

August 11, 2019 by Steve Brandon



## Parents and Peers

### Proverbs 1:8-19

1. Listen to Your Parents (verses 8-9).
2. Beware of Your Peers (verses 10-19).

Last week we began our exposition of the book of Proverbs by looking at the first seven verses. In these verses, we considered the author of Proverbs: Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. We considered the aim of the book, which is to give you wisdom, available to all of us if we but work at it. We also considered the key of the book: the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

This morning we continue on by looking at verses 8-19. My message is entitled "Parents and Peers," because these are the major players in the text. We see Solomon talking about parents in verses 8-9, and talking about peers in verses 10-19, regarding their influence upon your lives. Let's read our text:

#### Proverbs 1:8-19

Hear, my son, your father's instruction,  
and forsake not your mother's teaching,  
for they are a graceful garland for your head  
and pendants for your neck.  
My son, if sinners entice you,  
do not consent.  
If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood;  
let us ambush the innocent without reason;  
like Sheol let us swallow them alive,  
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;  
we shall find all precious goods,  
we shall fill our houses with plunder;  
throw in your lot among us;  
we will all have one purse"—  
my son, do not walk in the way with them;  
hold back your foot from their paths,  
for their feet run to evil,  
and they make haste to shed blood.  
For in vain is a net spread  
in the sight of any bird,  
but these men lie in wait for their own blood;  
they set an ambush for their own lives.  
Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain;  
it takes away the life of its possessors.

One of the keys to wisdom is knowing who to listen to, because in life there are many people vying for your attention, trying to persuade you of their cause. This may be politicians who want your vote, businesses that put up advertisements because they want your business, or teachers who seek to persuade you of their ideologies.

The wise person is the one who understands the influences in his life and rightly chooses which ones to follow. The wise one will know the blessing of walking in the right way, and the foolish one will know the troubles of walking in the wrong way. "Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked" (Proverbs 13:6). You walk in the right way and you will walk in safety. You walk in the wrong way, and your sin will find you out.

That is what our text this morning talks about: the influences in your life, and choosing the right ones.

#### 1. Listen to Your Parents (verses 8-9).

This comes right there in verses 8 and 9:

#### Proverbs 1:8-9

Hear, my son, your father's instruction,  
and forsake not your mother's teaching,  
for they are a graceful garland for your head  
and pendants for your neck.

In verse 8, Solomon mentions both father and mother. The commandment is clear: “Hear” and “forsake not.” That is, you need to listen to their advice, accept their instruction, and follow in their ways. If you do, your future will be bright. “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future” (Proverbs 19:20). Your parents have a storehouse of wisdom for you, and as you listen to them and obey them, you will have wisdom to walk in the right way.

One of the things that Proverbs holds high is a teachable spirit. When you listen to the wisdom of others, you gain wisdom for yourself. When you gain wisdom for yourself, you will make wise choices in life. When you make wise choices in life, it will go well with you. Your plans will be good plans, and your plans will succeed. “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22). “By wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Proverbs 24:6).

So, in many ways, wisdom in life is listening to the right counsel. And I ask you, young people, who is in your life to give you more abundant counsel than your parents? They have been there since the day you were born. They were there when you took your first steps. They were there on your first day of school. They heard your first word. They read stories to you during the evening. They prayed with you at night. They have taught you how to use scissors and tie your shoes. They were at your birthday parties year after year after year. They have eaten more dinners with you than anyone else on the planet. Who is in your life to give you more abundant counsel than your parents?

Who is there in your life who knows more about you than your parents? They know your fears, because they helped you when you were scared of the night. They know your strengths, because they have noticed when you have succeeded. They know your tendencies, because they have watched you respond over the years. They have seen you in social situations. They have seen you in stressful situations. They know what makes you laugh. They know what makes you cry. They know what your best school subjects are. Who is there in your life who knows more about you than your parents?

Who is there in your life who cares more about you than your parents? They held you in their arms. They changed your diapers. They have provided you food and shelter your entire life. They applauded when you performed in the plays. They cheered when you played in the games. They smiled as you received your awards. Your parents care for you more than any other person in the world. It makes their counsel better than the counsel of anyone. Probably better even than a pastor’s counsel, because they know their child better than any pastor ever could. I would trust their advice. I would trust their counsel.

Solomon says that their teaching and instruction are “a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.” The idea is that they will adorn you. They are beautiful. They have significance. Think of the Olympics. When a gymnast wins the competition, she receives a medal around her neck. She displays it proudly, puts her hand over her heart, and sings the national anthem. The garland around the neck is a reward, to be worn proudly. Sometimes when people arrive at exotic vacation spots, a welcoming gift is given: a lei, a fragrant necklace of flowers. These garlands are beautiful and intended for your blessing. So is the counsel of your parents. Their counsel is a blessing to you, something to be cherished, trusted, and followed.

