the ones who are blessed. We find ourselves enriched. We need to especially invite those who are less fortunate, perhaps even hungry, so that our hospitality extends to those who need it the most.

### **When we are hospitable, we share our blessings with others, expecting nothing in return.**

*Unity.* Family unity is when all of us as a spiritual family are united as one in Jesus Christ and enjoy being a part of God’s family. Unity means that we do things together and are there for one another when we are either “up” or “down.” Even the small things matter, such as sharing a meal or worshiping God together as a family. We grow closer to one another as we grow spiritually and learn together how to develop patience and other Christian traits of character.

*Cheerful spirit.* Although last, this is not the least of important spiritual fruit. A cheerful spirit is vital within the family. When our families struggle through issues, with a cheerful spirit we may remember that we have hope—most important of all is the blessed hope that Jesus is coming again soon. This helps us both remember what we are here for and put things into perspective. A happy family lives the message of faith and hope for the world to see.

### **REACT**

1. Which spiritual fruit do your families exhibit? How can you develop such spiritual fruit in serving others in your family?

2. How can we make our fruit—like fruit growing in the garden—tangible? In what ways can we cultivate such spiritual fruit in our Christian experience?

*Margarita Zubkova, Cavite, Philippines*

Prov. 29:15

**Opinion***Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child*

When I was a child, my least favorite word in the dictionary was probably *discipline*. Let's be honest, no one likes being told they are wrong, and certainly no one is fond of being punished. However, the Bible has a lot to say about this topic. Proverbs is perhaps the best place to reflect on what correction with love really means.

The Israelites got into a lot of trouble—on a regular basis too. Murmuring, they complained, built a golden calf, and got sidetracked with other enticements from the surrounding heathen nations. Yet, they were still God's chosen people. God still loved them, and because He did, He at times allowed them to be attacked by the enemy by removing His protection from them (something He did not want to do). All this time God never left or forsook them. The Bible clearly mentions that whom the Lord loves, He chastens (Heb. 12:6).

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Likewise, if parents love their children, they have a responsibility to mold their characters. There is accountability in any healthy family. While children may not appreciate correction at the time, in the long run, they will come to realize (hopefully!) that such correction (when done in love; see Prov. 15:1; 16:23) was meant to guide them so that they could become responsible adults. Most important, such loving correction should lead us to better understand how God views us.

Children also have a responsibility to obey their parents. Discipline, obedience, respect, and love are different ingredients that when baked together produce a deliciously attractive family. In other words, a family that has Christ as its center requires effort on the part of both the parents and the children to work together to incorporate these qualities as they seek to discover new ways to love one another.

**REACT**

1. What do you think is the best way for parents to discipline their children? What forms of discipline did you respond to best in your development?
2. How do you think God disciplines us today?
3. How can we continue to be accountable as young adults?
4. Can you identify instances and stories from the Bible where discipline was evident?

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## Exploration

# Families Who Trust

Prov. 3:5

### CONCLUDE

Proverbs is a treasure chest of wisdom. All of its advice is timeless because the words were inspired by God as an expression of love for His children. We can trust the Lord no matter how great our problems might be, and when we do, it is the best decision that we can make (Prov. 3:5). The Lord wants us to live lives of prosperity and blessing beyond what we can imagine for ourselves or for our families, and we will, if we trust Him.

### CONSIDER

- Taking a walk with your family and discussing three things that you love most about each person in your family. Be creative and sincere.
- Making a photo album with family pictures and memories, then underneath each picture sharing why you are grateful to God for each one.
- Writing a personal letter to each member of your family, recounting your favorite memories with them. Save these letters and read them in times when you might feel down or alone.
- Scheduling a special family outing once or twice a month where your family will not be distracted. Turn off your phones so that you can focus on communicating with one another and on everyone's emotional needs.
- Talking to a family member who you don't connect with as often. Remind them that you love them and that you are grateful to God that they are a part of your family.
- Writing a poem or a song or drawing a picture that expresses how you feel about the members of your family and how grateful you are to God that they are a part of your life.

### CONNECT

Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Marriage Covenant* (Biblical Perspectives, 2006).

Ken Canfield, *The 7 Secrets of Effective Fathers* (Tyndale, 1992).

Kay Kuzma, *To Understand Your Child* (Parent Scene, 1985).

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work, and Parenting in a Changing World* (IVP Academic, 1990).

Nancy Van Pelt, *The Compleat Parent* (Review and Herald®, 1976).