

Proverbs 4

(New International Version)

- Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.
² I give you sound learning,
so do not forsake my teaching.
³ For I too was a son to my father,
still tender, and cherished by my mother.
⁴ Then he taught me, and he said to me,
◆ Take hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands, and you will live.
⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or turn away from them.
⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.
⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get^{a1} wisdom.
Though it cost all you have,^{b1} get understanding.
⁸ Cherish her, and she will exalt you;
embrace her, and she will honor you.
⁹ She will give you a garland to grace your head
and present you with a glorious crown. ◆**
- ¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say,
and the years of your life will be many.
¹¹ I instruct you in the way of wisdom
and lead you along straight paths.
¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;
when you run, you will not stumble.
¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;
guard it well, for it is your life.
¹⁴ Do not set foot on the path of the wicked
or walk in the way of evildoers.
¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it;
turn from it and go on your way.
¹⁶ For they cannot rest until they do evil;
they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble.
¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.**
- ¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.
¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what makes them stumble.**
- ²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.**

***21 Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
22 for they are life to those who find them
and health to one's whole body.
23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
24 Keep your mouth free of perversity;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
25 Let your eyes look straight ahead;
fix your gaze directly before you.
26 Give careful thought to the^{c1} paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.
27 Do not turn to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.***

Study Notes

PROVERBS 4:3, 4

One of the greatest responsibilities of parents is to encourage their children to become wise. Here Solomon tells how his father, David, encouraged him to seek wisdom when he was young (see 1 Kings 2:1-9 and 1 Chronicles 28♦29 for David's charge to his son). This encouragement may have prompted Solomon to ask God for an understanding mind above everything else (1 Kings 3:9). Wisdom can be passed on from parents to children, from generation to generation. Ultimately, of course, all wisdom comes from God; parents can only urge their children to turn to him. If your parents never taught you in this way, you can learn from the Scriptures and then create a legacy of wisdom as you teach your own children.

PROVERBS 4:5-7

If you want wisdom, you must decide to go after it. It takes resolve♦a determination not to abandon the search once you begin, no matter how difficult the road may become. This is not a once-in-a-lifetime step but a daily process of choosing between two paths♦the wicked (4:14-17, 19) and the righteous (4:18). Nothing else is more important or more valuable.

PROVERBS 4:7

David taught Solomon as a young boy that seeking God's wisdom was

the most important choice he could make. Solomon learned the lesson well. When God appeared to the new king to fulfill any request, Solomon chose wisdom above all else. We should also make God's wisdom our first choice. We don't have to wait for God to appear to us. We can boldly ask him for wisdom today through prayer. James 1:5 assures us that God will grant our request.

PROVERBS 4:13-17

Even friends can make you fall. It is difficult for people to accept the fact that friends and acquaintances may lure them to do wrong. Young people want to be accepted, so they would never confront or criticize a friend for wrong plans or actions. Many other people can't see how their friends' actions could lead to trouble. While we should be accepting of others, we need a healthy skepticism about human behavior. When you feel yourself being heavily influenced, proceed with caution. Don't let your friends cause you to fall into sin.

PROVERBS 4:23-27

Our heart dictates to a great extent how we live because we always find time to do what we enjoy. Solomon tells us to guard our heart above all else, making sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure your affections lead you in the right direction. Put boundaries on your desires: Don't go after everything you see. Look straight ahead, keep your eyes fixed on your goal, and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin.