

# Proverbs 4 Commentary

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BGT Proverbs 4:1 κο σατε πα δεσ παιδε αν πατρ ς κα προσ χετε γν ναι ννοιαν

NET Proverbs 4:1 Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and pay attention so that you may gain discernment.

NLT Proverbs 4:1 My children, listen when your father corrects you. Pay attention and learn good judgment,

ESV Proverbs 4:1 Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,

NIV Proverbs 4:1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.

KJV Proverbs 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

LXE Proverbs 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

ASV Proverbs 4:1 Hear, my sons, the instruction of a father, And attend to know understanding:

CSB Proverbs 4:1 Listen, my sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding,

NKJ Proverbs 4:1 Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding;

NRS Proverbs 4:1 Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight;

YLT Proverbs 4:1 Hear, ye sons, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding.

- **Hear, O sons:** Pr 1:8 Pr 6:20-23 Ps 34:11 1Th 2:11,12
- **give attention:** Pr 2:1-5 5:1 7:4 8:32-36 19:20 22:17 Heb 2:1

## SOLOMONS COMMAND TO LISTEN TO A FATHER'S WISDOM

This passage could be subtitled "Passing the Baton." The Christian life is a race to be run and won for the glory of God. But it not a solitary race, but more like a relay race, so here Solomon passes on the baton to his **sons**. (by application "us"). One is reminded of Paul's last words to his beloved son in the faith Timothy (2 Ti 1:2, 1 Ti 1:18) charging him...

You therefore (WHY? SEE 2 Ti 1:13-18), my son, **be strong** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF OUR GRACE). 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** ([aorist imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) (PASS THE BATON ON TO) these to faithful men who will be able to teach others (ABLE TO PASS ON THE BATON) also. (2 Ti 2:1-2+) (See related topic - [Make Disciples](#)).

**Lawson** - IN this chapter, Solomon renews his exhortations to us to get wisdom, ver. 1–13, and to avoid temptations, ver. 14–19. The chapter concludes with a short sum of practical religion. In his exhortation to wisdom, he makes use of many of the same motives by which he had already recommended it. Solomon had a heart filled with knowledge, beyond all the sons of men; and he could have charmed and astonished, by the discoveries of new truths in every sentence; but he had wisdom to manage his knowledge, and therefore prefers those discourses which are solid and useful, to those which, by their dazzling brilliancy, are fitted only to produce admiration and surprise. He desires not our applause, but our benefit; and his aim is not to shine, but to instruct. He was a wise householder, instructed into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and brings out of his treasure things old as well as new. God speaks to us more than once or twice by this inspired penman, and shall we not listen to his voice? We have precept upon precept, and line upon line; and if we do not receive instructions pressed upon us so warmly, we must go and fall backwards, and be broken, and snared, and taken. May God open our hearts to hear what is said by him who was the wisest of men, and who spoke under the guidance of unerring Wisdom.

**Toy** sees "Three exhortations (Pr 4:1–9, Pr 4:10–19, Pr 4:20–27), the theme of all three being the excellence and beneficent power of wisdom.—They are like those of chs. 2; 3 in that the advice is of a general nature, while in Proverbs. 5; 6; 7 it is directed against a particular sin. ([Proverbs 4 - ICC](#))

**POSB** - "Repetition is the key to learning." Although the original source of this saying is not known, its use and acceptance lend credibility to its accuracy. Solomon's chief method of instructing his son in Proverbs implies his agreement with it. In this first division of Proverbs (chs.1-9), a father's instructions to his son, Solomon uses a number of teaching tools. His primary tool is repetition. Thus, the lessons from this father have many elements in common:

- the charge to listen, to pay attention to his teaching
- the equating of his teaching to God's Word and commandments (laws)
- the charge to get wisdom and to grow in wisdom
- the benefits of wisdom
- the value of wisdom
- the dangers of rejecting wisdom

These lessons were crucial to his son's training because they have the potential to be life-changing. Apparently, Solomon was driven to make sure his son followed the Lord and the path of wisdom throughout life. Therefore, he repeated the above themes in every lesson. And though he conveyed these lessons in a variety of ways, the basic truths still stand out. It is key to realize that even though the verses are repetitive, they are not redundant or meaningless. Every mention is inspired by God's Holy Spirit. Every mention reinforces them in the mind and, more importantly, in the heart of the reader. Hence, the reader must be careful not to pass over them because of their repetition. ([POSB](#))

**John Phillips** - The wise man began this section with an attempt to get the attention of the younger generation, a task that is not always easy

**Kinlaw** - It is a sobering fact that true values and morality are always only one generation removed from possible extinction. It is not enough that the present generation was taught the way of righteousness and justice by its fathers; the torch of righteousness and justice must just as surely be passed on to our children, who in turn must pass it on undimmed to their children. For one generation to allow the light to go out would mean that succeeding generations must be doomed to stumble in darkness. (Wesleyan Commentary)

**POSB** This is the first time in Proverbs that the plural address children or **sons** is used. This is significant because it reveals Solomon's understanding that he was transferring God's truth both to his son and to future generations as well. This body of truth came from his father, David, who had received it from his father, Jesse, and so on back through all former generations. Ultimately, it is traced back to Moses, who received it from God.

**Wardlaw** - SOLOMON, in the introductory portion of this Book, is especially addressing the young; and youth he knew to be naturally volatile, and listless as to the topics to which he was most solicitous to secure their attention. Hence, like a speaker who sees attention drooping—the interest of his hearers becoming languid—the eyelids heavy—the countenance vacant, and indicating an absent and wandering mind—he often rouses by a fresh appeal, in the language of affectionate concern. ([Lectures on the book of Proverbs - Volume 1](#))

**Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father** - **Hear** means far more than "sound waves" but sound grace, heeding what is said and so the idea is giving both attention and obedience (cf Pr 1:5, 8, 33). This is almost identical to Pr 1:8+ "**Hear**, my son, your father's instruction". Even a passage like this shows us the tragedy of sons growing up in homes without the father present! They are short-changed of the wisdom of a godly father. On the other hand, those blessed to have godly fathers in their home should "count their blessings" and truly give ear to the words of their fathers! The implication of Solomon giving two commands to sons implies that there will be innate resistance to hear and heed and that this resistance needs to be overcome. I had 4 children (2 sons) and can identify with the resistance to hearing and heeding! Dear parent, do not be discouraged by their resistance and "throw in the towel." That is exactly what the enemy wants us to do. Persevere in gentle, but firm teaching and you may be surprised at how much of your Biblical instruction lands in fertile soil (but you may not see the fruit until years, sometimes decades later).

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

-- Deut 6:4 = The [Shema](#)

As **Ross** says "the home continues to be the prominent arena of learning as the parents in turn pass on the traditions (see Deuteronomy 6:6–9)."

**Toy - Father** is not here used in the stricter (family) sense of the word, but with the wider connotation of teacher

**Bridges** - SURELY these frequent repetitions are as the angel's visit to the prophet; "waking him, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." (Zech. 4:1) A mind like Solomon's, "large even as the sand that is on the sea-shore," (1 Kings 4:29. Cp. Eccl. 47:14, 15) might readily have made every sentence a fresh discovery of knowledge. But more suitable to our sluggish and forgetful heart is "the word of the Lord, precept upon precept." (Isa. 28:13) Often do we see children bereft or destitute of a parental instructor. Here these orphan children are taken up, and called to hear the instruction of a father. For truly does the wise man, like the Apostle in after-

days, "exhort and charge as a father doth his children." (1 Thess. 2:11) ([Proverbs 4](#))

**Hear** (listen, obey, understand)(08085)(**shama**) means to **hear** (Adam and Eve hearing God = Ge 3:8, 10, Ge 18:10 = "overheard"), to **listen** (Ge 3:17, Ge 16:2 [= this was a big mistake and was the origin of Jews and Arabs!] Ex 6:9,16:20, 18:19, Webster's 1828 on "listen" = to hearken; to give ear; to attend closely with a view to hear. To obey; to yield to advice; to follow admonition) and since hearing/listening are often closely linked to obedience, **shama** is translated **obey** (1 Sa 15:22, Ge 22:18, 26:5, 39:10, Ex 19:5, **disobedience** = Lev 26:14, 18, 21, 27) or to understand. KJV translates **shama** "**hearken**" (196x) a word which means to give respectful attention. **Shama** means "to hear intelligently and attentively and respond appropriately." In other words to hear does not convey the idea of "in one ear and out the other!" The greatest significance of the use of **shama** is that of relation of man to God, especially where the context speaks of **obedience**. Obedience is the supreme test of faith and reverence for God. The Old Testament conception of obedience was vital. It was the one important relationship which must not be broken. While sometimes this relation may have been formal and cold, it nevertheless was the one strong tie which held the people close to God. The significant spiritual relation is expressed by Samuel when he asks the question, "Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying** (shama) the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to **obey** (shama) is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sa 15:22). It was the condition without which no right relation might be sustained to Yahweh. This is most clearly stated in the relation between Abraham and Yahweh when he is assured "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast **obeyed** (shama) my voice" (Ge 22:18). In prophetic utterances, future blessing and prosperity were conditioned upon obedience: "If ye be willing and **obedient** (shama), ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa 1:19). After surveying the glories of the Messianic kingdom, the prophet assures the people that "this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently **obey** (shama) the voice of Yahweh your God" (Zec 6:15). On the other hand misfortune, calamity, distress and famine are due to their disobedience and distrust of Yahweh.

**Hear** is a **key word** in **Proverbs** - Prov. 1:5; Prov. 1:8; Prov. 1:33; Prov. 4:1; Prov. 4:10; Prov. 5:7; Prov. 5:13; Prov. 7:24; Prov. 8:6; Prov. 8:32; Prov. 8:33; Prov. 8:34; Prov. 12:15; Prov. 13:1; Prov. 13:8; Prov. 15:29; Prov. 15:31; Prov. 15:32; Prov. 18:13; Prov. 19:20; Prov. 19:27; Prov. 20:12; Prov. 21:28; Prov. 22:17; Prov. 23:19; Prov. 23:22; Prov. 25:10; Prov. 25:12; Prov. 28:9; Prov. 29:24;

**Give Attention** (07181)(**qashab**) means to incline (ears) to listen carefully, to pay (close) attention, to give heed, to obey. The root denotes the activity of hearing, emphasizing either paying close attention or obeying (heeding). The Septuagint translates **qashab** in Pr 4:1 with [prosecho](#) (in [present imperative](#) = command for giving continual attention).

**Gilbrant** - The verb *qāshav* means "to listen" in the sense of "paying attention" or "obeying." Of the forty-six times it is used in the OT, it occurs once in the Qal stem, where it means "to be attentive" or "to be fully alert" (Isa. 32:3). All other uses of this word are in the Hiphil stem. To heed or to obey God is the primary principle of a faith relationship with Him, and sacrifice and faith claims without obedience are futile (1 Sam. 15:22). Through the prophets (Jer. 6:17, 19), God repeatedly called his people to heed the warnings of imminent judgment (Isa. 28:23; Jer. 6:10; 18:19), but they refused (Isa. 48:18; Jer. 18:18). In fact, God called all nations to declare his promises and exalt his name (Isa. 34:1; 49:1). On some occasions, God's people pleaded with Him to hear their cry (Ps. 55:2), and the psalmist confidently acknowledged God's attention to his situation in the statement, "You will cause your ear to hear" (Ps. 10:17).([Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#))

**Qashab** - 45v - gave attention(1), give attention(3), give heed(9), give...heed(1), given heed(2), heed(2), incline(1), listen(10), listened(2), listening(1), listens(1), make your attentive(1), paid attention(3), paid...attention(1), pay attention(6), pay...attention(1), pays attention(1). 1 Sam. 15:22; 2 Chr. 20:15; 2 Chr. 33:10; Neh. 9:34; Job 13:6; Job 33:31; Ps. 5:2; Ps. 10:17; Ps. 17:1; Ps. 55:2; Ps. 61:1; Ps. 66:19; Ps. 86:6; Ps. 142:6; Prov. 1:24; Prov. 2:2; Prov. 4:1; Prov. 4:20; Prov. 5:1; Prov. 7:24; Prov. 17:4; Prov. 29:12; Cant. 8:13; Isa. 10:30; Isa. 21:7; Isa. 28:23; Isa. 32:3; Isa. 34:1; Isa. 42:23; Isa. 48:18; Isa. 49:1; Isa. 51:4; Jer. 6:10; Jer. 6:17; Jer. 6:19; Jer. 8:6; Jer. 18:18; Jer. 18:19; Jer. 23:18; Dan. 9:19; Hos. 5:1; Mic. 1:2; Zech. 1:4; Zech. 7:11; Mal. 3:16

**Instruction** (04148) **musar** from *yasar* = to discipline, chasten, admonish) refers to discipline, chastening, correction. God's chastening is always for purposes of instruction, and should not be ignored or resented. (Job 5:17 cp Job 42:2). Solomon instructs us "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof." (Pr 3:11) One of major purposes of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom and instruction (*musar*) (Pr 1:2) Isaiah describes the divine chastisement poured out on the Suffering Messiah (Isa 53:5). **Musar** is

translated in the Septuagint with the noun **paideia** which is used of rearing and guiding a child to maturity (Heb 12:11) and refers to God's fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5). **Paideia** means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity.

**Musar** is a **key word** in **Proverbs** - Prov. 1:2; Prov. 1:3; Prov. 1:7; Prov. 1:8; Prov. 3:11; Prov. 4:1; Prov. 4:13; Prov. 5:12; Prov. 5:23; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 7:22; Prov. 8:10; Prov. 8:33; Prov. 10:17; Prov. 12:1; Prov. 13:1; Prov. 13:18; Prov. 13:24; Prov. 15:5; Prov. 15:10; Prov. 15:32; Prov. 15:33; Prov. 16:22; Prov. 19:20; Prov. 19:27; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:12; Prov. 23:13; Prov. 23:23; Prov. 24:32;

**And give attention that you may gain understanding** - This is a command not just to **"hear"** but to **"heed"** which means put into practice what is heard. **That** is a term of purpose which explains the goal is to **gain understanding**. (NET = so that you may gain discernment) It is not about being a "smarter sinner" but about being more like the Savior. If what you take in is not transforming your heart, then it is essentially head knowledge and you will be a puffed up joyless Pharisee (cf 1 Cor 8:1b).

**Wardlaw** - **"Attention"** is necessary to the acquisition of all knowledge, and not least the knowledge of divine truth. And when the instruction is imparted by a parent's lips, earnest and thoughtful **attention** is specially incumbent on children. The obligation is reciprocal. It lies on parents to teach; it lies on children to learn. Of all knowledge, pious parents will ever be most solicitous to impart to their children the knowledge of God's will. Whatever be second, this must be first. And while it should be that which parents are most anxious to impart, it should be that which children are most eager to gain. Remember, my young friends, Solomon here speaks of the "instruction of a father." And for children to disregard paternal instruction, is ungrateful, cruel, wicked, and infatuated. ([Lectures on the book of Proverbs - Volume 1](#))

**Understanding** (0998)(**binah**) means "understanding, insight, discernment, i.e., a good sense or wisdom to respond properly to the LORD and his Torah (Dt 4:6), (2) understand, i.e., to be given a revelation as well as its meaning (Da 10:1); (3) understand, i.e., skillfully react to life situations (1Ch 12:32." **Binah** "carries strong moral and religious connotations. **"Understanding"** (Pr 1:2, 5, 6) is the ability to look to the heart of an issue and to discern the differences at stake in the choices being weighed." (Hubbard)

**Binah** in Proverbs is a **key word** in Proverbs - Prov. 1:2; Prov. 2:3; Prov. 3:5; Prov. 4:1; Prov. 4:5; Prov. 4:7; Prov. 7:4; Prov. 8:14; Prov. 9:6; Prov. 9:10; Prov. 16:16; Prov. 23:4; Prov. 23:23; Prov. 30:2;

## Proverbs 4:2 For I give you sound teaching; Do not abandon my instruction.

BGT Proverbs 4:2 δ ρον γ ρ γαθ ν δωρο μαι μ ν τ ν μ ν ν μον μ γκαταλ πητε

NET Proverbs 4:2 Because I give you good instruction, do not forsake my teaching.

NLT Proverbs 4:2 for I am giving you good guidance. Don't turn away from my instructions.

ESV Proverbs 4:2 for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.

NIV Proverbs 4:2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching.

KJV Proverbs 4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

LXE Proverbs 4:2 For I give you a good gift; forsake ye not my law.

ASV Proverbs 4:2 For I give you good doctrine; Forsake ye not my law.

CSB Proverbs 4:2 for I am giving you good instruction. Don't abandon my teaching.

NKJ Proverbs 4:2 For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.

NRS Proverbs 4:2 for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching.

YLT Proverbs 4:2 For good learning I have given to you, My law forsake not.

- **sound teaching:** Pr 8:6-9 22:20,21 De 32:2 Job 33:3 Ps 49:1-3 Joh 7:16,17 1Ti 4:6 Tit 1:9
- **Do not abandon:** 1Ch 28:9 2Ch 7:19 Ps 89:30-32

**THE GOOD GIFT  
OF SOUND DOCTRINE**

**For** - This term of explanation is explaining why we need to hear and heed.

Toy says this (**for**) establishes "The ground of the sage's claim to be heard. The sage speaks with conviction and authority; he believes that his teaching is sound and important, and the teaching or law that he gives is his own, that is, is grounded in his own soul, though derived from divine teaching; the prophet, on the contrary, never speaks in his own name. "

**Wardlaw on good teaching** - I am speaking of the instructions of godly parents, and supposing them to be in harmony with the lessons of God. Children and youth are prone to question the goodness of them. Their hearts naturally dislike them. They are too strict, too spiritual, too holy, for their taste. Ever prone to worldly and sinful pleasures, they fret at the rein that holds them in. Even though that rein is of silk, and held by the hand of the kindest affection, they would rather be free. Their deceitful heart blinds and perverts their better judgments, so that they "call good evil, and evil good." The doctrine of God, taught in the Bible, and instilled into the opening mind by godly parents, is, in every sense, "good doctrine." It is good in its own nature—coming as it does from the very mind of God, by the illumination of his Holy Spirit; and it is good in its results, on the present and everlasting happiness of all who receive it. When temptations allure the young to "forsake the law," which God gives them, they will find in their sad experience that it is good they are forsaking, and misery they are pursuing. ([Lectures on the book of Proverbs - Volume 1](#))

**I give you sound (GOOD) teaching** - I love the Septuagint which says "I give you a good gift." Do we really see sound doctrine as a good gift? Indeed, James says "**Every good thing given** and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17+). What is sound teaching today? Scriptural teaching, nothing less, nothing more, nothing else! Preach the Word! (2 Ti 4:2+).

**John Kitchen on teaching** - The 'teaching' described implies the necessity of personally receiving the instruction. The root of the word means to 'take' or to 'seize' (cf. Prov. 1:5). Maturity is evidenced as one gains an ever-increasing ability to grasp with his mind the wisdom of God, as it relates to his particular circumstances. He thus receives 'perception' into the affairs of life. This teaching is further described as 'sound.' The term is the broadest Hebrew word for good. Among its expansive connotations are good, pleasant, beautiful, delightful, glad, joyful, precious, correct, and righteous. So, the teaching held out for us to lay hold of is that which is desirable no matter what angle it is viewed from or what light our circumstances may cast upon it. (Mentor Commentary)

**Sound** (good - Hebrew - [tob](#); Lxx = [agathos](#) = beneficial, wholesome, meets a high standard of quality) is a **key word** in Proverbs - Prov. 2:9; Prov. 2:20; Prov. 3:4; Prov. 3:14; Prov. 4:2; Prov. 8:11; Prov. 8:19; Prov. 12:2; Prov. 12:9; Prov. 12:25; Prov. 13:15; Prov. 13:22; Prov. 14:14; Prov. 14:19; Prov. 15:3; Prov. 15:15; Prov. 15:16; Prov. 15:17; Prov. 15:23; Prov. 15:30; Prov. 16:8; Prov. 16:16; Prov. 16:19; Prov. 16:29; Prov. 16:32; Prov. 17:1; Prov. 17:26; Prov. 18:5; Prov. 19:1; Prov. 19:2; Prov. 19:22; Prov. 20:23; Prov. 21:9; Prov. 21:19; Prov. 22:1; Prov. 22:9; Prov. 24:13; Prov. 24:23; Prov. 25:7; Prov. 25:24; Prov. 25:25; Prov. 25:27; Prov. 27:5; Prov. 27:10; Prov. 28:6; Prov. 28:21; Prov. 31:18;

**Teaching** ([03948](#)) [leqah/legach](#) from [laqach](#) = to seize) refers to teaching in an objective sense of something that is taught (Deut. 32:2; Job 11:4; Prov. 4:2). The extended meaning refers to grasping to understanding something well enough to teach others. [Leqach](#) refers to "insight" in a subjective sense of a personal acquirement (Prov. 1:5; 9:9; Isa. 29:24). It also refers to "instruction," as in the art of persuasion. It is used in a good sense of the teaching power or persuasion of a teacher (Prov. 16:21). But it is also used in the negative sense of the seductive words and persuasiveness of a harlot, a personification of the antithesis of wisdom (Prov. 7:21). **Leqah** can be subjective (instruction acquired) or objective (the thing being taught), but the latter fits best in Pr 4:2.

**Kitchen** adds that "**Teaching**" is literally the Hebrew word [torah](#), which most often refers to God's holy Law (e.g. Prov. 29:18) and can be a designation for the entire Pentateuch. However, here it refers specifically to what Solomon has given in these Proverbs as applications of the Law to daily living (Prov. 1:8; 4:2; 6:20, 23).

**Leqah** - 9v - Deut. 32:2; Job 11:4; Prov. 1:5; Prov. 4:2; Prov. 7:21; Prov. 9:9; Prov. 16:21; Prov. 16:23; Isa. 29:24

**Lawson** - many say, "Who will show us any good?" But they know not what is good for them, and suffer themselves to be deceived with shadows. Here God shows us what is good, and gives it to us. All the things that the sons of men can desire, are not to be compared to good doctrine.

**Do not abandon my instruction** - Why does Solomon give this instruction? Clearly our tendency (young sons, old men and everyone in between!) is to gravitate away from the Word of Truth if we are left to dependence on our old nature ([Old Man](#)). We need to make (enabled by the Spirit) a conscious effort, a volitional choice to pursue God in His Word. Note **instruction** is [torah](#) which links David's words with God's Word.



**Kitchen** - We are exhorted **not** to **'abandon'** what our father lays down for us by way of teaching. In its root (see [azab below](#)), the idea is that of leaving, forsaking, and loosing. It comes, then, to be the primary Hebrew word for apostasy. Here in Proverbs, we are additionally warned against forsaking the way of righteousness (Pr. 2:13; 15:10), wisdom (4:2, 6), reproof (10:17), loyalty and faithfulness (3:3). Sadly, perhaps the best biblical illustration of this kind of apostasy is that of Solomon's own son, Rehoboam. He turned away from the good wisdom of older men and chose instead the foolish counsel of his younger advisors (1 Kings 12:8, 13; 2 Chron. 10:8, 13). The result was a breach in the kingdom of Israel and the desolation of the nation.

**Bridges** - Solomon evidently speaks from the mouth of God, declaring his doctrine—his law. Therefore he claims attention to know under standing, for I give you good doctrine. (Eccl. 12:9–11) To many—exciting (Ezek. 33:31, 32.)—curious and speculative (2 Tim. 4:3, 4)—compromising (Isa. 30:10, Jer. 5:31)—self-righteous—self-exalting doctrine (Gal. 1:6, 7.)—is more attractive. But—Young people—remember! that which humbles the soul before God; that which exhibits the free grace of the Gospel; which melts down the will, consecrates the heart, imbues with the spirit of the cross—however unpalatable to the flesh, is alone good doctrine for the soul. Therefore forsake it not. ([Proverbs 4](#))

**Abandon** (leave) (05800)('azab) basically means to depart from something -- to leave, to forsake (48x), to leave (26x; "left" 22x), to loose, to depart, to abandon. The Septuagint uses [egkatalaipo](#) in Pr 4:2 which means to leave behind, sometimes even to [leave in a lurch](#). Things that can left behind or forsaken include persons (Ge 44:22; Nu 10:30; Ru 1:16; 2Ki4:30), people who should left behind (Ge 2:24); places (2Ki 8:6; Jer 18:14; 25:38) and objects (Ge 39:12,13; 50:8; Ex 9:21). Men can forsake God (apostatize) (Dt 28:20, 31:16, Jer 1:16), can abandon qualities of virtue (1Ki 12:8, 2Chr 10:8, 13), the way (of righteousness) (Pr 15:10), instruction/wisdom (Pr 4:2, 6), reproof (Pr 10:17 - "ignore" = forsake), kindness (lovingkindness, faithfulness) (Pr 3:3). God promises to not forsake His people (Ge 24:27, 28:15, Dt 31:6,7 contrast what God's people will do = Dt 31:16). In a use similar to Pr 28:13, we are instructed to "forsake wrath." (Ps 37:8) **1828 Webster - Forsake** = To quit or leave entirely; to desert; to abandon; to depart from. 2. To abandon; to renounce; to reject. 3. To leave; to withdraw from; to fail. In anger, the color forsakes the cheeks. In severe trials, let not fortitude forsake you. 4. In scripture, God forsakes his people, when he withdraws his aid, or the light of his countenance.

**'Azab in Proverbs** - These 11 uses are worth studying to give you a vivid picture of the importance of not abandoning or forsaking these instructions.

1. Proverbs 2:13 From those who **leave** the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;
2. Proverbs 2:17 That **leaves** the companion of her youth And forgets the covenant of her God;
3. Proverbs 3:3 Do not let kindness and truth **leave** you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.
4. Proverbs 4:2 For I give you sound teaching; Do not **abandon** my instruction.
5. Proverbs 4:6 "Do not **forsake** her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you.
6. Proverbs 9:6 "**Forsake** your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding."
7. Proverbs 10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who **ignores** reproof goes astray.
8. Proverbs 15:10 Grievous punishment is for him who **forsakes** the way; He who hates reproof will die.
9. Proverbs 27:10 Do not **forsake** your own friend or your father's friend, And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.
10. Proverbs 28:4 Those who **forsake** the law praise the wicked, But those who keep the law strive with them.
11. Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and **forsakes** them will find compassion.

**Instruction** (teaching) (08451)([torah](#) from [yarah](#)) is a feminine noun meaning instruction, direction, law, Torah, the whole Law. As discussed above [yarah](#) derives from a word that means to shoot an arrow, for a teacher aims to hit the target and achieve specific goals in the lives of the students. **Torah** refers to instructions from God to His people on how to live (cf Job 22:22), and this was to be a total way of life, permeating every decision, thought, deed, etc. Torah was given to make known the way we should walk. In Israel, parents (Pr. 1:8; 6:20) and wise persons (Pr 13:14; 28:4) were major sources of instruction for life. Rebels were not willing to accept God's instructions in any manner (Isa 30:8, 9). In a similar way, the scribes handled the torah deceitfully and falsely ""How can you say, 'We are wise, And the law of the LORD is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes Has made it into a lie." (Jer. 8:8). **Torah** is often found paired

with other words or phrases - "the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24), "the word of the LORD" (Isa. 1:10); "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20). Torah depict priestly instructions in general or as a whole. The Lord rejected the priests of Israel for they had disregarded it -- "those who handle the law did not know Me" (Jer 2:8) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since **you have forgotten the law of your God**, I also will forget your children." (Hos. 4:6). They had been charged to carry out and teach all the instructions of the Lord (Dt 17:11).

### Proverbs 4:3 When I was a son to my father, Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,

BGT Proverbs 4:3 υ ς γ ρ γεν μην κ γ πατρ π κοος κα γαπ μενος ν προσ π μητρ ς

NET Proverbs 4:3 When I was a son to my father, a tender only child before my mother,

NLT Proverbs 4:3 For I, too, was once my father's son, tenderly loved as my mother's only child.

ESV Proverbs 4:3 When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,

NIV Proverbs 4:3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother,

KJV Proverbs 4:3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

LXE Proverbs 4:3 For I also was a son obedient to my father, and loved in the sight of my mother:

ASV Proverbs 4:3 For I was a son unto my father, Tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

CSB Proverbs 4:3 When I was a son with my father, tender and precious to my mother,

NKJ Proverbs 4:3 When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,

NRS Proverbs 4:3 When I was a son with my father, tender, and my mother's favorite,

YLT Proverbs 4:3 For, a son I have been to my father -- tender, And an only one before my mother.

- 2Sa 12:24,25 1Ki 1:13-17 1Ch 3:5 22:5 29:1 Jer 10:23 Ro 12:16

## DAVID'S EXAMPLE TOWARD SOLOMON

Solomon describes how his father David and mother Bathsheba spoke to him at **tender** young age. Beloved, parental instruction can never begin too soon in the child's life!

**McGee** - Solomon wrote this, and he is talking about his own father. Notice that he says, "I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother." There are those who feel that the father's heart was wrapped up in his boy Solomon. I don't see it like that. In my opinion the historical books reveal that Solomon was not the first choice of his father. This boy, reared in the women's palace, was more or less of a sissy. I think he was a sort of playboy, and David did not have much in common with him. Solomon says, "I am my father's son, but it was my mother who really loved me and taught me."

**Kitchen** - Solomon now speaks autobiographically, concurring with his father David's assessment of him as 'tender' (1 Chron. 22:5; 29:1). Following the death of David and Bathsheba's first child, Solomon was the first of their four other sons (2 Sam. 12:24; 1 Chron. 3:5), making him their only son for a time.

**When I was a son to my father, Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother** - (cf 1 Chr 22:5, 1 Chr 29:1) To be a **son to my father** conveys the sense that Solomon was under David's authority. "Waltke explains that the sense here is of a true son, true in a spiritual and moral sense. Even as a rebellious child could be disowned in Israel (Deuteronomy 21:18–21 and 32:19–20), an obedient son was regarded as true in every sense.:1 Chronicles 3:5 indicates that Bathsheba had other sons through David, but Solomon was her special son, God's chose heir to the throne of Israel. "Though Abraham had other sons, only Isaac is called his yahid (Genesis 22:2, 12, 16) to emphasize the special status of Sarah's offspring." (Waltke)" (Guzik)

**POSB on tender** - Tender refers to the early, innocent years of a child's life when his or her heart is soft and impressionable. David knew that his son would not be tender like this forever. Therefore, he took advantage of this limited window of opportunity: he stamped God's law-His Holy Word-upon Solomon's heart before it hardened, before the world made its impression upon him. For a time, Solomon was the only son of David and Bathsheba. Scripture says he was the "only beloved [child] in the sight of [his] mother" (Pr 4:3). He was not their firstborn, however. The child, conceived in David and Bathsheba's adultery, was taken by God in judgment



for their sin (2 Sa.12:14). They would later have three additional sons (1 Chr.3:5), but Solomon's emphasis here is that his father instructed him while he was very young, before his brothers were born.

**Tender** (07390)(rak) is an adjective meaning gentle, tender, weak, indecisive. "This adjective is used in the sense of the tenderness or softness of few years (Gen. 18:7), of soft words (Job 40:27), and in the sense of weakness (Gen. 29:17). Here, a loving father and mother see Solomon in the vulnerability of young age." (Kitchen)

**Gilbrant** - The concept of tenderness is spoken of little children (Gen. 33:13), as Jacob politely refused Esau's offer to ride with Jacob's entourage because his children were tender. Tender, here, must include the idea that children could not physically or emotionally withstand the hardships and sustained efforts of which adults are capable. Young cattle are called tender of flesh when Abraham selected one to be eaten by his angelic visitors (Gen. 18:7). Usually, the younger animal's flesh, when used for human food, is not as tough to chew as an older one. King David called himself weak, too weak to confront the sons of Zeruah (Joab and his brothers) who had murdered Abner. Thus, the king could not, or would not, punish them and called upon the Lord to do so (2 Sam. 3:39). Leah's eyes were considered tender, which means they were dull colored, probably light blue or gray, not dark colored, the preferable color for standards of beauty in the Near East at the time (Gen. 29:17). Certain men and women were called delicate when their personalities and situations in life left them pampered, without the necessity of physical labor or hard work (Deut. 28:54, 56). The proverbial "soft answer" that turns away wrath is a use of rakh (Prov. 15:1). Words that are pleasant, spoken with tender feeling and tact, diffuse the heat of anger in conflicting social interaction. Such words were not spoken to humans by the giant animal, the Leviathan, a fierce and invincible foe (Job 41:3). A final use for rakh is "soft of heart," which means "fearful" or "fainthearted." Conspirators fought against Rehoboam, when he was young and tenderhearted (2 Chr. 13:7). The interesting thing about this passage is that Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and that age was considered young (cf. 2 Chr. 12:13). He did not listen to the old men but took counsel with his friends, the young men (2 Chr. 10:6-11). Here, the meaning seems more related to a lack of wisdom, defensiveness, insecurity and fear. ([Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#))

**Rak** - 15v - frail(1), gentle(1), inexperienced(2), refined(2), soft(2), tender(3), tender one(1), timid\*(1), weak(2). Gen. 18:7; Gen. 29:17; Gen. 33:13; Deut. 28:54; Deut. 28:56; 2 Sam. 3:39; 1 Chr. 22:5; 1 Chr. 29:1; 2 Chr. 13:7; Job 41:3; Prov. 4:3; Prov. 15:1; Prov. 25:15; Isa. 47:1; Ezek. 17:22

**Charles Bridges** - Solomon here claims our attention as a teacher of youth, on account of his own godly education by such a father. He was a **tender** child (1 Chron. 22:5, 29:1)—well-beloved, as an only son (Not really the only son. 2 Sam. 5:14, 1 Chron. 3:5. Thus Isaac was called the only son, (i.e. most beloved,) when Ishmael was another son: Gen. 22:2, 12, 16, with Ge 17:19). The more dearly he was loved, the more carefully was he taught. Thus we are brought into the family of "the man after God's heart," to hear him "commanding his child" in the fear and service of the Lord! (Comp. also 1 Kings 2:2-4, 1 Chron. 22:6-16; 28:9, 10, 20. Comp. Gen. 18:19, Deut. 6:8.) A special mercy is it to us, if we can tell of an Abraham or a David—of a Lois or an Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14, 15), having taught and bound us to the ways of God! Parents! remember—a child untaught will be a living shame. (Pr 29:15.) Training discipline, not foolish indulgence, is the truest evidence of affection to our tender and beloved. (1 Kings 1:6. Comp. Pr 13:24)

**Proverbs 4:4 Then he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; Keep my commandments and live;**

BGT Proverbs 4:4 ο λεγον κα δ δασκ ν με ρειδ τω μ τερος λ γος ε ς σ ν καρδ αν

NET Proverbs 4:4 he taught me, and he said to me: "Let your heart lay hold of my words; keep my commands so that you will live.

NLT Proverbs 4:4 My father taught me, "Take my words to heart. Follow my commands, and you will live.

ESV Proverbs 4:4 he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

NIV Proverbs 4:4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.

KJV Proverbs 4:4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

LXE Proverbs 4:4 who spoke and instructed me, saying, Let our speech be fixed in thine heart, keep our commandments, forget them not:

ASV Proverbs 4:4 And he taught me, and said unto me: Let thy heart retain my words; Keep my commandments, and live;

CSB Proverbs 4:4 he taught me and said: "Your heart must hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live.

NKJ Proverbs 4:4 He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live.

NRS Proverbs 4:4 he taught me, and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

YLT Proverbs 4:4 And he directeth me, and he saith to me: 'Let thy heart retain my words, Keep my commands, and live.

- He: Pr 22:6 Ge 18:19 1Ch 22:11-16 28:9 Eph 6:4 2Ti 1:5 3:15
- Let: Pr 3:1 De 4:9 6:6 Ps 119:11
- keep: Pr 7:2 Lev 18:3-5 Isa 55:3 Joh 12:50 Heb 5:9

## TAKING GOD'S WORD TO HEART

Pr 4:4b through Pr 4:9 quote David's instruction to his son. So Solomon quotes David to pass the instruction on to his sons. (cf pattern of 2 Ti 2:2+)

**Kitchen** - Solomon was stressing that he was once in the very position his sons now found themselves in: that of a learner. David and Solomon are both illustrating the fulfillment of the covenant obligation of parents to pass on the truth to the next generation. Deuteronomy 6:6–9 told of the transmission of truth across three generations (Moses, parents, children) just as we have pictured here. Teaching travels along lines of relationship and affection, making the home life the primary and most ideal place for instruction. The father is to take the initiative in this instruction, though certainly the mother is highly involved grace (cf 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14–15),.

**Then he taught me and said to me** - Solomon is referring to his father David (**he taught me**).

**POSB** - Despite the passing of time, Solomon had not forgotten what his father taught him (Pr 4:4-9). He could still hear David's voice echoing in his ears. The words his father had spoken were permanently inscribed on his tender heart.

**John Trapp** comments that Solomon's fall (1 Kings 11:1-12) "was therefore the more blameworthy, because he had been so piously educated."

**Morgan** writes that ""Those who receive from their parents direction in the fear of Jehovah, have that for which to be perpetually thankful. They can never escape its power. It may be that they will ultimately reject its appeal, but the fact that they have received it will create for them a way of escape from evil through all life's pilgrimage."

Recall David's charge to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a wholeheart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

**Let your heart hold fast my words** - More literally "Let your heart keep my words." **UBS** says "We may also say, for example, "Keep my words in your thoughts," "Keep my words in your memory," or "Remember the teachings you learn from me." These were powerful, life-giving words. In a similar exhortation in Pr 3:1 Solomon said "let your heart keep my commandments." **Hold fast** - grasp, hold firmly in hand. The Septuagint for **hold fast** (Heb - [tamak](#)) is the verb **ereido** which is a command in the [present imperative](#) calling for the words to be become fixed in your heart. **Ereido** is used in Acts 27:41 describing Paul's shipwreck and the ship's "prow **stuck fast** and immovable" on the shore.

**Toy on heart** - the whole inward perceptive nature. The Heb. word is not properly represented by Eng. heart, which conveys to the modern reader the impression of a particularly emotional element.

**Heart** ([03820](#))([leb](#)) sometimes refers to a literal heart (Ex 28:29, 1Sa 25:37, 2Ki 9:24), but most often is used figuratively to refer to what I term the "control center" of our being. Think of an Air Traffic Controller and how

dysfunctional, even destructive it is when the controllers fail to function as they should. Just as a healthy human heart is at the center of the body and absolutely essential for physical life and health, so too a healthy spiritual heart (intellect, emotion, will) is at the center of one's inner being (soul) and is vital for a healthy soul, serving as the "fountain" of all moral attitudes and actions. Our spiritual heart thus controls out **actions** and our actions determine our **habits**, which in turn determine our **character**. When God measures the "worth" of a man's life He puts the measuring tape around his heart, not around his head.

**Heart** is a **key word** in **Proverbs** - Prov. 2:2; Prov. 2:10; Prov. 3:1; Prov. 3:3; Prov. 3:5; Prov. 4:4; Prov. 4:23; Prov. 5:12; Prov. 6:14; Prov. 6:18; Prov. 6:21; Prov. 6:32; Prov. 7:3; Prov. 7:7; Prov. 7:10; Prov. 7:25; Prov. 8:5; Prov. 9:4; Prov. 9:16; Prov. 10:8; Prov. 10:13; Prov. 10:20; Prov. 10:21; Prov. 11:12; Prov. 11:20; Prov. 12:8; Prov. 12:11; Prov. 12:20; Prov. 12:23; Prov. 12:25; Prov. 13:12; Prov. 14:10; Prov. 14:13; Prov. 14:14; Prov. 14:30; Prov. 14:33; Prov. 15:7; Prov. 15:11; Prov. 15:13; Prov. 15:14; Prov. 15:15; Prov. 15:21; Prov. 15:28; Prov. 15:30; Prov. 15:32; Prov. 16:1; Prov. 16:5; Prov. 16:9; Prov. 16:21; Prov. 16:23; Prov. 17:3; Prov. 17:16; Prov. 17:18; Prov. 17:20; Prov. 17:22; Prov. 18:2; Prov. 18:12; Prov. 18:15; Prov. 19:3; Prov. 19:8; Prov. 19:21; Prov. 20:5; Prov. 20:9; Prov. 21:1; Prov. 21:2; Prov. 21:4; Prov. 22:11; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 22:17; Prov. 23:7; Prov. 23:12; Prov. 23:15; Prov. 23:17; Prov. 23:19; Prov. 23:26; Prov. 23:33; Prov. 23:34; Prov. 24:2; Prov. 24:12; Prov. 24:17; Prov. 24:30; Prov. 24:32; Prov. 25:3; Prov. 25:20; Prov. 26:23; Prov. 26:25; Prov. 27:9; Prov. 27:11; Prov. 27:19; Prov. 27:23; Prov. 28:14; Prov. 28:26; Prov. 30:19; Prov. 31:11

**Hold fast** (08551)(**tamak**) means to take hold of, to grasp, to uphold, to support, to hold fast. **Tamak** conveys the basic idea of grasping securely and is used often in the context of moral issues as here in Pr 5:22 (See below and ). Wisdom is " is a tree of life to those who **take hold** of her."

**Tamak** - 20v - Gen. 48:17; Exod. 17:12; Job 36:17; Ps. 16:5; Ps. 17:5; Ps. 41:12; Ps. 63:8; Prov. 3:18; Prov. 4:4; Prov. 5:5; Prov. 5:22; Prov. 11:16; Prov. 28:17; Prov. 29:23; Prov. 31:19; Isa. 33:15; Isa. 41:10; Isa. 42:1; Amos 1:5; Amos 1:8

**Guzik** - Before David spoke to Solomon he cultivated a receptive heart. David didn't want his words to fall upon deaf ears or a hard heart, so he addressed this first.. Plainly said, if the king of Israel took the time to teach his children in this way, so does every father. "Parents, you must remember than an untaught child will be a living shame (Proverbs 29:15)." (Bridges)

**Jensen** - Solomon very tenderly recognizes the impressions made on his life by his parents, David and Bathsheba (4:3). He quotes his father's counsel (4:4-9), and regards it as the same instruction he wants to give to his reader.

**Henry on hold fast** - Let thy heart retain my words; and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained. (see [Memorizing His Word](#) and [Biblical Meditation](#)). He must govern himself by them: Keep my commandments, obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, Jn. 7:17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."

Proverbs 6:23+ says "the **commandment** is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life."

**Keep my commandments and live** - The identical words are found in Pr 7:2. The idea is "**keep** so that you may live." **Keep** means to heed, to guard, to obey, to adhere, to follow the precepts, to conform your practices to the commandments. The result of keeping these lessons is life, which here, as in Pr 3:2, refers "length of days and years of life."

**Toy on live** - that they may secure the happiness of a long earthly life;"... Long life is considered in OT. to be one of the chief blessings of man's lot (Ex. 20:12), including, as it does, the idea of happiness (so that the first line might be rendered: a long and happy life). Sheol offered nothing—the longer one lived on earth the greater one's opportunities for work and enjoyment (Isa. 38:19; 65:20).

**Kitchen** points out that "The three discourses on wisdom that make up this chapter all contain a similar emphasis on the life-giving power of wisdom (Prov. 4:4, 10; 22-23)."

THOUGHT - NT believers have no excuse for we have the indwelling Spirit to enable us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12+), for it is God (the Spirit of Christ) Who is continually working in us (energizing) us, giving the desire (to "keep" or obey) and the power (to obey) for God's good pleasure." (Phil 2:13NLT+) This recalls Jesus' words that He "came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10)

**Guzik** - One of the ways that David cultivated a receptive heart was to communicate the importance of his instruction. Because the teaching faithfully communicated God's truth, obedience to the commands of his father meant life or death for Solomon.

**McGee** - David probably gave him a great deal of advice. When Solomon was made king, David said to him, "Play the man!" I think he said that because he felt that Solomon was not manly. He said, "Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live." David had learned by experience that you had better obey the Lord. Probably David was not as kind in teaching his son as he could have been. I have never felt that David was a success as a father. Unfortunately, that has been true of a great many famous men. The life of David was something that Solomon could emulate. Perhaps you are saying, Yes, but look what David did. Well, David's great sins were committed before Solomon was born, and David had turned from that type of life altogether. Now Solomon is giving advice to a young man, and he is really laying it on the line.

**Charles Bridges** - But let us examine this beautiful specimen of parental instruction. (Where David's instruction begins, is obvious. Where it ends is not so clear, whether it be Pr 4:6, 10, 12, 13; or as F. Taylor asserts, at the close of the ninth chapter But as Geier observes—"Let the reader form his own judgment—provided that we pay due obedience to the instruction; it matters little, whether we have it in the words of David or Solomon.") Observe the anxiety for his son's heart-religion. Let thine heart retain my words. Often (and this is a comfort to a weak memory) words may be lost to the memory, yet retained in the heart with a permanent sanctifying impression. This heart-keeping is the path of life, without which we "have only a name that we live, and are dead." Pr 4:13; 6:23; 8:34, 35, Isa. 55:3, Zech. 3:7, contrasted with Rev. 3:1, 2.)

**Commandments** (04687)(**mitsvah** rfrom **tsavah** = to lay charge upon, command, order) is that which is commanded, even human (esp a king, e.g. 2 Chr 9:14) or divine (most often) . In short it is not a suggestion. In the Pentateuch, **mitsvah** speaks only of God's commands to men, never of men's commands. Note that commandment is coupled with "keep" some 69 times in the NAS, clearly indicating that a major emphasis of this **mitsvah** is human obedience to God.

**Mitsvah** in Proverbs - Prov. 2:1; Prov. 3:1; Prov. 4:4; Prov. 6:20; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 7:1; Prov. 7:2; Prov. 10:8; Prov. 13:13; Prov. 19:16;

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## Proverbs 4 Today in the Word

April 4, 2013

Raising a child is a costly endeavor. To raise a child to age seventeen, a typical, middle-income American family spends an estimated \$234,900, or about \$14,000 per year. About 16 percent of this total is spent on food, 18 percent on childcare and education, and 30 percent on housing. This total represents, adjusted for inflation, a 23-percent increase since 1960.

More important than any financial challenge, though, is the task of instilling children with godly wisdom (Pr 4:7). Proverbs 4 focuses on several themes to help us do so. One is to teach attentiveness. You've probably already noticed the frequent exhortations to "listen" and "pay attention" (Pr 4:1, 20). Attentiveness involves more than hearing the words—it requires one to "lay hold" of wisdom, store it up and not to swerve from her commands (Pr 4:4–5, 23). It's a commitment that involves one's whole being (Pr 4: 6, 21).

Another focus for training wise children is to teach them that wisdom and righteousness are two sides of the same coin. One of the most important differences between godly wisdom and human wisdom is that God's wisdom never takes us down the path of the wicked (Pr 4:14–15). Wisdom is righteousness and folly is sinfulness, by definition, in the same way that light and dark are opposites by nature (Pr 4:18–19).

One more emphasis in godly childrearing is to teach wise decision-making. The spiritual life often confronts us with choices between two paths. One is the path of wisdom and righteousness and obedience; the other is the path of foolishness and evil and disobedience. One is the path of life; the other is the path of death (Pr 4:4, 13, 22–23). Wisdom reveals which are the crooked ways and which are the "straight paths" (Pr 4:11–12, 25–27).

Apply the Word - Building a spiritual heritage with our children is one of the most important callings we have as parents and even grandparents (Pr 4:3–9). Teaching, discussing, and modeling a life of faith for our children is an example of our own obedience to God's Word. When the time comes for them to leave the nest, godly wisdom is the garland of grace they need!

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## Proverbs 4:1-13 — A Dad Looks Back

Where did two decades go? How could they have sneaked by so fast? How could my little girl with the ringlet hair and cherubic smile already be 20 years old?

Wasn't it just a short time ago that she learned to write her name? Now she's writing term papers and e-mail. Wasn't it just yesterday that she sat on her tricycle and asked Jesus to be her Savior? Now she's working with foster kids to tell them of Christ.

Gone are the preschool years, the elementary years, and now the teenage years. With the loss comes the recollection of so many

great times—so many opportunities to reveal God's goodness, His guidelines, His love, and His salvation to Lisa.

As I think back on the opportunities I had during her formative years, I've concluded that the most vital aspect of parenting is relationship. Only when we maintain close fellowship with our children can we instruct them properly. When parents and their children share a relationship of mutual respect, new moments of teaching build themselves into a lifetime of love and strong values.

Mom and Dad, make it easier for your children to listen to your teaching by nourishing the relationship. It will help to make looking back a great experience. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God gives us children for a time  
To train them in His way,  
To love them and to teach them how  
To follow and obey.  
—Sper

Children may not inherit their parents' talents, but they will absorb their values.

**Proverbs 4:5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.**

BGT Proverbs 4:5 φ λασσε ντολ ς μ πιλ θ μηδ παρ δ ς σιν μο σι ματος

NET Proverbs 4:5 Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding; do not forget and do not turn aside from the words I speak.

NLT Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them.

ESV Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

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

KJV Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

LXE Proverbs 4:5 and do not neglect the speech of my mouth.

ASV Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding; Forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth;

CSB Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding; don't forget or turn away from the words of my mouth.

NKJ Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

NRS Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

YLT Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding, Do not forget, nor turn away From the sayings of my mouth.

- **Get wisdom:** Pr 1:22,23 2:2-4 3:13-18 8:5 17:16 18:1 19:8 23:23 Jas 1:5
- **neither:** 2Ch 34:2 Job 23:11 Ps 44:18 119:51,157

### **ACQUIRE WISDOM AT ANY COST!**

Proverbs 16:16 How much better it is to **get** (same verb "acquire") wisdom than gold! And to **get** (same verb "acquire") understanding is to be chosen above silver.

Proverbs 19:8 He who **gets** (same verb "acquire") wisdom loves his own soul; He who keeps understanding will find good.

Proverbs 23:23 **Buy** (same verb "acquire") truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.

**Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!** - NLT - Get wisdom; develop good judgment." The same verb **acquire** is used twice here and twice in Pr 4:7. Acquire (qanah) is used most often in the OT meaning to literally buy or purchase something and thus speaks of a commercial transaction. Here the verb qanah speaks of a spiritual transaction, a spiritual acquisition. If we seek the riches of wisdom, we need to dig into the Word of Truth and Life. We are not to go to men for wisdom but to God (cf earthly versus heavenly wisdom - James 3:15-18+). Here the repeated imperatives underscore the great importance of getting wisdom and understanding. It is interesting to consider that these commands from David to Solomon had motivated him to ask God for wisdom

in 1 Kings 3:5-14.

**We can get INFORMATION "on LINE" (from Google)  
but WISDOM is from "on HIGH" (from God)!**

**Related Resources:**

- [Click for much more discussion on Biblical wisdom](#)
- More on Biblical Wisdom - includes multiple devotionals related to wisdom

**Kitchen on acquire wisdom** - There is no charge too high to pay for these priceless treasures (Matt. 13:45–46). Forget all else, but be certain to gain wisdom!

**Guzik** makes an interesting point - Before David gave him the actual words of wisdom, he first encouraged the pursuit of wisdom in Solomon. We might say that this is even more important than any particular piece of wisdom, or it is one of the early lessons of wisdom. Value wisdom, pursue wisdom, sacrifice for wisdom,

**Kidner on acquire wisdom** - A blunt way of saying: 'What it takes is not brains or opportunity, but decision. Do you want it? Come and get it.' "

**Lawson** - How earnestly are we called to seek after wisdom, till we find it! It would be a happy token of getting it, were we so deeply convinced of its value, as to make the attainment of it our grand concern; for blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. If we cry for wisdom, and lift up our voice for understanding, our cries shall not remain unanswered. The success of Solomon's petition is recorded as an encouragement to our prayers and our hopes\*.

**Guzik** - Waltke explains that the verb get really has the sense to buy or purchase. "Qana means to acquire moveable goods through a financial transaction." The idea is that wisdom will cost something, but it is worth it.

**Wiersbe** agrees writing "'Get wisdom' suggests, 'buy wisdom,' because the Hebrew word carries the idea of a commercial transaction. There's a price to pay if you want to know God's truth and obey it."

**Toy on wisdom - Wisdom** is the general expression for knowledge of all good things; it is practical sagacity (Jdg. 5:29; 2 Sa 13:3; 14:2; 20:16), the skill of the artisan (Ex. 31:3), wide acquaintance with facts (1 Ki. 4:29–34 [5:9–14]), learning (Jer. 8:9), skill in expounding secret things (Ez. 28:3), statesmanship (Jer. 18:18), and finally, knowledge of right living in the highest sense. This last is its sense here—moral and religious intelligence. It excludes not only the morally bad, but also (in contrast with Greek wisdom) the philosophically speculative....In it the religious element is practically identical with the moral.

**McGee** - Wisdom is depicted as a lady who keeps a school and sends out her catalog. Remember that there is another woman, the stranger woman, who is also bidding for the interest of the young man. Wisdom is urging him to come to her school so that he might be wise.

**Wisdom** (Q2451)(**chokmah** from the verb **chakam** - to be wise) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. **Wisdom** is the ability to see something from God's viewpoint. **Wisdom** is "God's character in the many practical affairs of life." **Chokmah** is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The consistency of making the right choice is an indication of one's spiritual maturity. The prerequisite for this "**wisdom**" is the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7+). "**Wisdom**" is personified as crying out for disciples who will do everything to pursue her (Pr 1:20). The person who seeks **chokmah** diligently will receive understanding: (Pr 2:6) and will benefit in life by walking with God (Pr 2:20, cf Gal 5:16).

Wisdom - obtain it and retain it!

**Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth**- The positive instruction **acquire** is not balanced by the negative which is saying in essence do not lose what you acquire and do not turn from following wisdom and understanding. The implication is that it is possible to lose wisdom and understanding and sadly Solomon is a living example of this very danger (see 1 Kings 11:1-13)! **To turn away** means to abandon or give up. The **words of my mouth** refer to "my instructions."

**Kitchen** - The word warns against more than an absent-minded misfiling of information. It calls us to take personal action to recall what is important.

Often, it is a change in life-circumstances that creates the atmosphere in which one may forget previous experiences and instruction. But, just as often, the forgetfulness comes from personal neglect.



**POSB** - Wisdom must be exercised; it must be intentionally sustained. Many things in life are lost, not because they are intentionally let go, but because they are not purposely kept. Wisdom is one of those things. If a person does not deliberately practice and apply wisdom, it will silently slip away.

Beloved, these comments on Solomon's slide remind me of Paul's clear warning...

Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** ([blepo](#) in the [present imperative](#) - see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) that he does not fall. (1 Cor 10:12).

**THOUGHT** - Do not miss the [present imperative](#)! This taking heed is not for a moment or even a season of our life, but for our entire life! And as noted this means we need to continually depend on the enabling power of the Spirit to keep watching! He enables. We take heed! It is not "Let go, let God," but more like "Let God and let's go!" See the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible \(100/100\)](#)"

**Lawson** - It is not enough to get wisdom; we must also use it, and walk in its ways. They are all pleasantness and peace, but pain and misery will meet us, if we turn either to the right hand or to the left.

**Charles Bridges** - Observe again the earnestness of the exhortation. Many a parent, like Augustine's father (Of whom he records —'This Father of mine never troubled himself with any thought of—How I might improve myself towards thee, so that I proved eloquent, though I were withal left undrest by thy tillage.'—Confess, ii. 3.), insists—'Get wealth—worldly honor or wisdom.' This godly parent inculcates "line upon line"—Get heavenly wisdom—get it with all thy getting—at any cost and pains (.Pr 23:23. Comp. 1 Kings 10:1, Matt. 12:42.), and when thou hast got it, forget it not—decline not from it—forsake it not; (See the great importance of this continuance. John 7:30, 31, Col. 1:22, 23, Heb. 3:6, 14, contrasted with Matt. 13:20, 21.) and—as the cleaving principle of perseverance—love (Thus Jerome wrote to a friend—'Beg now for me, who am gray-headed of the Lord, that I may have wisdom for my companion, of which it is written—Love her, and she shall keep thee—embrace—exalt—her. Such a keeping is she for thy soul! (Pr 2:10–18) Such a treasure for thy happiness! Such a promoting honor even in this life! Such an ornament of grace in the Church! Such a crown of glory in heaven! Is not then wisdom the principal thing, not only important, but all-important? Shall it not then have our first choice (Matt. 6:33.)—infinitely above this world's glitter? (1 Kings 3:5–12, Phil. 3:7, 8.) It can have no place, if it has not the first place. Earthly wisdom may be "a goodly pearl;" But this "wisdom from above" is "the pearl of great price;" worth getting indeed; but only to be got, by "selling all that we have to buy it." (Matt. 13:45, 46)

#### **Proverbs 4:5-13**

The World Wide Web

I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. --Ecclesiastes 2:13

Brewster Kahle has a vision for the Internet. He dreams of universal access to all human knowledge. As Digital Librarian and Director and co-founder of Internet Archive, Kahle believes we have only begun to tap the vast potential of the Internet to change and improve our world. "My interest," he says, "is to build the great library... It is now technically possible to live up to the dream of the Library of Alexandria." He's referring to a huge vault of writings in ancient Egypt that was said to house all the world's knowledge.

But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. King Solomon was a man of vast knowledge (1Ki 4:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34). In his better moments, he used his God-given capacity to collect information and insight from every corner of life. In unguarded moments, however, he showed that all the knowledge in the world does not keep a person from missing the purpose of life (Ec 1:16, 17, 18). In spite of his knowledge, Solomon married many women, and when he was old he built altars to their gods (1Ki 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). His foolishness eventually led to his downfall.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Don't get caught in a web of knowledge without true wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7; 9:10). --Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

True wisdom is in living  
Near Jesus every day;  
True wisdom is in walking  
Where He shall lead the way.  
--Anon.

Wisdom gives wings to knowledge

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## Proverbs 4:5-13 — The World Wide Web

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Near Jesus every day;  
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Where He shall lead the way.  
—Anon.

Wisdom gives wings to knowledge.

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## Cutting A Trail By David C. Egner

The Native Americans of Michigan were the state's first highway route engineers. With few exceptions, Michigan's major highways follow the trails they cut through the wilderness hundreds of years before the white man came. A trail was 12-18 inches wide, and for safety the people followed single file. Then pack horses followed these trails, widening them. Later came wagons, and the trails became dirt roads and then highways.

In a similar way, Solomon followed the trail of his father and in turn paved the way for his sons and grandsons. He did this by encouraging his sons to heed his instructions just as he had followed the sound teaching of his father (Prov. 4:4-5). So this father, giving his sons good practical and spiritual counsel, was passing on what he had learned from the boys' grandfather, David, who was called a "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). The younger generation of believers often learns best about God from the family.

Our physical and spiritual children watch the path we're taking. As God's men and women, let's make certain we cut a righteous, wise, and clear trail. Then if ongoing generations choose to follow, the trail can become a highway—an ongoing legacy to God's glory. ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, as I walk my path of life,  
Help my feet step straight and true;  
That those who follow after me,  
Will be tracking straight with You.  
—Egner

When we follow God, we blaze a trail for those who would follow.

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## Proverbs 4:6 "Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you.

BGT Proverbs 4:6 μηδ γκαταλ π ς α τ ν κα νθ ξετα σου ρ σθητι α τ ς κα τηρ σει σε

NET Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will guard you.

NLT Proverbs 4:6 Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you.

ESV Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

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

KJV Proverbs 4:6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

LXE Proverbs 4:6 And forsake it not, and it shall cleave to thee: love it, and it shall keep thee.

ASV Proverbs 4:6 Forsake her not, and she will preserve thee; Love her, and she will keep thee.

CSB Proverbs 4:6 Don't abandon wisdom, and she will watch over you; love her, and she will guard you.

NKJ Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you.

NRS Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

YLT Proverbs 4:6 Forsake her not, and she doth preserve thee, Love her, and she doth keep thee.

- love: Pr 4:21,22 2:10-12 Eph 3:17 2Th 2:10

## BENEFITS OF WISDOM A GUARDIAN AND WATCHMAN

See Bridges comments above.

**Wisdom** is personified as a woman as in Pr 4:8, 9. Ross adds ""The teacher uses feminine verbs to promise protection and safety. Here we find wisdom personified as a woman, at first reading like a bride that is to be loved and embraced (v. 8), but also having the qualities of an influential patron who can protect."

**Do not forsake** (see ['azab](#)) **her, and she will guard** (see [shamar](#); Lxx - [tereo](#)) **you** - NLT = "Don't turn your back on wisdom." First the negative warning with a motivation. If we forsake wisdom, we jettison the fact that wisdom guards us, protects us, looks after us. The idea of guard is the exercising of great care over something.

**Love her, and she will watch** (see [natsar](#)) **over you** - Now the positive command motivated by a similar benefit. Wisdom will keep safe from danger, physical and spiritual danger.

**Kitchen on love her** - To 'love' wisdom is underscored especially in the eighth chapter. Those who love wisdom are loved by her (Prov. 8:17). To love wisdom is to succeed (Prov. 8:21). To hate wisdom is, on the other hand, to love death (Prov. 8:36). The son who loves wisdom gladdens the heart of his father (Prov. 29:3).

**Lawson** - That we may not forsake wisdom, we must embrace and love her. A miser will never forget where his treasure lies, and he will lose his life sooner than be robbed of his precious store. The love of wisdom will in like manner induce us to lay it up in our hearts, and to keep fast hold of it in defiance of every danger. When persons receive not the truth in the love of it, they provoke God to leave them to the influence of strong and soul-ruining delusions. When we receive it into our hearts, it makes us strong and victorious over the wicked one†.

**McGee** - Notice that he says that wisdom will "preserve" and "keep" the young man. The great difference in contemporary educators is pinpointed in this verse. Do they **love** wisdom? In other words, do they love the Word of God? It was Pascal who said that human knowledge must be understood to be loved. But divine knowledge must be loved to be understood. So if you are going to understand the Word of God, you must bring to it love and a mind that is willing to be taught. Then the spirit of God can open up the great truths to you. How important it is to see this. He says, "love her, and she shall keep thee."

**Proverbs 4:7 "The beginning of wisdom is: **Acquire** wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.**

NET Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is supreme— so acquire wisdom, and whatever you acquire, acquire understanding!

NLT Proverbs 4:7 Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.

ESV Proverbs 4:7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

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

KJV Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get

understanding.

LXE Proverbs 4:7

ASV Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom; Yea, with all thy getting get understanding.

CSB Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is supreme-- so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding.

NKJ Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

NRS Proverbs 4:7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.

YLT Proverbs 4:7 The first thing is wisdom -- get wisdom, And with all thy getting get understanding.

- Wisdom is: Ec 7:12 9:16-18 Mt 13:44-46 Lu 10:42 Php 3:8
- with: Pr 16:16 21:6 Ps 49:16-20 Ec 2:4-9 4:8 Mk 8:36,37 Lu 12:20
- get understanding: Ps 119:104

## WISDOM IS THE CHIEF THING

**The beginning** (same word in Pr 1:7) **of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding** - Wisdom is to be our passionate pursuit. **Beginning** signifies first in place, time, order, or rank. Again he emphasizes acquisition of wisdom -- no price is too high for wisdom—give everything for it. And this repetition of **acquire** indicates that wisdom is not a once-and-for-all decision but is a process. Wisdom is not obtained in a moment but progressively over one's life. The key is to stay in the Word of Wisdom and ask the Spirit of Wisdom to teach us continually.

**Lawson** - David had got understanding by meditating on God's testimonies, and he found it the principal thing. His crown and palace were not comparable to it in his eyes. Setting so high a value upon it himself, it was his great desire that his beloved son should get it also. And those parents who are possessed of David's spirit, would rather see their children wise unto salvation, than rich and great in the world. Evil parents are not so bad as to refuse bread and fishes to their children. Good parents use every means to make them sharers of that wisdom, which they have found to be their own happiness. Whatever we get, let us get wisdom. I remember to have read of two religious women in the reign of Queen Mary of England, who parted with a considerable portion of their estate, for a few leaves of the Bible. They who look upon the bargain as a foolish one, have little knowledge of the worth of the scriptures. If a man has acquired thousands of gold and silver, and is without wisdom, he has gained thousands of shining nothings. If he has acquired wisdom, and nothing besides, he has gained the one thing needful\*.

**Kitchen** - The attainment of wisdom is, in the final analysis, not a matter of I.Q. or G.P.A., but of desire and will. Richard Baxter was right: 'You shall find this to be God's usual course: not to give his children the taste of his delights till they begin to sweat in seeking after them.'<sup>15</sup>

**Jensen** - The key statement of the stanza is in verse 7a, in which Solomon hails wisdom as the primary thing. So, exclaims Solomon, get wisdom! "Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (4:7b, NIV). Four lines earlier he made the same appeal: "Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!" (4:5a). Surrounding the key statement, we find four commands about Wisdom personified: Do not forsake her [4:6]; Love her [4:6]; Prize her [4:8]; Embrace her [4:8]. The rewards could not be greater. She will exalt you [4:8] She will honor you [4:8]; She will place on your head a garland of grace [4:9]; She will present you with a crown of beauty [4:9; cf., 16:31].

**McGee** - Notice the way he speaks of wisdom. It is not just knowledge; it is not simply having a computer mind. It is wisdom and intelligence to use knowledge properly and to have a love for it. That is something that the souls of men need today. The reason education is not satisfying is because of the way it is dished out. The most impressive thing here is that we are to get wisdom. How important it is.

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### First Things First Proverbs 4:7

During World War II, I served as an orthopedic technician in a hospital in England. One day we were cleaning up after putting casts on fractured limbs when I noticed some co-workers goofing off instead of helping. I didn't hesitate to show my displeasure.

Such incidents are why I usually find myself saying a few words in defense of Martha whenever I preach on Luke 10:38, 39, 40, 41, 42. You'll recall that she was "distracted with much serving" (Lk 10:40), while her sister Mary did nothing but listen

to Jesus.

It's easy for me to see Martha's point of view. In Proverbs, more than a dozen verses rebuke the slothful. And when some first-century Christians quit working and started to freeload off others, Paul laid down the rule: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2Th 3:10).

Our approach to work must be balanced. Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing." Martha could have said, "Mary, dinner can wait. I'll join you in listening to Jesus before getting started in the kitchen."

Work is vital. But we should not be so obsessed with it that it crowds out worship and spiritual instruction.

Work hard, but keep first things first. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

For more on this topic, read the online booklet

Mary & Martha: Balancing Life's Priorities

Don't be so busy doing good that you neglect to do what's right.

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Proverbs 4:7a

A series of cartoons in a New York newspaper depicted a young woman, garbed in cap and gown, holding a diploma with much pride. With her head held high she is looking down her nose at "Mr. World," while that cold, cruel cynic is saying, "Well, who do we have here?" Next, with shoulders thrown back, the young lady replies, "Certainly you know who I am. I'm Cecelia Shakespeare Doaks, a graduate of Prestige College. I have my A.B." "My dear child," Mr. World says in reply, "come with me, and I'll teach you the rest of the alphabet!"

Now, we certainly would not discourage the quest for learning, nor the desire to pursue an education to meet the demands and opportunities of life — we would encourage it! But it's important to remember that there is more involved in a well-rounded education than the completion of some college courses. Four years of classroom instruction, even under the most competent teachers, doesn't make one all-wise. The "school of hard knocks" often makes a far greater impact than the "university of hard facts." Even with the best education and down-to-earth, practical experience, however, a man or woman really "knows" nothing apart from God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Knowledge is the acquisition of facts. Wisdom is the ability to use this knowledge rightly. A person may acquire much knowledge, but without wisdom his acquired storehouse of facts will do him little good; in fact, it may even be spiritually harmful to him. Get an education? Yes, but also seek for that wisdom which is from above. James tells us, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God ... and it shall be given him" (James 1:5-note).

"Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life [behavior] his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A man may store his mind with facts,  
Till knowledge from it overflows,  
But lacking wisdom from Above,  
He's still a "fool" till Christ he knows.  
—Bosch

True wisdom consists principally of two parts: the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of

**Proverbs 4:8 "Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her.**

BGT Proverbs 4:8 περιχαρ κωσον α τ ν κα ψ σει σε τ μησον α τ ν να σε περιλ β

NET Proverbs 4:8 Esteem her highly and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

NLT Proverbs 4:8 If you prize wisdom, she will make you great. Embrace her, and she will honor you.

ESV Proverbs 4:8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

NIV Proverbs 4:8 Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you.

KJV Proverbs 4:8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

LXE Proverbs 4:8 Secure it, and it shall exalt thee: honour it, that it may embrace thee;

ASV Proverbs 4:8 Exalt her, and she will promote thee; She will bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.

CSB Proverbs 4:8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you.

NKJ Proverbs 4:8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.

NRS Proverbs 4:8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

YLT Proverbs 4:8 Exalt her, and she doth lift thee up, She honoureth thee, when thou dost embrace her.

- Pr 3:35 22:4 1Sa 2:30 1Ki 3:5-13 Da 12:3

**Prize her, and she will exalt you;** **Prize** (salal) means build up, to lift up; to cast up, to exalt, to hold in a position of a high or excessively high reputation or worth. In short the idea is to esteem wisdom highly. The Septuagint translates salal with pericharakoo (in [aorist imperative](#) ) which means to surround with a stockade, and figuratively to secure. It is used one other time in the Bible in Jer 52:4 to describe when Nebuchadnezzar "built a siege wall all around" Jerusalem. The "promise" (as much as proverb can be a promise) is that wisdom **will exalt** ([Rum](#)) you, lift you high. [Rum](#) is used 8x in Proverbs, some uses in a negative sense and some like this verse in a positive sense (Prov. 3:35; Prov. 4:8; Prov. 6:17; Prov. 11:11; Prov. 14:29; Prov. 14:34; Prov. 24:7; Prov. 30:13).

The principle of this passage is in a sense illustrated in 1 Sa 2:30 where God honors those who honor Him.

One paraphrase (French Common Language Version) has "Clasp wisdom like a beloved woman. If you embrace her, she will make you noble and great."

**Kitchen** comments that "The first line contends that, when you lift high wisdom, it pulls you up with it. When you attempt to lift yourself high, you will be brought low (Prov. 16:18). If, however, you concentrate not on exalting yourself, but placing wisdom high and to the forefront of all you do, then you also shall be lifted up and honored (James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6)."

**She will honor you if you embrace her** - Wisdom will **honor** the possessor. **Honor** is [kabad](#) (Lxx = [timao](#) = ascribe worth to someone) and [kabad](#) is used in Pr 3:9, 4:8, 8:24, 12:9, 13:18, 14:31, 27:18). The idea of [kabad](#) is weightiness so one can picture **honor** as "you are weighty and heavy in that you are loaded with praise and good report. Proverbs often sounds the note that outward reputation comes through an inward embrace of wisdom (Prov. 21:21; 22:4; 26:1). If you hold yourself close to wisdom, you will take on the weight of her honor as she is seen in you." (Kitchen) **Embrace** ([habaq](#); Lxx = [perilambano](#) = put one's arms around!) is used of giving a physical embrace to show affection and is often accompanied by the verb to kiss, and clearly is figurative in this usage. But if wisdom is personified as a woman, it depicts showing appropriate affection for "her." The only other use of embrace is in a negative sense - "embrace the bosom of a foreigner." (Pr 5:20+). And I would submit that if embrace wisdom, we will be far less likely to embrace the bosom of a foreigner. In that sense wisdom is a guardian or watchman as we saw in Pr 4:6.

**Lawson** - All that truly know wisdom, must embrace and exalt her. The only reason why any treat her with indifference, is that they are entire strangers to her. None knew her better than David and Solomon, and we hear how eloquent in her praises they are. We must prize wisdom as a pearl of inestimable value, and we must testify our regard for her, by growing in grace and in knowledge; by improving every means and opportunity afforded us of increasing this divine treasure; by valuing, for the sake of wisdom, the teachers and lovers of it; by earnest endeavours to make our friends and neighbours sensible of its value; and, in a word, by giving it the throne of our hearts, and the government of every action of our lives. They who honour wisdom, obtain the noblest honours, for by wisdom they are promoted. Their heads are adorned with a diadem of beauty, and a crown of glory is delivered to them.

**McGee** - The interesting thing here is that wisdom is to be loved like a woman is loved. When we get to the New Testament, this is changed—Christ has been made unto us wisdom, and we are to love Him. The real difficulty in our day is not that there are problems in the Bible. The real difficulty is that in man there is not that love and longing for God and for the things of God. When love is present in the heart, this Book will begin to open up, because the spirit of God will become the Teacher.

**Proverbs 4:9 "She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty."**



BGT Proverbs 4:9 να δ τ σ κεφαλ στ φανον χαρ των στεφ ν δ τρυφ ς περασπ σ σου

NET Proverbs 4:9 She will place a fair garland on your head; she will bestow a beautiful crown on you."

NLT Proverbs 4:9 She will place a lovely wreath on your head; she will present you with a beautiful crown."

ESV Proverbs 4:9 She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

NIV Proverbs 4:9 She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor."

KJV Proverbs 4:9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

LXE Proverbs 4:9 that it may give unto thy head a crown of graces, and may cover thee with a crown of delight.

ASV Proverbs 4:9 She will give to thy head a chaplet of grace; A crown of beauty will she deliver to thee.

CSB Proverbs 4:9 She will place a garland of grace on your head; she will give you a crown of beauty."

NKJ Proverbs 4:9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you."

NRS Proverbs 4:9 She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

YLT Proverbs 4:9 She giveth to thy head a wreath of grace, A crown of beauty she doth give thee freely.

- **will place:** Pr 1:9 3:22 1Ti 2:9,10 1Pe 3:4
- **a crown:** Pr 16:31 Isa 28:5 Heb 2:7-9 1Pe 5:4 Rev 3:21

Most commentators see this verse as the end of the instructions of David to Solomon.

**She will place on your head a garland of grace-** Again wisdom is personified as bestowing favor on the possessor of wisdom, in this case grace.

The Hebrew for **garland** ([livyah](#)) is translated with [stephanos](#) which was an adornment worn around the head, given as an award in athletic contests and is the word used to describe the crowns believers can gain (See crown in Rev 2:10+)

**Garlands** were often fashioned from flowers, vines or branches and would be placed upon the heads of royalty or dignitaries. They were not only decorative, but they also symbolized honor, respect to the one who wore them. The only other use of garland in the OT is Pr 1:8-9+ "Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; 9 Indeed, they (INSTRUCTION, TEACHING) are a graceful **wreath** to your head And ornaments about your neck."

It is interesting that the combination of wisdom and grace is found in Luke 2:40+ describing Jesus "The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in **wisdom**; and the **grace** of God was upon Him." Indeed, those filled with wisdom and grace are much more likely to manifest Christ-like behavior.

**NET NOTE** - The personification of wisdom continues with the bestowal of a wreath for the head (e.g., 1:9). The point is that grace will be given to the individual like a wreath about the head.

**She will present you with a crown of beauty-** **Crown** ([atarah](#)) is again translated with [stephanos](#). "This verse uses wedding imagery: The wife (wisdom) who is embraced by her husband (the disciple) will place the wedding crown on the head of her new bridegroom. Wisdom, like a virtuous wife, will crown the individual with honor and grace." (NET NOTE)

**Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many.**

BGT Proverbs 4:10 κουε υ κα δ ξαι μο ς λ γους κα πληθυνθ σεται τη ζω ς σου να σοι γ νωνται πολλα δο β ου

NET Proverbs 4:10 Listen, my child, and accept my words, so that the years of your life will be many.

NLT Proverbs 4:10 My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life.

ESV Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

NIV Proverbs 4:10 Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.

KJV Proverbs 4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

LXE Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and receive my words; and the years of thy life shall be increased, that the resources of thy life may be many.

ASV Proverbs 4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; And the years of thy life shall be many.

CSB Proverbs 4:10 Listen, my son. Accept my words, and you will live many years.

NKJ Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many.

NRS Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

YLT Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And years of life are multiplied to thee.

- **my**: Pr 8:10 19:20 Job 22:22 Jer 9:20 Joh 3:32,33 1Th 2:13 1Ti 1:15
- **the**: Pr 3:2,16 De 5:16 6:2

Solomon returns to the familiar metaphor of life as a path (e.g. Pr. 1:15, 19; 2:7–9, 12–15, 18–19; 3:6, 23). In Proverbs 4:10-19 we see two diverging, diametrically opposed paths on which can choose to walk on this short journey called life. In Pr 4:10-13 we see the path of the godly man or woman and in Pr 4:14-17 the path of the ungodly, wicked person.

**Hear** (command - [shama](#)), **my son** - Solomon again demands his son's attention, directing him to hear what he is saying (Pr 4:10a; 1:8; 4:1). As discussed the idea is not just hearing sound waves, but processing them and practicing them (aka obey).

**And accept my sayings** - **Accept** ([laqach](#)) (see Pr 1:3+ = "To receive instruction in wise behavior." and Pr 2:1+ = "if you will receive my words") means to take, grasp, take hold of and is translated in the Septuagint with dechomai which means to "put out the welcome mat" (so to speak) for these sayings (cf use in James 1:21+ = "receive"). So the ideas of hear and accept are listen, heed, receive (welcome) and apply as an integral part of one's life. Make them your "good friends," which you enjoy associating with.

**Accept** ([laqach](#)) in Proverbs - Prov. 1:3; Prov. 1:19; Prov. 2:1; Prov. 4:10; Prov. 6:25; Prov. 7:20; Prov. 8:10; Prov. 9:7; Prov. 10:8; Prov. 11:30; Prov. 17:23; Prov. 20:16; Prov. 21:11; Prov. 22:25; Prov. 22:27; Prov. 24:11; Prov. 24:32; Prov. 27:13; Prov. 31:16

**And the years of your life will be many** - While this a proverb and not a promise per se, the truth of this statement is certainly a motivation for hearing and accepting these sayings from Solomon. This reiterates the truth of Pr 3:16+ that "Long life is in her (WISDOM'S) right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. (ESPECIALLY SPIRITUAL RICHES AND HONOR)."

The promise of **life** is frequent in Proverbs - Pr 3:2, 16; Pr 9:11; Pr 10:27; Pr 14:27; Pr 15:24).

**Life** ([chayyim](#)) in Proverbs (if you would have a fruitful blessed life you might consider pondering "life" in these passages) - Prov. 2:19; Prov. 3:2; Prov. 3:18; Prov. 3:22; Prov. 4:10; Prov. 4:13; Prov. 4:22; Prov. 4:23; Prov. 5:6; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 8:35; Prov. 9:11; Prov. 10:11; Prov. 10:16; Prov. 10:17; Prov. 11:19; Prov. 11:30; Prov. 12:28; Prov. 13:12; Prov. 13:14; Prov. 14:27; Prov. 14:30; Prov. 15:4; Prov. 15:24; Prov. 15:31; Prov. 16:15; Prov. 16:22; Prov. 18:21; Prov. 19:23; Prov. 21:21; Prov. 22:4; Prov. 27:27; Prov. 31:12

**Lawson** - Who is the man that desires to live long, that he may see good? Let him hear and receive the sayings of David\* and of Solomon. There are few men that do not wish to live long, but there are few too that can trust as much to the counsels of the sovereign arbiter of life and of death, as to the counsels of a good physician; for all men have not faith. Many shorten their days by seeking to the physicians rather than to the Lord.

**Adam Clarke** - "Vice and intemperance impair the health and shorten the days of the wicked; while true religion, sobriety, and temperance, prolong them. The principal part of our diseases springs from 'indolence, intemperance, and disorderly passions.' Religion excites to industry, promotes sober habits, and destroys evil passions, and harmonizes the soul; and thus, by preventing many diseases, necessarily prolongs life."

**Charles Bridges on Pr 4:10-12** - It is instructive to see a king not forgetting in the midst of his royal cares his domestic responsibilities. 'Youth'—we are told—'will have its swing.' So—adds an old Commentator solemnly—'it may—to hell.' For where else can a wayward will lead? Ponder the need of guidance of every step, both to take and to avoid. **The ways of wisdom assure a happy life in the favor of God.**

And what rest to the parent's conscience on the death-bed will be the recollection of children—not brought up for the world,—but taught in these ways! Yet this cannot be, if the rod, when needed, has been spared; if the will has been indulged; the love of the world cherished. This will be—if godly discipline has been exercised; if the Bible has been laid down as the rule of life; if habits of

prayer,—love to the service of God,—fellowship with his people, have been encouraged. The path, though rough—sometimes lonely, is a right path;—and, though strait and narrow, a path of liberty (Psalm 119:32, 45.). The single eye and the humble heart, will preserve a steady, cheerful, and safe walk (Isa. 48:17, 18, Matt. 6:22)—Thou shall run, and shalt not stumble. (Pr 3:21–26. Comp. Hos. 14:9)

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### **Proverbs 4:10-19 The Dalton Gang By Dennis Fisher**

The Dalton brothers were infamous outlaws during the late 1800s in the US. They started out on the right side of the law as officers. But then they followed a gradual descent into crime and became known for bank and train robberies. Their day of reckoning came when they tried to hold up two banks at once. Hearing of the robberies, the townspeople armed themselves and began to fire on the Dalton Gang. When the smoke cleared, Emmett Dalton was the sole survivor.

After serving 15 years in the penitentiary, Emmett was pardoned and set free. While in prison, he had come to see the error of his ways. So when he was released, he wanted to deter young people from a life of crime. Drawing from his own experience, Emmett wrote and starred in a film about the Dalton Gang in which he showed the folly of being an outlaw. In many ways, Emmett's film was telling others: "Do not enter the path of the wicked" (Prov. 4:14).

In a similar way, when we have sinned but have genuinely repented and experienced God's forgiveness, we can tell our own story. We can encourage others not to make the same mistakes we have made. James wrote, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death" (Pr 5:20). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If others learn from our mistakes,  
And it saves them from the pain  
That we ourselves experienced—  
Then it wasn't all in vain.  
—Sper

When we learn from our mistakes, we are less likely to repeat them.

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### **Proverbs 4:10-27 — The Path Of Wisdom**

I had always heard that if a farmer keeps his eyes on a distant object while he's plowing, he'll make a straight furrow. So I tested the principle when I mowed my lawn. Sure enough, my first cut was a straight swath of new-mown turf.

If you can plow a straight furrow or mow in a straight line by keeping your eyes fixed on a distant object, surely the principle should also be true of life—especially if the object on which you fix your gaze is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

That's what the writer of the Proverbs says in chapter 4. In fact, the whole book of Proverbs is about following a straight path. It tells how to avoid the sexual trap (ch. 5-7), how to retain your integrity (Pr 12:1-16; 29:23), how to control your tongue (Pr 12:17-22; 21:23), how to get along with difficult people (Pr 14:7; 15:1), and how to stay healthy and live long (Pr 3:7-8,13-18). According to Proverbs, the wise person can walk the straight path and not be diverted.

But the Bible doesn't just advise, "Be wise!" It introduces us to Jesus Christ. The truly important question is our relationship to Him. He didn't just teach the truth; He is the truth (Jn. 14:6). So the only way to follow a straight path through life is to keep your eyes on Him. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I need His eye to guide me in the pathway,  
For I am weak and helpless as a child;  
And if without it I would take my journey,  
My feet would stumble on the mountains wild.  
—Anon.

Our wisdom is folly unless we're following Christ.

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**William Arnot - Precept and Example** - "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings.... I have taught thee in the way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths."—4:10, 11.

IT is a great matter for a parent, if he is able to say to his grown son, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." Teaching and leading are closely allied, but not identical. It is possible, and common, to have the first in large measure, where the second is wanting. They are two elements which

together make up a whole. With both, education in a family will go prosperously on: where one is wanting, it will be halting and ineffectual. Many a parent who acquits himself well in the department of teaching his children, fails miserably in the department of leading them in the right path. It is easier to tell another the right way, than to walk in it yourself. To lead your child in right paths implies that you go in them before him. Here lies the reason why so many parents practically fail to give their children a good education. Only a godly man can bring up his child for God. It is not uncommon to find men who are themselves vicious, desiring to have their children educated in virtue. Infidels sometimes take measures to have Christianity taught to their children. Many will do evil; few dare to teach it to their own offspring. This is the unwilling homage which the evil are constrained to pay to goodness.

Great is the effect when parents consistently and steadfastly go before their children, giving them a daily example of their daily precepts; but to teach the family spiritual things, while the life of the teacher is carnal, is both painful and fruitless. A man cannot walk with one leg, although the limb be in robust health; more especially if the other limb, instead of being altogether wanting, is hanging on him, and trailing after him dead. In this case it is impossible to get quit of the impediment; it will not off. The only way of getting relief from its weight is to get it made alive. An example of some kind, parents must exhibit in their families: if it be not such as to help, it will certainly hinder the education of the young. God, in the providential laws, permits no neutrality in the family: there, you must either be for or against him.

One of the broadest and best defined experiences that passed under my observation, and was imprinted on my memory in early youth, was that of a family whose father stood high above all his neighbours in religious profession and gifts, and yet returned from market drunk as often as he had the means. The sons of that family all turned out ill. Nothing is impossible with God; but it would have been indeed a miracle of mercy if these young men, who were accustomed from childhood to see in their own father a lofty spiritual profession wedded to the vilest vice, had themselves, as they grew up, lived soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world.

#### Proverbs 4:11 I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths.

BGT Proverbs 4:11 ὁ ς γ ρ σοφ ας διδ σκω σε μβιβ ζω δ σε τροχια ς ρθα ς

NET Proverbs 4:11 I will guide you in the way of wisdom and I will lead you in upright paths.

NLT Proverbs 4:11 I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths.

ESV Proverbs 4:11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

NIV Proverbs 4:11 I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.

KJV Proverbs 4:11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

LXE Proverbs 4:11 For I teach thee the ways of wisdom; and I cause thee to go in right paths.

ASV Proverbs 4:11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in paths of uprightness.

CSB Proverbs 4:11 I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths.

NKJ Proverbs 4:11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.

NRS Proverbs 4:11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

YLT Proverbs 4:11 In a way of wisdom I have directed thee, I have caused thee to tread in paths of uprightness.

- **I have directed:** Pr 4:4 De 4:5 1Sa 12:24 Ec 12:9
- **led:** Pr 8:6,9,20 Ps 23:3 25:4,5 Ac 13:10

**I have directed you in the way of wisdom - Directed** ([yarah](#)) in the Septuagint is [didasko](#) ([present tense](#)) - continually instructed you. Solomon is now instructing or pointing the way.

**Ross** - "Living according to wisdom is like walking or running on a safe road, a course that will be free of obstacles, so that progress will be certain."

**Lawson** - In our journey through life we have great need of one to guide us, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. God

only can lead us in a safe way, and he does it by his Spirit through his word. This inspired writer does not only teach, but guide us. He is like a companion in our journey, who points out every step that we should take, and every step that we ought to avoid.

**Kitchen** writes "The sense seems to be that Solomon reminds his son that he has cast before him a clear path for wise living, guiding him and directing him in that path as he got his legs under him."

