

**Notes from Sermon given by Ian Stackhouse - Sunday November 4th 2007  
Proverbs 31:10-31 on wisdom in the home**

Over the last twenty years, the term political correctness has entered everyday speech. In the beginning it was defined as 'language or conduct that avoids giving offence, for example on the basis of ethnic origin or sexual orientation'. Which sounds reasonable. But now this has now gone too far. For example the 19 year-old woman who was failed the interview to join the police because she assumed the sergeant was male; or the window cleaner who now has to be called a 'vision clearance executive'!

This sermon will not be politically correct, simply because anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord goes against the grain of current wisdom which says that truth is relative and there are no moral absolutes. In fact everywhere now you will hear the term 'values', rather than 'morals'.

However, starting with parenting, a wise home is where there is discipline, where children are brought up not simply with values, but with the fear of the Lord, a definite sense of right and wrong, in spite of the complexity of the world. Parenting is a craft not a science, and you grow up with your children. Proverbs 22:6 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it' is not a promise but like all proverbs something that is generally true. After all there is such a thing as rebelliousness. A wise home does not delegate the bringing up of children to school, Sunday school, or the television. It takes responsibility for itself even to the point of corporal discipline. One of the reasons for the moral chaos in the western world today is because, in our wisdom, we have done away with this and believe we can reason a child into maturity. Smacking can be abuse, but discipline can take a variety of forms all the way to praising a child when it has done something well. But to say that smacking, *per se*, is abuse is sheer disaster. We believe in original folly, and therefore not to discipline is a sign of a lack of love. Meaning that it takes more than words to dislodge folly. Proverbs 22:15; 13:24; 23:13.

And just to counter the risk of being misunderstood, I would say:

- Never smack a child in anger – that is abuse
- Don't smack in front of other people and so shame the child
- For every dose of discipline give two doses of love
- Don't smack a girl who has begin to menstruate - not least because if you administer it properly you shouldn't have to smack a child beyond a certain age anyway.

Our generation thinks it can go against this tried and tested biblical wisdom without consequences. Why is it that all the best, most courteous, respectful, hard-working students are not from western culture? Because they live in families where old people are honoured and not just dismissed – their wisdom and involvement is important for the well-being of society. Why are some of the most adjusted children coming from conservative, religious traditional communities? Because not only does it take a whole community to raise a child, but when mum and dad love each other, and respect each other, a child flourishes.

When we get to Proverbs 31, we can be very intimidated. We have one shrewd businesswoman, who works around the clock. Her husband praises her; she is not disrespectful to him, rude, or a nagging wife. She is prudent. Should women go out to work? We have to work this one out culturally, and not legislate, and find God's will.

You may be saying 'Who is sufficient for this?' I am not even married! This is a real woman described here, but in addition this is what wisdom looks like. It is describing what a wise home would look like if all that we have been speaking about

over the last few weeks took root in a home, in a life, whether you are married or single.

A wise home is one that is hard-working; generous; well-prepared; confident – clothed with strength and dignity, not paranoid about the future; trusts in the fear of the Lord. Charm and beauty are fleeting, but a wise home is where there is lots of praise; a home with the fear of the Lord is where you want to be.

Recover the fear of the Lord. We are the people of God. Our culture is in free-fall, but do not fear those days.