

The Pathway to Eternal Wisdom

[Part 7]

A lifelong pilgrimage. [v1-27]

Proverbs 4:1-4 [NIV] *“Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, ‘Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.’”*

These verses contain a little piece of autobiography. Consumed with desire for moral and spiritual health of his pupils, the teacher, Solomon, tells of his own father’s [King David] wise instruction, proved by the experience of his own life, in the effort to impress upon them the urgency of obtaining, above all things, Godly Wisdom.

One of the greatest responsibilities of parents is to encourage their children to become wise.

We can read the encouragement that King David gave to his son Solomon in **1 Kings 2:1-9** and **1 Chronicles 28:6-10, 1 Chronicles 29:10-19**.

The approach of Solomon as a teacher is very positive, being far less interested in “*don’ts*” than in getting his pupils to see that he is offering the secret of being really alive.

Ultimately all wisdom comes from God, parents can only urge their children to turn to the Creator God for wisdom.

God’s Word, the Christian Bible, can function as a loving and compassionate mother or father to us, if our own parents did **not** teach us God-given wisdom.

As you learn from God’s Word, the Christian Bible, as a whole, you create a legacy of wisdom to teach your own children.

“*Listen*” – Hebrew “*shâma*” to hear intelligently with the implied intention of obedience to what we hear.

[Please download and study our article ‘*Do We Hear But Not Really Listen?*’ under main heading ‘*Marriage*’]

“*Pay attention*” – Hebrew “*qâshab*” meaning prick up your ears, give heed, mark well, regard.

“*Understanding*” [995].

“*Sound learning*” – Hebrew “*lâqach*” wide application meaning something to accept, buy, carry away, seize, use.

“*Teaching*” – Hebrew “*tôrâh*” meaning precept, statute or law.

These two verses indicate in powerful language that all of what is being taught is **not** to be taken lightly.

Again the retaining and applying Godly Wisdom is linked to real living an abundant and fulfilling life.

All the time there is an encouragement given to choose a life guided by Godly Wisdom, that is God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

Proverbs 4:5 [NIV] *“Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.”*

“Get” is a very weak translation of the Hebrew word used “*qânâh*” meaning purchase, procure, own, attain, jealously possess, redeem.

The urgency and importance vibrates in this very powerful word.

“*Sswerve from*” – Hebrew “*nâtâh*” meaning turn away from, set aside, decline from, put away.

Proverbs 4:6 [NIV] *“Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.”*

Caution must be exercised in the personification of wisdom. Although the Hebrew text gives wisdom gender [an attractive woman] even claiming to be the first creation of God and perhaps an assistant in the work of creation. [**Proverbs 3:19-20; Proverbs 8:22-30**]

The main purpose of presenting wisdom as female is to ensure that men were attracted to pay wisdom rightful heed.

[**Proverbs 9:1-6** – wine and food being added to making wisdom attractive to men whom God looks on as guide to the family.]

“*Forsake*” – Hebrew “*âzar*” meaning relinquish, leave or refuse.

“*Wisdom*” [2451]

“*Protect*” – Hebrew “*shâmar*” meaning to hedge about, attend, watch, serve, save.

“*Love*” – Hebrew “*ahab*” meaning to have affection as a friend.

“*Watch*” – Hebrew “*nâtsar*” meaning to protect, observe, maintain, preserve.

Proverbs 4:7 [NIV] *“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”*

Seeking Godly Wisdom is the most important thing we can do, especially when we are young. The major goal of the preacher, Solomon, is to educate his young son.

“*Supreme*” – Hebrew “*rêshîyth*” meaning first place in time order or rank, beginning and chief thing.

“*Therefore*” – Hebrew “*kên*” meaning straightaway, just, with the inference of speed or no delay.

“*Wisdom*” [2451]

“*Understanding*” [995]

To obtain Godly Wisdom we do **not** need great intellect or opportunity but a firm decision on our part, whatever it may cost us in time or substance.

Proverbs 4:8 [King James] *“Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.”*

“*Embrace*” – Hebrew “*châbaq*” meaning to clasp hands.

Proverbs 4:9 [King James] *“She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.”*

“*Ornament*” – Hebrew “*livyâh*” a wreath symbolic of a winner’s reward in a race.

“Grace” – Hebrew “*chên*” favour or kindness.

“Crown” – Hebrew “*atârâh*” from root word meaning to encircle for protection.

“Glory” – Hebrew “*tiphereth*” meaning honour or beauty.

“Deliver” – Hebrew “*mâgan*” meaning to hand safely over, shield, encompass with.

Proverbs 4:10 [King James] “*Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*”

Again we are reminded that Godly Wisdom will bring us long life. [**Proverbs 3:2; Proverbs 3:16**]

Proverbs 4:11 [King James] “*I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.*”

We have already learned from what is gone before in what direction in life Godly Wisdom leads us.

“*Right paths*” – referring to the path of righteousness that is moral conduct and wise decisions in life.

Proverbs 4:12 [NIV] “*When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.*”

Godly Wisdom shows itself in the conduct we have been shown is a sure guide to true freedom.