**Teach** (archer, cast, instruct, shoot)(03384) **arah** means to "teach, instruct" but is related to another root sharing the same spelling "to shoot an arrow". The word "teaching, instruction" (torah [08451]) is derived from this same verb cluster. The instruction of Yahweh may be compared to archery in the sense that the "arrow" of God's teaching (laws, commandments, statutes) was aimed at our heart with the goal of pursuing God's holiness.

**Way** (**derek**) is a **key word** in Proverbs - Prov. 1:15; Prov. 1:31; Prov. 2:8; Prov. 2:12; Prov. 2:13; Prov. 2:20; Prov. 3:6; Prov. 3:17; Prov. 3:23; Prov. 3:31; Prov. 4:11; Prov. 4:14; Prov. 4:19; Prov. 4:26; Prov. 5:8; Prov. 5:21; Prov. 6:6; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 7:8; Prov. 7:19; Prov. 7:25; Prov. 7:27; Prov. 8:2; Prov. 8:13; Prov. 8:22; Prov. 8:32; Prov. 9:6; Prov. 10:9; Prov. 10:29; Prov. 11:5; Prov. 11:20; Prov. 12:15; Prov. 12:26; Prov. 12:28; Prov. 13:6; Prov. 13:15; Prov. 14:2; Prov. 14:8; Prov. 14:12; Prov. 14:14; Prov. 15:9; Prov. 15:19; Prov. 16:2; Prov. 16:7; Prov. 16:9; Prov. 16:17; Prov. 16:25; Prov. 16:29; Prov. 16:31; Prov. 19:3; Prov. 19:16; Prov. 20:24; Prov. 21:2; Prov. 21:8; Prov. 21:16; Prov. 21:29; Prov. 22:5; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 23:19; Prov. 23:26; Prov. 26:13; Prov. 28:6; Prov. 28:10; Prov. 28:18; Prov. 29:27; Prov. 30:19; Prov. 30:20; Prov. 31:3;

**I have led you in upright paths** - Literally ""in the tracks of uprightness" NAB = "on straightforward paths." This passage reminds me of the children's game "follow the leader." Sadly Solomon stumbled in his walk (1 Ki 11:1-13). Upright paths are straight paths especially morally and everyday practical behavior. God's "highway of holiness," is the best path to trod in this life. " It offers the fewest potholes, detours, and dangers. God's commands are similar to the lines on modern highways. They help travellers stay on the proper part of the road so they do not have accidents and hurt themselves and other people." (Constable)

**Waltke** - "A track is not a road that has come into existence without people moving on it, but is that on which and in which people move. The son will be walking on an ancient and proved way."

**Lawson** - The way in which he leads us, is the way of wisdom, for we are taught to keep our great end constantly in view, and to adopt the proper methods for reaching it. It is a right way, for our interest and duty are jointly pursued; and every point is gained, when these two most important objects are combined. Our duty to God and to man, and to ourselves, are all clearly explained by this divinely instructed teacher.

**Upright** (**yosher**) in Proverbs

Proverbs 2:13 From those who leave the paths of **uprightness** To walk in the ways of darkness;

Proverbs 4:11 I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in **upright** paths.

Proverbs 11:24 There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds **what is justly due**, and yet it results only in want.

Proverbs 14:2 He who walks in his **uprightness** fears the LORD, But he who is devious in his ways despises Him.

Proverbs 17:26 It is also not good to fine the righteous, Nor to strike the noble for their **uprightness**.

**Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; And if you run, you will not stumble.**

BGT Proverbs 4:12 ν γ ρ πορε ο συγκλεισθησεται σου τ διαβ ματα ν δ τρ χ ς ο κοπι σεις

NET Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your steps will not be hampered, and when you run, you will not stumble.

NLT Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, you won't be held back; when you run, you won't stumble.

ESV Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

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

KJV Proverbs 4:12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

LXE Proverbs 4:12 For when thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not be distressed.

ASV Proverbs 4:12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; And if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

CSB Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered; when you run, you will not stumble.

NKJ Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.

NRS Proverbs 4:12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble.

YLT Proverbs 4:12 In thy walking thy step is not straitened, And if thou runnest, thou stumblest not.

- thou goest: Pr 6:22 2Sa 22:37 Job 18:7,8 Ps 18:36
- thou shalt: Pr 4:19 3:23 Ps 91:11,12 119:165 Jer 31:9 Joh 11:9,10 Ro 9:32,33 1Pe 2:8 1Jn 2:10,11

**Kitchen** - the path of wisdom provides firm footing, so that one may not only 'walk' through life securely, but may 'run' in God's way without concern for danger (Prov. 3:23; 10:9; Ps. 18:36; 37:31; 91:12; 119:32, 165)

**When you walk, your steps will not be impeded** - NLT "When you walk, you won't be held back" Why not? Because you are walking with the "wind" so to speak (Spirit of God) at your back and in a manner worthy of His Name and for His glory. **Your steps** is a metaphor for the course of one's life.

**Impeded** ([06887](#))([tsarar](#)) means to be narrow, to be cramped, to be straitened, to be constricted, to hem or be hemmed in. Tsarar may refer to anything which is confining. It refers to that which is narrow or constricted, signifying distress, trouble, adversity; that which was wide-open or broad represents freedom and deliverance.

**Kitchen** points out that "The obstacles are described by two verbs. The first, 'impeded,' describes a pressing, cramping, constricting action. The idea is that you will not walk into situations which hem you in, narrow the path, or catch you between a rock and a hard place.

**And if you run, you will not stumble** - "The second verb is 'stumble.' The idea here is that of tangling the feet and falling headlong, whether from inner exhaustion and inability to continue on or from external obstacle that causes one to lose balance. These two verbs combine to assure those who walk in God's paths that nothing will leap up before them, close in around them, or arise from within them so as to bring them low." (Kitchen)

**NET Note** - The progression from **walking** to **running** is an idiom called "anabasis," suggesting that as greater and swifter progress is made, there will be nothing to impede the progress (e.g., Isa 40:31).

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**Streams in the Desert** - "When thou goest, thy way shall be opened up before thee step by step." (Proverbs 4:12, free translation.)

THE Lord never builds a bridge of faith except under the feet of the faith-filled traveler. If He builds the bridge a rod ahead, it would not be a bridge of faith. That which is of sight is not of faith.

There is a self-opening gate which is sometimes used in country roads. It stands fast and firm across the road as a traveler approaches it. If he stops before he gets to it, it will not open. But if he will drive right at it, his wagon wheels press the springs below the roadway, and the gate swings back to let him through. He must push right on at the closed gate, or it will continue to be closed.

This illustrates the way to pass every barrier on the road of duty. Whether it is a river, a gate, or a mountain, all the child of Jesus has to do is to go for it. If it is a river, it will dry up when you put your feet in its waters. If it is a gate, it will fly open when you are near enough to it, and are still pushing on. If it is a mountain, it will be lifted up and cast into a sea when you come squarely up, without flinching, to where you thought it was.

Is there a great barrier across your path of duty just now? Just go for it, in the name of the Lord, and it won't be there.—Henry Clay Trumbull.

We sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty said, "Up and onward forevermore." Let us move on and step out boldly, though it be into the night, and we can scarcely see the way. The path will open, as we progress, like the trail through the forest, or the Alpine pass, which discloses but a few rods of its length from any single point of view. Press on! If necessary, we will find even the pillar of cloud and fire to mark our journey through the wilderness. There are guides and wayside inns along the road. We will find food, clothes and friends at every stage of the journey, and as Rutherford so quaintly says: "However matters go, the worst will be a tired



traveler and a joyful and sweet welcome home.”

I'm going by the upper road, for that  
still holds the sun,  
I'm climbing through night's pastures where  
the starry rivers run:  
If you should think to seek me in my  
old dark abode,  
You'll find this writing on the door,  
“He's on the Upper Road.”

**Proverbs 4:13 Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.**

BGT Proverbs 4:13 πιλαβο μ ς παιδε ας μ φ ς λλ φ λαξον α τ ν σεαυτ ε ς ζω ν σου

NET Proverbs 4:13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; protect it, because it is your life.

NLT Proverbs 4:13 Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life.

ESV Proverbs 4:13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

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

KJV Proverbs 4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

LXE Proverbs 4:13 Take hold of my instruction; let it not go,-- but keep it for thyself for thy life.

ASV Proverbs 4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; Let her not go: Keep her; For she is thy life.

CSB Proverbs 4:13 Hold on to instruction; don't let go. Guard it, for it is your life.

NKJ Proverbs 4:13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.

NRS Proverbs 4:13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

YLT Proverbs 4:13 Lay hold on instruction, do not desist, Keep her, for she is thy life.

- Take: Pr 3:18 23:23 Ac 2:42 11:23 1Th 5:21 Heb 2:1 Rev 2:13 12:11
- let: Ge 32:26 Song 3:4 Lu 24:27-29 Joh 4:39-42
- she: Pr 3:22 De 32:47 Ec 7:12 Joh 6:68

### THREE EXHORTATIONS REGARDING INSTRUCTION

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.

**Take hold of instruction** ([musar](#) - discipline; Lxx - paideia- discipline - see grace as the "disciplinarian" - Titus 2:11-12+) - Emphasizes need for volition (making the choice to grasp) and then effort on our part to follow through.

**THOUGHT** - **Take hold** and **guard** are not suggestions, but are commands in Hebrew and in Greek (In the Septuagint it is [aorist imperative](#) - I call it the "*Nike Commercial Command*" = "**Just Do It!**")! This is not a call to legalism, but an invitation to liberation by the pure milk of the Word that by it you might grow in respect to salvation (aka progressive sanctification) (1Pe 2:2+). Jesus was very clear when He said "*you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free* ([eleutheroo](#)) *and if the Son sets you free* (He uses His Word of truth and Spirit of truth), *you will be free indeed!*" (Jn 8:32,36+) **Real freedom** is not the natural right to do as you wish, but the supernatural power to do as you should! My (your) fallen flesh fights against keeping the Biblical commands saying things like "*God, you don't have the right to tell me what to do!*" Yes He does! He is God and we are not ("Take five" and listen to the words of this song "[You Are God and I Am Not](#)")! But the great news is that He enables us to desire to keep the command, giving us the "*want to*," so to speak (my flesh does not "*want to!*"), and He also gives us the supernatural power to follow through on the commands and to **take hold** of and to **guard** His life giving instruction. Taking hold of and guarding **instruction** is in effect working out our

salvation in fear and trembling as Paul describes in Php 2:12+ (where "work out" is a command in [present imperative](#)). Then Paul gives us the "secret of spiritual success" using that great "hinge word" ([see video](#)) "**FOR**," a term of explanation ("FOR" is found 9635 times in the NASB 1977 - not all are terms of explanation but if you can substitute "because" the "for" is probably explaining something which in turn should prompt a pause to ponder [aka "mini-meditation"] asking "*What is the writer explaining?*"). In Phil 2:13+ Paul explains how to work out our salvation and in the present context how to take hold of and guard instruction writing (in the original version of the New Living Translation) "**FOR** God is (present tense - continually) working in you (I interpret this as God's indwelling Spirit), (present tense - continually) giving you the desire ([thelo](#)) to obey him and the power ([energeo](#) in present tense) to do what pleases Him." Paul is not saying "*Let go, let God*," but more like "*Let God* (Php 2:13), *let's go* (Php 2:12)!" And how do we take hold and guard in practical terms? Obviously we must read it. But even better we should "eat it" by memorizing it so that the life giving Word (Dt 32:47+) literally becomes part of our innermost being, "assimilated in our soul" so to speak!

**Bridges** - The animated exhortation to hold on to instruction shows that it is a struggle to retain our principles. Feeble, indeed, is our hold when we are only interested in wisdom because it is a novelty."

**Do not let go** - This implies we could become lax and let instruction slip from our grasp! Instruction is something that takes effort but it takes effort to hold on to it in a world that is filled with anti-god instructions. Solomon is the prime example of the effort necessary, for when he began to compromise, it ended in a crash (1 Ki 11:1-13).

**Guard her** - The implication is that instruction can be "stolen", corrupted, diluted, etc, as for example by admixture of humanistic thinking, earthly wisdom, etc. We need pure instruction. This reminds me of Peter's words in 1 Peter 2:2+ where he says "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." This point Peter is making is that (1) intake is necessary for spiritual growth (no one ever achieves growth in Christ-likeness by reading a "One Minute" Bible a few times a week!) and (2) the nourishment needs to be pure, without dilution, without additives.

**for** (term of explanation)

**She is your life** - How much should we value God's wisdom? How much do you value your life? There is your answer! Now **instruction** is personified as a woman as one who bestows life to the possessor. Long life, blessed life, full life.

Proverbs 3:18+ She (WISDOM) is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast.

Pr 3:22 So they will be life to your soul And adornment to your neck.

Pr 8:35 "For he who finds me finds life And obtains favor from the LORD.

Deuteronomy 32:47 "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

Ecclesiastes 7:12 For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.

**Kitchen** points out "Compare this with the statements concerning Jesus, who is not only the way to life, but is life itself (John 14:6; Col. 3:4; 1 John 5:11-12).

**Reformation Study Bible** - Life cannot exist without wisdom. In the New Testament, Christ is called our wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30) and our life (Col. 3:4).

**Alden** - Not only is wisdom the means of making progress in life, it is life itself. Anything so essential must be enthusiastically maintained.

**Bridges** - And yet the animated exhortation to take fast hold, shews the struggle necessary to retain our principles. Feeble indeed is our hold—when connected merely with the excitement of novelty (Matt. 13:20, 21), temporary convictions, (Psalm 78:34-36; 106:12, 13) the restraint of education, (2 Chron. 12:1, 24:2, 15-18) unestablished knowledge, (Gal. 3:1-4) or the indulgence of sin (Mark 6:18-26). The fast hold of instruction implies intensity of interest, determination of pursuit—"continuing in the things which we have heard and been assured of"—cleaving with purpose of heart unto the Lord. (2 Tim. 3:14, Acts 11:23; 2:42) "As Jacob detained the angel (Gen. 32:26-29)—as the spouse held fast hold of her Beloved," (Song 3:4)—as the disciples "constrained the Saviour to abide with them" (Luke 24:28, 29)—so—young Christian—let not her go. Keep her as the "man for joy" guarded his precious treasure. (Matt. 13:44) So let thy heavenly treasure stand above every earthly blessing. Thus will it be thy life. (Pr 3:18, Eccl. 7:12.) And while others "turn back, and walk no more" in the way, thine heart will turn to its only spring of happiness—"Lord! to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:65-69)

**“Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life.”—4:13.**

OFTEN a ship's crew at sea are obliged suddenly to betake themselves to their boats and abandon the sinking ship. The case of an American whale ship in the South Seas, lately reported, will serve as the basis of our parable. The huge leviathan of the deep, wounded by the art of man, ran out the distance of a mile by way of getting a run-race, and thence came on with incredible velocity against the devoted ship. Such was the shock that she instantly began to fill, and was gradually settling down. The sea was calm: there was opportunity for effort, but not time for delay. They were not only far from land, but far from the usual track of ships on the sea. In the dreary region of the antarctic circle, they might wander a whole year, and see no sail on the desolate horizon. There was little probability of rescue until they should regain those latitudes through which the thoroughfare of nations runs. The word was given; all hands went to work, and soon all the sea-worthy boats were loaded to the gunwale with the prime necessities of life. The deck was now nearly level with the water, and the boats shoved off for safety. After they had pulled a hundred yards away, two resolute men leaped from the boats into the sea, and made towards the ship. They reach it while still afloat, and disappear down a hatchway. In a minute they emerge again, bearing something in their hands. As they leap into the water the ship goes down; the men are separated from each other and their burden, in the whirlpool that gathers over the sinking hull. They do not seem to consult their own safety. They remain in that dangerous eddy, until they grasp again the object which they had carried over the ship's side. Holding it fast, they are seen at length bearing away to their comrades in the boat. What do these strong swimmers carry, for they seem to value it more than life? It is the compass! It had been left behind, and was remembered almost too late. Now they have taken fast hold of it, and will not let it go. Whatever they lose, they will at all hazards keep it, for “it is their life.”

When shall we see souls, shipwrecked on the sea of time, take and keep such hold of the truth as it is in Jesus, because it is their life? When will men learn to count that the soul's danger in the flood of wrath is as real, as the body's danger on a material ocean? When will men begin to make real effort for the eternal life, such as they make to preserve the present life when it is in danger? There is not an atom of hypocrisy about a man when he is in instant danger of drowning or starvation. He lays about him with an energy and a reality that brook no delay, and regard no appearances. If we could truly believe that the life of our souls is forfeited by sin, that they must be saved now or lost for ever, and that there is none other name given under heaven among men to save them, than the name of Jesus; then there would be a corresponding reality in our cleaving to the Saviour. Although, in a sense, we seek the right things, all may be lost by reversing the order in which, by divine prescription, they should be sought. The rule is, Seek first the kingdom of God, and then it is intimated that other things may be innocently “added.” Those who seek first these other things as their heart's portion, may also strive earnestly to attain the kingdom; but their labour is lost, because they do not “strive lawfully.” “Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do,” and how wouldst thou have me to do it? “Send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me.”

**Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men.**

BGT Proverbs 4:14 ὃο ς σεβ ν μ π λθ ς μηδ̄ ζηλ σ ς ὃο ς παρὰν μων

NET Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked or walk in the way of those who are evil.

NLT Proverbs 4:14 Don't do as the wicked do, and don't follow the path of evildoers.

ESV Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

NIV Proverbs 4:14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.

KJV Proverbs 4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

LXE Proverbs 4:14 Go not in the ways of the ungodly, neither covet the ways of transgressors.

ASV Proverbs 4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, And walk not in the way of evil men.

CSB Proverbs 4:14 Don't set foot on the path of the wicked; don't proceed in the way of evil ones.

NKJ Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.

NRS Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers.

YLT Proverbs 4:14 Into the path of the wicked enter not, And be not happy in a way of evil doers.

- Pr 1:10,15 Pr 2:11,12 Pr 9:6 Pr 13:20 Ps 1:1 26:4,5 1Co 15:33



THE FORK IN THE ROAD OF  
EVERY PERSON'S LIFE -  
ON WHICH WILL YOU TRAVEL?

## BE CAREFUL WHICH PATH YOU TAKE

### Related Passages:

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

Proverbs 1:15 My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path,

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Solomon moves from the positive to the negative (Pr 4:14-17)

**Plaut** wrote "Don't take the first step, for you may not be master of your destiny thereafter."

**Aitken** - These then are the two ways. There is no third, middle way; far less "labyrinthine ways", any one of which the traveller might venture along as the fancy takes him. The fool only thinks there are (see Pr 12:15; 14:12). But the ways are forked; and so a choice of direction has to be made (see Jer. 6:16). The theme of the two ways serves as a warning against the modern tendency to fudge the edges between right and wrong. (DSB)

**Do not enter the path of the wicked** - Avoid fellowship with the wicked. In other words, don't even take the first step (and deceptively thinking "I can handle this one!" No you can't. And you will be sucked into an evil vortex before you even realize what is happening!) The way of the wicked is crooked and full of stumbling blocks (Pr 4:19; cf. Pr. 2:12–15; Job 18:7–8).

If a way is never entered, it never has to be remedied.

-- David Guzik

**Ross** - "The warning is to avoid evil ways and evil men by not even starting on the wicked path of life. Plaut rightly paraphrases: 'Don't take the first step, for you may not be master of your destiny thereafter.' "

**Adam Clarke** - Never associate with those whose life is irregular and sinful; never accompany them in any of their acts of transgression."

**Kitchen** - The first decision we must make with regard to sin is not even to enter its path or play at its gate. If we do not 'enter,' we cannot 'proceed.' Better to cut off temptation at its beginning, before its enticements gain momentum, than to attempt to stop the desires it has already aroused.

'But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death' (James 1:14–15+).

**And do not proceed in the way of evil men** - "How often does fellowship with the wicked loosen the fast hold of instruction! Their path is so contrary to the way of instruction, that the very entrance into it is forsaking the way of God. The character of the wicked is here drawn in their Father's image—first sinners—then tempters." (Bridges)

**McGee** - We have noted before that the warning in this book is against the evil man and the stranger woman. That woman is a prostitute, of course. I think we shall see that this also has a spiritual application.

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Robert Frost in his poem "Road Not Taken" writes in his last stanza

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
two roads diverged in a wood, and I --  
I took the one less traveled by,  
**And that has made all the difference.**

In an even more famous discourse on roads taken and not taken, Jesus admonishes those who have an ear to hear to...

**Enter** ([aorist imperative](#) see [need for the Holy Spirit enablement to obey](#)) by the narrow **gate**; for the gate is wide, and **the way is broad** that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and **the way is narrow** that leads to life, and few are those who find it. (Mt 7:13, [14+](#))

**Which road will you travel?** The road prepared and paved by careful observation, proper interpretation and diligent application of the Scripture or the one wrought by a superficial, inaccurate, irreverent approach? It will make "*all the difference*" in this life and the next for as Paul wrote...

**Discipline** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourself for the purpose of godliness;godliness ([eusebeia](#)) (produced by discipline and diligent application of God's Word) is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the **present life** and also for **the life to come**. It is a trustworthy ([pistos](#) = faithful; cp Paul's 4 "faithful sayings" - 1Ti 1:15, 4:9, 2Ti 2:11+, Titus 3:8+) statement deserving full acceptance, for it is for this (godliness) we labor ([kopiao](#) = to the point of exhaustion; [present tense](#) = continually) and strive ([agonizomai](#) = as when striving in an athletic contest emphasizing concentration, discipline, conviction, effort; [present tense](#) = continually)." (1Ti 4:8+, 1Ti 4:9, [10+](#))

**Application** of God's Word will not always be "pain free", but it will always be profitable. We will not fully comprehend the extent of the "return on our investment" until we enter Paradise and stand before our Lord at His [bema \(judgment\) seat](#). This is a motivating truth that you can trust and which you should welcome and willingly acknowledge. The old saying regarding application is true that the same Word that afflicts the comfortable, also provides comfort for the afflicted!

The growing numbers of sermon-sippers and seminar-sitters who flit from one doctrinal dessert to another like so many busy, buzzing hummingbirds are most assuredly deceiving themselves unless they are also choosing to assimilate (heed) the truth ("How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! " Ps 119:103+) which they have tasted

James 1:22-25+ But **prove** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25+ But one who **looks** intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and (HERE IS THE CRUCIAL STEP - SO NOT JUST LOOKS BUT...) **abides** by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an **effectual doer**, this man will be blessed in what he does.

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#### Proverbs 4:14-15 (cf Pr 13:20) - C R Pearson

**Interpretation.**—The advice is, not so much as to set thy foot on the path of the wicked or habitually vicious man. But if thou hast by any chance been thrown into it, then go not on. Avoid it with detestation, yea, avoid nearness to it, for the border-land of temptation is dangerous.

**Illustrations.**—Lot, Dinah, Solomon himself, and St. Peter, are all instances of the danger of rashly venturing into temptation. Moses escaped from evil associations by casting in his lot with God's people. Daniel and his three friends avoided fellowship with idolaters, and kept themselves pure. It was the high praise given by the Lord to the Church of Ephesus, "Thou canst not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:2).

**Application.**—**Avoidance of bad company is the highest wisdom; speedy withdrawal from it the next wisest step. He who is not afraid of temptation is not afraid of sin, and there is no foolhardiness so gross as this. I must remember that my heart is predisposed to evil.** Were it not, how difficult, instead of easy, would it be to persuade me to it! In mercy God forbids the tampering with temptation, as He forbade our first parents even to touch the forbidden fruit. For do I not know that the very sight of many kinds of evil is seductive, and that to hear of the pleasures of sin whets the appetite for enjoying them? And is it not also certain that I am prone to fall into some offences more out of custom than out of love for them? It is difficult if not impossible to breathe a pestilential air, and not be infected. Hence my true wisdom surely is to keep out of and carefully avoid the path of the

wicked. I may indeed not be able to avoid them altogether. They may cross my path. I may be thrown with them in my necessary business and daily life. I am not to go out of the world. But I shall need in that case the more prayer and watchfulness to be kept from the evil that is in the world. I must avoid all fellowship which hinders fellowship with God, and loosens the fast hold of instruction. And I must not forget that the world has its counterfeit religion, and is most dangerous when apparently least so.

May fellowship with Christ, through His holy Sacrament, keep me safe from the fellowship of the wicked!

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### **Proverbs 4:14-27a Sand In Your Shoes**

Imagine the obstacles a person would have to overcome to walk from New York City to San Francisco. A man who had accomplished this feat was asked about his biggest hurdle. He said that the toughest part of his trip wasn't walking up the mountains or crossing hot, dry, barren stretches of desert. "The thing that came the closest to defeating me," he admitted, "was the sand in my shoes."

This reminds me of how we can be spiritually defeated by what begins as a little irritant. We let an unkind word, a small setback, or a misunderstanding get us down. Or we allow people around us to influence us in little but wrong ways. Instead of being determined to avoid evil—big or small— (Pr 4:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), we compromise. We neglect to go to the Lord for forgiveness and help.

Sir Francis Drake, the 16th-century English explorer who had sailed around the world, was crossing the Thames River when a violent storm threatened to capsize his boat. He cried, "Shall I who have endured the storms of oceans be drowned in a ditch?"

We would be wise to ask ourselves, "Shall I, who have come so far by faith, be defeated by 'sand in my shoes'?" We must answer with a resolute no!—Richard De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant us strength to overcome  
Life's greatest trials that we may meet;  
And grant it also when we face  
Those little trials that would defeat.  
—D. De Haan

We stumble over pebbles, not mountains

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### **Proverbs 4:14-27 Healthy Ingredients**

By Joe Stowell

My wife, Martie, is a careful shopper when it comes to buying healthy and nutritious food. No matter how attractive the packaging looks, she checks the list of ingredients on the back of the box. Lots of difficult-to-pronounce words usually announce the presence of preservatives that work against good nutrition. She always puts those items back on the shelf and continues to look for labels with lists of natural food products that contribute to good health.

I've often thought that her shopping habits are a lot like what God is looking for in our lives: It's what's on the inside that counts, regardless of how attractive the outside might be. It's no wonder that the wisdom-teller of Proverbs warns us to guard what goes into our hearts, "for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Wearing the right fashions and keeping ourselves looking young are of little importance if our hearts harbor greed, hatred, grumpiness, self-pity, and other counter-productive contents.

So, ask yourself: When others get past the packaging of my life, do they experience a heart full of healthy, Christ-honoring ingredients? By putting in grace, kindness, patience, and compassion, we'll reflect the wonderful nature of Christ. ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, teach me to value my heart more than the externals. Grant me the wisdom to cultivate internal ingredients that will make my heart a wellspring of life to those whom I come in contact with today.

The contents in your heart are more important than the outer packaging.

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### **Proverbs 4:14-27 Ponder Your Path**

David McCasland



A 47-year-old Austrian man gave away his entire \$4.7 million fortune after concluding that his wealth and lavish spending were keeping him from real life and happiness. Karl Rabeder told the Daily Telegraph (London), "I had the feeling I was working as a slave for things I did not wish for or need. It was the biggest shock in my life when I realized how horrible, soulless, and without feeling the 'five-star' lifestyle is." His money now funds charities he set up to help people in Latin America.

Proverbs 4 urges us to consider carefully our own road in life. The passage contrasts the free, unhindered path of the just with the dark, confused way of the wicked (v.19). "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live" (v.4). "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (v.23). "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established" (v.26). Each verse encourages us to evaluate where we are in life.

No one wants to go through life on a selfish, heartless road. But it can happen unless we consider where we are going in life and ask the Lord for His direction. May He give us grace today to embrace His Word and follow Him with all our hearts. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we pursue mere earthly gain,  
We choose a path that ends in pain;  
But joy remains within the soul  
When we pursue a heavenly goal.  
—D. De Haan

You are headed in the right direction when you walk with God.

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### Proverbs 4:14-27 Smart Dad

A hard-working single dad named William Jackson Smart was the inspiration for the creation of Father's Day. His wife died in 1898 while giving birth to their sixth child, and the Civil War veteran was left to raise the children alone in rural Washington.

In May 1909, Smart's daughter, by then a married woman named Sonora Dodd, heard a sermon enumerating the virtues of motherhood. It was Mother's Day, a new American holiday that had begun the previous year. Sonora decided to honor her dad's dedication to his children by seeking to have a Father's Day designated on the calendar. The day caught on, but it wasn't permanently established as an annual holiday in the US until 1972.

What a vital role fathers can play in the home as they train their children to follow God's ways! Proverbs 4 gives these nuggets of wisdom that dads can pass on to their children: "Do not enter the path of the wicked" (Proverbs 4:14). "Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). "Put away from you a deceitful mouth" (Proverbs 4:24). And finally, "Remove your foot from evil" (Proverbs 4:27).

We honor our godly fathers by obeying their instruction. And we should pray for all dads to recognize their God-given role of training in the home. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We're thankful for good fathers, Lord,  
They're special gifts from You;  
Help us to show we honor them  
By what we say and do.  
—Sper

Good fathers not only tell us how to live—they show us

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### Proverbs 4:14-15 Watch Out For Pebbles

My kids enjoy rollerblading. My 13-year-old son likes jumps, rails, and anything else he can do tricks on. But my daughters like long excursions on smooth paths.

Straight-line blading has its hazards too, my daughter Julie explained to me. She said that when she blades, she stays alert for big obstacles ahead like a large rock or a limb on the path. But she said that most problems are caused by small pebbles she doesn't see while watching for the big objects.

Then she made this observation: "It's like that in life. You keep watching for the big problems, but then a little one surprises you and causes trouble."

She's right. Most of us are on the lookout for life's big difficulties—the big sins. But we allow what might be considered a less serious problem to trip us up. An angry word, a dirty thought, a hateful feeling toward someone—we see these as small indiscretions. But to a holy God, all our sins are serious. Look at Uzza. He may have thought that touching the ark of God was a small infraction. But it wasn't, and he died instantly (1Chr 13:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

"Little sins" can cause us to fall down in our forward movement toward maturity. Sure, watch out for the big problems, but don't forget the pebbles. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It's "little" sins that trip us up  
And cause an unexpected fall;  
That's why we need to stay alert  
To every sin, both large and small.  
—Sper

Little sins can add up to big trouble.

### Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on.

BGT Proverbs 4:15 ν ν τ π στραποεδε σωσιν μ π λθ ς κε κκλινον δ π α τ ν κα παρ λλαξον

NET Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, do not go on it; turn away from it, and go on.

NLT Proverbs 4:15 Don't even think about it; don't go that way. Turn away and keep moving.

ESV Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

NIV Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

KJV Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

LXE Proverbs 4:15 In whatever place they shall pitch their camp, go not thither; but turn from them, and pass away.

ASV Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it; Turn from it, and pass on.

CSB Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it; don't travel on it. Turn away from it, and pass it by.

NKJ Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.

NRS Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

YLT Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it, pass not over into it, Turn aside from it, and pass on.

- Pr 5:8 6:5 Ex 23:7 Job 11:14 22:23 Isa 33:15 Eph 5:11 1Th 5:22

## COMMANDS REGARDING THE WICKED WAY

**Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on** - If the preceding two commands (v14) did not get your attention, Solomon shoots four more in rapid succession! "The rapid sequence of commands stresses the urgency of the matter." (NET Note)

**Guzik** - If, through foolishness, the path of the wicked is entered, then one's steps should turn from it soon. With urgency, wisdom speaks and says avoid it and turn away from it. Every further step on the way of evil makes it more difficult to depart from that path of the wicked.

**Kitchen** has an very practical comment - The four verbs used here provide a wonderful strategy for fighting off temptation. First, we must 'avoid' temptation. When temptation is near, we must steer as wide a path away as possible. Do not make eye contact (Prov. 4:25; 6:13, 25; 10:10; 16:30). Cross the street and give it a wide berth (Prov. 5:8; Job 11:14).

Second, we must not 'pass by' temptation. While temptation may spring up and entice us unawares, there are also areas of temptation we know we are vulnerable to. We must calculate and construct our steps each day so as to stay as distant as possible from those temptations that we know may hound us.

Third, we must activate our will and immediately 'turn away' from the enticement of sin when confronted by it. To linger over

temptation, to delay decision regarding it is to walk headlong into its trap (Ps. 119:60).

Fourth, we must 'pass on' once we have made the decision not to imbibe in the wanton pleasure of some allurements. Walk and keep walking. Do not contemplate the fleeting pleasure that might have been yours, if the decision had been different (Col. 3:1; Phil. 4:8). To look back after your hand has been put to the plow is to disqualify yourself (Luke 9:62; Rom. 6:21–23; Col. 3:5).

**Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.**

BGT Proverbs 4:16 ο γ ρ μ π τ ν σωσιν ν μ κακοποι σωσιν φ ρηται πνος α τ ν κα ο κοιμ νται

NET Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep unless they cause harm; they are robbed of sleep until they make someone stumble.

NLT Proverbs 4:16 For evil people can't sleep until they've done their evil deed for the day. They can't rest until they've caused someone to stumble.

ESV Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

NIV Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall.

KJV Proverbs 4:16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

LXE Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep, unless they have done evil: their sleep is taken away, and they rest not.

ASV Proverbs 4:16 For they sleep not, except they do evil; And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

CSB Proverbs 4:16 For they can't sleep unless they have done what is evil; they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.

NKJ Proverbs 4:16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.

NRS Proverbs 4:16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

YLT Proverbs 4:16 For they sleep not if they do not evil, And their sleep hath been taken violently away, If they cause not some to stumble.

- Pr 1:16 Ps 36:4 Isa 57:20 Mic 2:1 Lu 22:66 Joh 18:28 2Pe 2:14

## THE POWER OF SIN TO ENSLAVE

**EBC** - The first reason that one should avoid such a life style is that it is enslaving. By using hyperboles the teacher portrays the character of the wicked as those who are addicted to evil (v. 16; cf. Ps 36:4). They are so completely devoted to evil conduct that they cannot sleep until they find expression for it.

**For they cannot sleep unless they do evil** - No rest for the wicked. They are committed, devoted, dedicated to their lifestyle of sin! They are willing to sacrifice sleep and favor sleeplessness over sinlessness! It is one thing to be zealous to do good (cf Titus 2:14), but zeal to commit evil is a tragedy. They are now so entangled in the power of sin that they cannot sleep unless they commit sins.

**NET Note** - The verse is using the figure of hyperbole to stress the preoccupation of some people with causing trouble.

### Related Passages:

Psalm 36:4 He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil.

Micah 2:1 Woe to those who scheme iniquity, Who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, For it is in the power of their hands.