Now, I know that there are some exceptions to this. There are some parents who are cruel to their children, who don’t care about them, or who have abandoned them. This is the reason adoptions take place. This is why others have parental custody over children. But those who adopt and those who have custody care deeply for the well-being of the children in their care.

Furthermore, there are some parents who will lead their children astray with their counsel, leading them into sin. In those cases, you ought not to follow that counsel. But this is the exception, and my guess is that it is not true of any of you here. For you, your parents will guide you into proper paths, if you but listen to them.

Your parents want what is best for you. They want you to succeed. They want things to go well with you. In most cases, they are the most qualified people in the world to give you counsel and advice. I would encourage you young people, with all my heart, to listen to your parents. Only if you are absolutely certain that their counsel is not good should you neglect it. Otherwise, listen to them, accept their instruction, and it will go well with you.

In fact, I would venture to guess that in more than 90% of the cases in which a child goes astray, he or she has done so against the instruction and teaching of their parents. I would even encourage you children to listen to your parents’ words as if they were the word of God. They are not the Bible, but God communicates to you and gives you guidance through your parents. He tells us to listen to your parents. Your parents want the best for you. I don’t know a parent who wants the worst for his child.

Now, parents, this does not get you off the hook. Make sure that everything out of your mouth is good instruction for your children, so that they come to trust your wisdom. Let your word be true. Do not make idle threats. Whatever you promise, fulfill it. Show them year after year that your counsel is really the best for them, that you want the best for them. Build that credibility, so that they will listen to you. You cannot simply demand to be listened to; you must earn it. Verse 8 is addressed to the children, not to the parents, but you can smooth the way.

## **2. Beware of Your Peers (verses 10-19).**

We have seen the persuasion of parents. Now, in verses 10-19, we see the persuasion of peers. Peers are those who are your own age. It is not that you should never listen to anyone your own age, but Solomon’s exhortation is to look out for those who would seek to persuade you to walk in a wrong way. The simple command comes in verse 10:

Proverbs 1:10  
My son, if sinners entice you,  
do not consent.

That is, if evil people seek to persuade you to join them in their wickedness, refuse them. This verse can be summarized in just three words: “Just Say No!” That was Nancy Reagan’s phrase in her fight against drugs, and it is the most simple exhortation to holiness that exists. When people are tempting you to sin, resist them. Do not follow after them. Of course, “Just Say No” is straight moralism. By itself it does not work.

We will come to that at the close of this message, when we consider what actually does work, and that is trusting in Christ.

Know this: sinners want you to follow in their ways. Paul writes at the end of Romans 1, "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Romans 1:32). Sinners want you to follow them because it helps them to feel better when others are sinning alongside them. They will do everything in their power to get you to do as they do. The pressure can be high. Their talk can be persuasive.

But Solomon says, "Do not consent." As clear and as simple as this is, the Bible is filled with examples of those who have given in to the sinful persuasions of others.

- When Eve sinned by eating the fruit, she enticed her husband to eat, and he ate.
- When Israel lost hope in Moses and asked Aaron to make an idol, he obliged.
- When Korah rebelled against Moses, 250 chiefs of the congregation joined him in his cause.
- When the ten spies came back from the land of Canaan and gave a bad report, the people of Israel followed in their unbelief.
- When Eli's sons corrupted the priesthood, their helpers empowered them.
- When Saul led the attack against David, his men followed his orders.
- When Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, they moved to make him king.
- When the young men in Rehoboam's life gave him bad advice, he followed in their ways.
- Ahab and Jezebel stirred each other on in their wickedness.
- The wicked kings set up altars to false gods, and the people gladly followed.
- In the days of Jeremiah, the prophets enticed the people into sin, and the people gladly followed (see Jeremiah 5:30-31).  
[\[1\]](#)
- In Jesus' day, the religious leaders stirred up the crowds to cry out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:23).
- False teachers have always ravaged the church (see Acts 20:29-30).  
[\[2\]](#)
- To Timothy, Paul said that in the last days, "evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

The world is a dangerous place. There are many temptations and all sorts of people trying to lead you astray. Solomon says:

Proverbs 1:10  
My son, if sinners entice you,  
do not consent.

After this simple command, Solomon follows up with an example of the persuasive power of peers. He begins with the enticement to sin:

Proverbs 1:11-14  
If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood;  
let us ambush the innocent without reason;  
like Sheol let us swallow them alive,  
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;  
we shall find all precious goods,  
we shall fill our houses with plunder;  
throw in your lot among us;  
we will all have one purse"—

In these verses, Solomon uses an illustration from the world of gangs. Gangs are nothing new to our day. They have been around for thousands of years. A collective group of people, intent upon doing evil, team up and recruit others to have more power in their numbers. These people are not ashamed of their evil at all. They are vicious and violent, and right up front they make their plans clear: they plan to prey upon the innocent, take them down, and plunder their goods. Solomon then gives the exhortation:

Proverbs 1:15  
My son, do not walk in the way with them;  
hold back your foot from their paths.

Now, we at Rock Valley Bible Church are not located in the inner city. We don't have a gang problem, and my suspicion is that few of you will ever face this particular temptation. However, know that the recruitment techniques of those in gangs are the same as all temptation.

First, notice the appeal to power. Joining the gang will give you ability you never had before. There is power in numbers, there is protection in numbers. "Let us swallow them alive": the "us" is stronger than the "them." Temptation to sin always promises something more, as Satan tempted Jesus by showing him the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and saying, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9).

Second, notice the appeal to pleasure. Joining the gang will bring pleasure, in this case through financial gain:

Proverbs 1:13  
we shall find all precious goods,  
we shall fill our houses with plunder.

Temptation to sin always promises greater pleasure, as Satan tempted Jesus by noting his hunger and telling him to "command these stones

to become loaves of bread" (Matthew 4:3). The bread will satisfy in a way that God's provision apparently will not.

These are the common threads of all temptation, not just the temptation of joining a gang: the promise of power and the promise of pleasure. Eve saw that the fruit was good; it promised pleasure. Eating it would give her knowledge; it promised power. Korah rebelled against Moses because it promised power. David wanted Bathsheba because it promised pleasure.

To all of this, Solomon gives the exhortation of verse 15 again:

Proverbs 1:15  
Do not consent.

It may look good. It may promise power. It may promise pleasure. But those promises are false. Notice that Solomon does not just say no and leave it there. He goes on to give an explanation, a reason. This is exactly what Jesus did every time he was tempted. He did not merely resist; he gave a response from Scripture. "It is written: man shall not live by bread alone." "It is written: you shall worship the Lord your God and him only." He had reasons. We need reasons when we are tempted too, because sin's promises are empty promises, like a politician's promises. They sound good, but they do not deliver.

In verses 16-19, Solomon gives the explanation:

Proverbs 1:16  
for their feet run to evil,  
and they make haste to shed blood.

Those who are tempting you are evil (verse 16). What they are doing is wrong. The fear of the LORD will cause you to run from evil, not toward it. "The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil" (Proverbs 8:13).

Solomon continues in verse 17 with the humorous illustration of trying to entrap a bird with a net.

Proverbs 1:17  
For in vain is a net spread  
in the sight of any bird,

The bird is up in the tree, chirping merrily along, while you are down on the ground laying out a net to catch it. Solomon says the bird sees everything and will not be ensnared by a trap it sees you laying.

But how different people are.

Proverbs 1:18-19  
but these men lie in wait for their own blood;  
they set an ambush for their own lives.  
Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain;  
it takes away the life of its possessors.

People think they will get away with their sin. They think they will never get caught. Such is the deceptive power of sin. If only we had the wisdom to see the end of the sin we are tempted by, we would see that what appears sugar-coated is actually a poison pill inside. David never thought he would be caught in his sin. He was the king! Absalom never thought he would be caught in his lust for power. But that is what verses 18 and 19 are about: the end of sin. Those who join the gang will be caught. Using Solomon's language, "they set an ambush for their own lives." They may get away with it for a season, but in the end, it will catch up with them. Ask those in prison; most of them never thought they would be caught. But your sin will find you out.

So turn away. Do not consent. Turn from those who give you bad counsel, and listen to those who give you good advice.

But let us be honest: none of us obeys Proverbs 1:10 perfectly. There have been times when sinners have enticed us and we have consented. We have walked in that way. What do you do when that has happened? You turn to Jesus. Consider the following text:

Hebrews 4:14-16  
Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus had parents and peers. He submitted to his parents. He discerned the counsel of his peers. He alone followed Proverbs 1:10 perfectly, never consenting when sinners enticed him. And because he did what we could never do, we can come to the throne of grace when temptation comes our way, praying: "God, sinners are enticing me. I need mercy. I need grace at this hour for my need."

May this be our cry to the LORD this day.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 11, 2019 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

---

[1] Here is one example of the prophets enticing people to sin:

Jeremiah 5:30-31

An appalling and horrible thing  
has happened in the land:  
the prophets prophesy falsely,  
and the priests rule at their direction;  
my people love to have it so,  
but what will you do when the end comes?

[2] Paul told the Ephesian elders, "

Acts 20:29-30

"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."