“*Hampered*” – Hebrew “*yâtsar*” meaning narrow, vexed, distressed, referring to the restricted movements of those who “*leave the way of Godly Wisdom*” and the “*paths of righteousness.*”

Using Godly Wisdom gives us the best route in our lives.

Proverbs 4:13 [NIV] “*Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.*”

Again and again we are told to hold on to Godly Wisdom for there are many pressures in society for us to be led astray, and powerful spiritual forces behind that pressure. [**Revelation 12:9; 1 John 5:19** – Satan and his demons.]

Our life is being watched and judged by our Creator God. [**2 Chronicles 16:9; Zechariah 4:10**]

Proverbs 4:14-15 [NIV] “*Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.*”

Notice the vigour and rapid succession of the verbs taking up the urgent style of the previous verse.

Even our friends can make us fall aside from the path of Godly Wisdom in our lives.

Young people want to be accepted, so they would never want to confront or criticise a friend for wrong plans or actions.

While we should be accepting of others, we need to have a healthy scepticism about human behaviour that is **not** guided by Godly Wisdom.

Don't let your friends cause you to fall into ways that are guided by human wisdom.

Proverbs 4:16-17 [NIV] “*For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.*”

“*Fall*” – Hebrew “*kâshal*” is better translated “*stumble*” as it is in **v19**.

It is ironic in this picture of wickedness that has become meat and drink and even a duty.

It is a warning against setting foot on a path which may look adventurous and diverting for it can end up in evil and violence.

The Christian Bible does **not** hide the fact that people can become as zealous for evil as for good.

John 4:34 [NIV] “*‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.’*”

In contrast to this Proverb the food and drink of a Christian should be fulfilling the work that each of us have been given by God.

Proverbs 4:18-19 [NIV] “*The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.*”

The Hebrew word for “*shining*” is “*nôgahh*” which is the general words for brightness. The translators, when linked with the rest of the phrase, saw the reference to draw light and the progressive intensity of light as the day progressed.

The path in life that is illuminated by Godly Wisdom will continue to improve as this wisdom is applied day by day.

In stark contrast the people who are **only** guided in life by human wisdom are constantly in the darkness of ignorance.

The difference between the two ways of life is danger and constant bewilderment on one hand and safety and growing certainty on the other.

Jeremiah 23:11-12 [NIV] “*‘Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness,’ declares the LORD. ‘Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished,’ declares the LORD.*”

Jeremiah takes the imagery of **v19** still further.

Light and darkness is used often in the Christian Bible to illustrate truth and error or sin and makes an illuminating study.

A good starting place would be to download and study our article on the website ‘*Let There Be Light*’ found under main heading ‘*Bible Study.*’

Proverbs 4:20-27 [NIV] “*My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*”

The constant repetition of this call to pay close attention to what is being said is deliberate.

For a major part of godliness lies in dogged attention to familiar truths found in God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

What follows is a kind of spiritual medical inspection of our life, where our healthy readiness is being examined.

Heart – verse 21. The Hebrew word “*lêb*” translated “*heart*” has a wide range of usage, all of which indicate the motivating force in our lives, our mind and human spirit.

Proverbs 15:15, 30. In these passages of scripture the word represents the emotions.

Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 14:14. The same word is used to represent the will.

Proverbs 3:5. In this verse heart is referring to our whole inner being.

“*Wellspring*” [v23] – the Hebrew word is “*tôtsâh*” meaning exit, deliverance, issues and boundary of our life.

This adds greatly to the importance of Godly Wisdom.

This verse is the key to the whole series of lessons that are being given.

Godly Wisdom leads to life now and future, but fundamentally Godly Wisdom originates, **not** in the following a collection of wise precepts, but in the heart, the focus of the mind and will that leads to action and attitude.

Jeremiah 24:7 [NIV] “*I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.*”

Referring to a group of people who had been exiled in a foreign country.

Matthew 15:19 [NIV] “*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*”

Evil thoughts lead to evil actions.

Philippians 4:7-8 [NIV] “*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.*”

Good thoughts lead to godlike actions.

Mouth – [v24] After thoughts come the words that are generated by our thoughts.

Luke 6:45 [NIV] “*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*”

This can be a two-way response, superficial habits or talk can react on the state of our mind.

For example, cynical chatter, fashionable grumbles, flippancy, half-truths.

These habits may be barely meant in the first place, but can harden into well-established patterns of thought in our mind, which will then come out of our mouths in words that are **not** loving our fellow human beings.

Romans 10:9-10 [NIV] “*That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*”

What is in our heart and what we confess with our lips is crucial to our salvation.

Eyes – [v25] With this steady aim in life, minor decisions are governed by our ultimate goal.

Matthew 6:19-24, 31-33 [NIV] *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” ... “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

This is the ultimate goal that every true Christian must have constantly before them.

Feet – [v26] Vision to be turned into right action, demands practical planning.

“Make level” – Hebrew *“palac”* meaning to ponder, prepare, weigh mentally.

“Firm” – Hebrew *“kûwn”* meaning upright, established, perfect.

“Swerve” [v27] – Hebrew *“nâtâh”* meaning to bend away, pervert, turn aside.

Look straight ahead, keep our eyes fixed on our goal and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin.