

Raising children is one of the greatest responsibilities God has given us. By God's design, a man and a woman have created something which will never cease to exist — a spirit that has been made in the image of God. Can you imagine the awesome feeling of responsibility you would have if Bill Gates made you a trustee to administer a charitable trust fund of one billion dollars? Or if the president of the United States asked you to formulate a peace plan for the Middle East? But would that be a greater responsibility than raising a child for eternity? I am afraid that many take their responsibilities rather lightly. One man once stated that if we cared for our shrubbery as we care for our children, we would all soon be living in a jungle.

Our Heavenly Father has given us some insight about words to children. Over 3,000 years ago, King David of Israel realized that his days were numbered and the time of his departure was at hand. Thus David called for his beloved son Solomon to come to his bedside that he might instruct him. What he told him is good advice for fathers to tell their children today. *1 Kings 2:1-4 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, (2) I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; (3) And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: (4) That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.* David went on with further instructions, and then in v10 it states that *“David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.”* Years later, Solomon wrote from his vast storehouse of wisdom, instructing those who would follow after him in such passages as Proverbs 4:1-13.

David's Words to Solomon. David's charge begins with “Be strong...and show yourself a man” (v2) Strong in the text is from a word that suggests courage, with the idea of the strength of mind that was would be required to function as a king. Being strong means holding to your values. A special temptation to young people is to be popular, but sometimes popularity comes at the expense of compromise. How many parents have heard the tried and true, *“But everyone else is going”*? I would want my children to be strong enough to stand on their own two feet so they would stand for something and not fall for everything.

This was the courage of Joshua who was willing to stand alone against the whole nation of Israel if need be. ***Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.***

This was the courage of Daniel when faced with the choice of prayer to his God or being fed to the hungry lions. A decree was signed by King Darius that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days shall be cast into the den of lions. ***Daniel 6: 10 (10) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.***

There was the courage of Esther when confronted with the risk of losing her life when her cousin Mordecai asked her to petition King Ahasuerus to spare her people. You will recall that she was reluctant to do so, for to go before the king without being summoned carried the risk of being put to death. Mordecai sent her the message that is one of the key passages in the book of Esther. “Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, ***(4:13) Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. (14) For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*** Esther’s courage then came to the surface, as she responded with these words: ***Esther 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.***

This was the courage of when in 1970 she was nominated for State Sweetheart of a high school organization. There was to be an awards banquet where the winner would be announced, with a dance to follow after the banquet. Her advisor said that if she won, she would need to reign over the dance. Dana conferred with her parents and wrote a statement to be read in case she won the crown. In her own words, she relates what happened.

"The night was a magical night in many ways... Word had spread around within our close group of high school friends. They had snuck into the hotel after the banquet just in time to be there for me at the crowning ceremony. When they called my name it was surreal. I will never forget them placing the crown upon my head and looking out and seeing so many friends cheering for me. I asked if I could make a statement and went to the microphone. "Thank you so much for this honor. It has been a thrill and an honor to compete in this event. Due to my religious convictions, however, I will not be attending the dance. I ask that the first runner-up assume my role." The crowd cheered even louder. I was shocked. I thought that I would just slip away into the night. I was surrounded by hundreds of well-wishers wanting to shake my hand, give me a hug and talk to me..."

David continues (1 Kings 2:3) with "Ánd keep the charge of the Lord thy God..." What does it mean to "keep the charge of Jehovah?" David elaborates on this: "to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His ordinances, and His testimonies." I think we can all understand this; it means to follow God's teaching. What does David say is the purpose for keeping the charge of Jehovah? "that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn" (1 Kings 2:3).

What is the greatest prosperity that one can have - houses, lands, bank accounts? If so, then we pity the poor apostle Paul, who often languished in jail cells, and must have had more than a few scars on his body from the beatings and stoning that he endured. Wealth can be the source of all sorts of problems. Paul warned Timothy about this danger

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Proverbs 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. It is not that money is the root of all evil, but the love of money that causes the problems. Notice what Solom, on would say about wealth. ***Ecclesiastes 5:10-16 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. (11) When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? (12) The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. (13) There is a sore***

evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. (14) But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. (15) As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. (16) And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

Instead of riches, Paul had peace. *Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* In vs 13 Paul said he learned contentment. He had something which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away - peace of mind and a contented heart. The point of God's promise is that his commandments are always for good. He always has our best interests in mind whether we understand or like it or not. For example, parents tell children to do or not to do certain things, and they are for the good of the child, whether or not the child understands or likes them. Just think of how many bad things a child would avoid simply by obeying parents, and how good life would be. And so it is with God and obeying His always wise directions for us.

Solomon's Words to His Son. *Proverbs 4:1-13 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. (2) For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. ... (5) Get wisdom, get understanding: ... (7) Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. ...* Solomon raises wisdom and understanding to the highest level. It's been said that true wisdom consists not in seeing what is immediately before our eyes, but in foreseeing what is to come. ***In all your getting, get wisdom and understanding.*** No price is too high nor sacrifice too great to obtain the greatest treasure. Men have sacrificed morals, ethics, family, friends, health, and even their own souls in order to obtain wealth. But there is a far greater treasure in life — the wisdom that makes life worth living, that gives riches beyond measure — the peace that passes understanding. Christ asked a sobering question in ***Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*** There is no greater treasure to pass on to the

following generation than learning the wisdom and commandments that comes from God.

Solomon then says to his son, I showed you the way. *(10) Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. (11) I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. (12) When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.* We are going to conclude our remarks with the one more admonition from Solomon. *Proverbs 3:1-7 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: (2) For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. (3) Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: (4) So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. (5) Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (7) Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

No matter what success I may have in life there is no greater thing that I can do than teach my children to love the Lord and follow His Word. In teaching these things to my children, I pray that they would pass them on to future generations, thus continuing to build bridges for those yet unborn.

An old man traveling a lone highway,
 Came at the evening cold and gray,
 To a chasm vast and deep and wide,
 Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
 The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
 The sullen stream held no fears for him;
 But he turned when safe on the other side,
 And builded a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” cried a fellow pilgrim near,
 “You’re wasting your time in building here.
 Your journey will end with the closing day;

You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at even tide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,

"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This stream which has been as naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim--
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."
--Will Allen Dromgoole

Invitation