**Bridges** - With sleepless eagerness do they pursue their work (Job 24:15, 16, Psalm 36:4, Mic. 2:1.), caring little for any lengths of violence, so that they do mischief, or cause some to fall. (Pr . 1:10–14, 16; 2:14, 24:2, Psalm 10:8. Comp. 2 Peter 2:14.) Judas with his midnight torches; (John 18:3) the early morning assemblage of the Jewish rulers (Jn 5:28, Luke 22:66); the frenzied vow of the enemies of Paul;(Acts 23:12) and many a plot in after ages against the Church—all vividly portray this unwearied wickedness. Yet if we be preserved from this undisguised malignity, what are all the allurements for every rank and circumstance of life, but the more subtle poison of the murderer? A light-minded young person pours into the ear of his companion—simple and inexperienced in the ways of sin—filthy conversation; or presents before him images of lasciviousness. What but a rooted principle of grace can save his unsuspecting victim? Or again—the venomous infidel, intent upon “spoiling” his fellow creature of his most precious treasure, drops into his bosom the repetition of the first lie.(Ge 3:3) No principle appears to be given up; no fundamental doctrine denied; yet the foundation of an unwavering confidence is shaken to pieces. And are not these deeds of mischief and violence, malignant and destructive as the murderer’s stab?

Is it not then mercy, that forbids needless intercourse with the evil man (Eph. 5:11)? With a constitution prone to evil—when the alternative is—whether we shall shun or dare the danger—can we doubt our path? The whole Scripture is on the side of caution—to hazard nothing, except on a plain call of duty—tantamount to a call of Providence. Observe how the wise man heaps up his words—Enter not into the path—no—not so much as set thy foot into it. If some accident throws thee into it, go not on in it, avoid it with detestation. Pass not by it, lest thou shouldst unwittingly turn in. Not only avoid it when near; but avoid nearness to it. It is like living in the atmosphere of contagion; taking up thy abode in a pest-house, in the midst of virulent and fatal disease. The earnest repetition of the warning shews at once the imminency of the danger, and the certainty of the injury. The world around us is the action of mind upon mind. We are continually, through the medium of intercourse, moulding ourselves by other minds, and other minds by our own. Intercourse with the ungodly must therefore be fraught with fatal Contamination. The occasions, the company, the border, of temptation—all must be avoided. It is far easier to shun the occasion of sin, than the sin, when the occasion presents it. There must be no tampering with it; no trial of strength, to see how far our resolutions will keep us. Let the examples of Lot<sup>3</sup>—Dinah—Solomon<sup>5</sup>—Peter—warn us—how far only the entrance into the path of the wicked may carry us; lengths, that we could never have contemplated in prospect without horror. Here and there some special miracle of preservation may be manifested. But no one comes out of the path without hurt or defilement; and the general issue is an open door to ruin.<sup>8</sup> To pretend to dread sins without fearing temptation, is self-delusion. Satan has too nearly allied them for us to separate them. The evil company is loved—then the evil of the company. To pray “not to be led into temptation;” yet not “watch that we enter not into it”<sup>10</sup>—is not this practically to contradict our prayers—to mock our God, by asking for what we do not heartily wish? “Come out then, and be separate”—is the voice of God. “Touch not the unclean thing.” “Watch and pray.”<sup>12</sup> Walk with God and his people. Take care to avoid fellowship with them, who hinder thy fellowship with God.

**And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble** - What is the picture? The darkness comes and normal, godly people sleep, but these men are so consumed with corruption they cannot sleep. Not much good happens in the cover of darkness unless you are doing a Bible Study at night but even there you have some light (physical) and of course wonderful light spiritually. “Not content with their own misdeeds, they seek to ‘make someone else stumble.’ Oh, that we were as zealous in enlisting people for godliness as the wicked are in recruiting others for ruin! The word ‘stumble’ is used three times in this section (vv. 12, 19).” (Kitchen)

Beware of that which sprouts and blooms before the sun rises!

-- John Kitchen

**Alden** wrote "How sick to find peace only at the price of another man’s misfortune!"

**Kitchen** - Contrast this fevered fight against sin with the sweet sleep of the righteous (Prov. 3:24). Also, contrast Psalm 132:3–5 and David’s refusal to sleep until he provided a settled place for God’s house.

**Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness And drink the wine of violence.**

BGT Proverbs 4:17 ο δε γ ρ σιτο νται σ τα σεβε ας ο ν δ παραν μ μεθ σκονται

NET Proverbs 4:17 For they eat bread gained from wickedness and drink wine obtained from violence.

NLT Proverbs 4:17 They eat the food of wickedness and drink the wine of violence!

ESV Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

NIV Proverbs 4:17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

KJV Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

LXE Proverbs 4:17 For these live upon the bread of ungodliness, and are drunken with wine of transgression.

ASV Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.

CSB Proverbs 4:17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

NKJ Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.

NRS Proverbs 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

YLT Proverbs 4:17 For they have eaten bread of wickedness, And wine of violence they drink.

- Pr 9:17 20:17 Job 24:5,6 Ps 14:4 Jer 5:26-28 Eze 22:25-29 Am 8:4-6 Mic 3:5 6:12 Zep 3:3 Mt 23:14 Jas 5:4,5

## THEY LOVE EVIL "DIET AND DRINK"

**For they eat the bread of wickedness And drink the wine of violence** - What is this metaphor teaching? What do we all need each day and have a desire for? Food. Sin has become their bread and wine so to speak! Their desire for wickedness has so enslaved them they crave it just like would intake of food. This also speaks of their "appetite" for sin! Of course it is an appetite they will never satisfy, because sin always wants more and darker sins.

**Kidner** - The Bible does not hide the fact that one can become as zealous for evil as for good.

**Bridges** - Mischief is their meat and drink.(Job 15:16, Psalm 14:4) 'To do evil is more proper and natural than to sleep, eat, or drink.' (Job 24:15, 16, Psalm 36:4, Mic. 2:1)

**John Trapp** - As empty stomachs can hardly sleep, so neither can graceless persons rest till gorged and glutted with the sweetmeats of sin, with the murdering morsels of mischief. The devil, their taskmaster, will not allow them time to sleep; which is very hard bondage."

**Ross** - By using hyperboles the teacher portrays the character of the wicked as those who are addicted to evil (Proverbs 4:16; cf. Psalm 36:4). They are so completely devoted to evil conduct that they cannot sleep until they find expression for it.

**NET Note** - Heb "the bread of wickedness" (so KJV, NAB, NIV, NRSV). There are two ways to take the genitives: (1) genitives of apposition: wickedness and violence are their food and drink (cf. TEV, CEV, NLT), or (2) genitives of source: they derive their livelihood from the evil they do. Heb "the wine of violence" (so KJV, NAB, NIV, NRSV). This is a genitive of source, meaning that the wine they drink was plundered from their violent crime. The Hebrew is structured in an AB:BA chiasm: "For they eat the bread of wickedness, and the wine of violence they drink." The word order in the translation is reversed for the sake of smoothness and readability.

**Delitzsch**, says "The bread of 'wickedness' is gobbled up and then washed down with the wine of 'violence.'"

**McGee** - This portrays for us how the evil man and the stranger woman live. They can't even sleep unless they have done some evil thing. You read of crimes and say, "I don't see how a man could do a thing like that; I don't see how a woman could live that kind of life. How can they stand to live with themselves?" My friend, these folk couldn't live with themselves if they didn't do these wicked things. We do not know how desperate and how deep into sin the human heart can go. There is nothing which the human mind and heart cannot conceive in wickedness. We need to realize that out in this world we are rubbing shoulders with many people who are not always nice. Of course there will be some wonderful people, but we need to be careful of the kind of people we meet. When I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles and rode to work on the freeways, I would pray. (When you ride these freeways in Southern California, you do well to pray for your safety, but actually, I prayed about something else.) My prayer would be something like this: "Lord, I'm going to meet new people today. Some of those people I will be able to help. Some of them would like to hurt me. Help me to be able to tell the difference. Help me to put my arm around the man who needs my help, but help me to avoid the man who would put a knife in my back." I think it is important that we recognize the kind of world in which we live. I have learned that there are certain men who will become true friends, bosom friends, and I thank God for them. It is men like that who made my radio ministry possible. Then there have been men who have tried to destroy it—yet they profess to be Christians. It is difficult to understand their

thinking. The human heart is not to be trusted. We need to be very careful; we need to have discernment as we meet mankind in our daily walk.

**Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.**

BGT Proverbs 4:18 α ὁ δὸς τῆς δικαίων μοῦς ὡς φωτὶς ἡμποῦσιν προπορεύονται καὶ φωτίζουσιν ὡς κατορθώματα

NET Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the bright morning light, growing brighter and brighter until full day.

NLT Proverbs 4:18 The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.

ESV Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

NIV Proverbs 4:18 The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

KJV Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

LXE Proverbs 4:18 But the ways of the righteous shine like light; they go on and shine, until the day be fully come.

ASV Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

CSB Proverbs 4:18 The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday.

NKJ Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

NRS Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

YLT Proverbs 4:18 And the path of the righteous is as a shining light, Going and brightening till the day is established,

- 2Sa 23:4 Job 11:17 23:10 Ps 84:7 Ho 6:3 Zec 14:6,7 Mt 5:14,16,45 Joh 8:12 2Co 3:18 Php 2:15 2Pe 1:19 3:18 Rev 21:23 22:5

**SUNRISE OVER SEA OF GALILEE**

**But** - Blessed term of contrast marking a 180 degree change of direction in lifestyle.

**the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day**- "He proceeds from virtue to virtue, until at length he shines like the sun in its strength." (Thomas Brooks) "The path of the wicked is dark and increasingly so. Yet the path of those who get wisdom—the path of the just—grows brighter." (Guzik)

**Bridges** - This is not the feeble light of a candle, nor the momentary blaze of the meteor, but the grand illumination of heaven."

**Adam Clarke** - "The path of the wicked is gloomy, dark, and dangerous; that of the righteous is open, luminous, and instructive. This verse contains a fine metaphor; it refers to the sun rising above the horizon, and the increasing twilight, till his beams shine full upon the earth."

**Kitchen has a good word** - This verse sets forth what awaits those who walk the path of wisdom. The life of the righteous is one of progressive illumination, understanding and insight. The dawn begins with a faint glow on the horizon, progressively moves to that first brilliant moment when the sun peeks over the skyline, and, eventually, becomes the blazing midday sun. So also those who follow hard after God increasingly see and understand His wisdom as He leads them through life.

**Walke on dawn** - "Nogah refers to the light's bright gleam or radiance, as from the moon (Isaiah 4:5; 50:10) or stars (Joel 2:10;



3:15), and connotes that there are no clouds, not even a shadow, on this path.”

**NET Note-** The word “light” (אור, ’or) refers to the early morning light or the dawn (BDB 21 s.v.). The point of the simile is that the course of life that the righteous follow is like the clear, bright morning light. It is illumined, clear, easy to follow, and healthy and safe—the opposite of what darkness represents.

**Bridges** - This is a fine picture of the Christian’s path of light, in contrast with the dark and dangerous path of the wicked. It is not the feeble wasting light of a taper, nor the momentary blaze of the meteor; but the grand luminary of heaven, “coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run his race,”(Psalm 19:5) from earliest dawn to his noon-day glory. And a beautiful sight it is to see the soul thus rising out of darkness, beginning his course; rising higher and higher; taking in a wide circle; advancing onward with increasing brightness unto the perfect day. Knowledge—faith—love—holiness—irradiate every step. It is at first but a glimmering ray—the first dawn of day. But “following on”—the eye becomes more unveiled (Hos. 6:3. Comp. Mark 8:22–25); the heart more enlightened; the truth more vividly impressed upon the conscience; the “understanding” more quick in “the fear of the Lord;” the taste more discerning between good and evil. Faith now becomes more strong in the Saviour’s love, more simple in the promises of God. Subjection to the Redeemer’s sceptre is more unreserved; love rises to a higher estimation, to a closer union with him—to a more intimate complacency in him. Experience may be confused. But light will clear away the mists. Practice in some points may be inconsistent. But, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18. Comp. Job 17:9, Psalm 84:7) Such is the godly man. Such is his path. The devout Nathanael was cheered with the promise of a brighter day. (John 1:46–51) The clouds upon the minds of the Apostles gradually melted away before a brighter sun. (Mark 6:52; 10:35; 16:14, with John 16:13, Acts. 2.) The Eunuch and Cornelius sincerely seeking, rejoiced in the full sunshine of Gospel light. (Acts 8:27–39, 10) The Thessalonian Church shone more and more with Christian graces. (1 Thess. 1:3, 2 Thess. 1:3)

But is this shining light the picture of my path? There is no command given—“Sun—stand thou still.” (Jos. 10:12.) Therefore it rebukes a stationary profession. It is a rising and advancing, not a declining, sun. Therefore it rebukes a backsliding state. It is not necessary that every thing should be perfect at once. There may be an occasional cloud, or even (as in the cases of David and Peter) a temporary eclipse. But when did the sun fail of carrying its early dawn unto perfect day? Be thankful then for “the day of small things. Despise it not.” (Zech. 4:10.) But be not satisfied with it. Aim high, and you will reach nearer the mark. Religion must be a shining and progressive light. We must not mistake the beginning for the end of the course. We must not sit down at the entrance, and say to our soul—“Soul—take thine ease.” Let us hasten on to the perfect day, when the path of the just shall be eternally consummated—when ‘they shall come to full perfection—which is—when they shall be joined to their Head in the heavens.’ “Then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:43. Comp. Jdg. 5:31) Their “sun shall no more go down; for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.” (Isa. 60:20. The LXX. version is very beautiful—‘The ways of the righteous shine like the light; they grow and shine until the day be perfected.’ Dr. Watts’s Hymn on the Summer evening—written for the infant mind—but glowing to the finest taste—furnishes a most exquisite exposition of this verse, — ‘How fine has the day been; how bright was the sun,’ &c.)

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**Adrian Rogers** - Many people want to be "earthquakers" when it comes to discerning God's will. They want a cyclone, a forest fire, an inferno. But if you want to find out generally the will of God for your life, there's a still, small voice. There's a path "like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday" (Prov. 4:18). First it's dark, then it's gray dawn, then you see colors and shadows, then high noon.

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**Adrian Rogers** on Proverbs 4:18 - Now, what does that mean? It means that finding your dream, knowing the will of God for you, is very much like a sunrise. "The path of the just is as the shining light"—a shining light, he's talking about the sun—"that shineth more and more unto a perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

Now, perhaps you're trying to walk through the woods and there's a path in the woods, but you can't see it because it's dark. There's no light there and you're just stumbling along not knowing which way to go. And, then the sun begins to come up and it's just gray dawn. Now, you can see the trees, but you can't see the leaves on the trees. You just begin to see things very faintly there are just some shadows and outlines. And, then the sun comes up more and there are long shadows, which you can see not quite as well because there are shadows in dark places. And, then finally the sun is up, and it is high noon and you can see, and it's very clear. You see, "... the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). And, it turns from darkness, to gray dawn, to high noon in your life.

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**Adrian Rogers (p 615)** - My dear friend, God didn't open your blinded eyes just to have you sit around. Do you want to learn truth? You can learn truth. Well, you say, "Oh, the Holy Spirit will give me truth." No, the Holy Spirit's not going to give you truth. Jesus said, "**He will guide you into all truth.**" But you, my dear friend, must want to learn the truth. Luke 8:18: "**Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he**

**seemeth to have.**” Now what does that mean? It means, dear friend, the way to have more light is to obey the light that you have. Put this verse down, Proverbs 4:18: **“The path of the just is as a shining light. It shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”** I love that verse. What God says is, “Here’s the way a man grows in grace and knowledge. The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto a perfect day.” When you first have your eyes opened spiritually, it’s just great on. The light is just coming over the horizon. You see some things. You see some shapes of trees or houses. You just can see. But then the sun, sunrise begins to happen in the soul, and the sun comes up. And the first thing you know, or after a while it’s high noon, a perfect day, and you see without any shadow at all. “The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto a perfect day.” That’s the way, dear friend, it is to be for you. It takes more than light. It takes sight. But once God gives you sight, then you must use the sight that you have to learn to see.

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**The Antithesis of the Path of the Righteous** - Ordinarily, rivers run small at the beginning, now broader as they proceed, and become widest and deepest at the point where they enter the sea. It is such rivers that the Christian’s life is like. But the life of the mere worldly man is like those rivers in Southern Africa, which, proceeding from mountain freshets, are broad and deep at the beginning, and grow narrower and more shallow as they advance. They waste themselves by soaking into the sands; and at last they die out entirely. The farther they run, the less there is of them.

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**Spurgeon** - To-day it is fair, the next day there may be the thundering storm: to-day I may want for nothing; to-morrow I may be like Jacob, with nothing but a stone for my pillow and the heavens for my curtains. But what a happy thought it is!—though we know not where the road winds, we know where it ends. It is the straightest way to heaven to go round about. Israel’s forty years’ wanderings were, after all, the nearest path to Canaan. We may have to go through trial and affliction; the pilgrimage may be a tiresome one, but it is safe. We cannot trace the river upon which we are sailing; but we know it ends in floods of bliss at last. We cannot track the roads; but we know that they all meet in the great metropolis of heaven, in the centre of God’s universe. God help us to pursue the true pilgrimage of a pious life!

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**MacDuff** - Have I begun this path of heavenly love and knowledge now? Am I progressing in it? Do I feel some dawns of the heavenly light,—earnests and ante-pasts of the full day of glory? Let all God’s dealings serve to quicken me in my way. Let every affliction it may please Him to send, be as the moving pillar-cloud of old, beckoning me to move my tent onward, saying, “Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest.” Let me be often standing now on faith’s lofty eminences, looking for “the day of God”—the rising sun which is to set no more in weeping clouds. Wondrous progression! How will all earth’s learning,—its boasted acquirements and eagle-eyed philosophy,—sink into the lispings of very infancy in comparison with this manhood of knowledge! Heaven will be the true “Excelsior.” Its song, “A song of degrees”; Jesus leading His people from height to height of glory, and saying, as He said to Nathaniel, “Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

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#### **F B Meyer - Proverbs 4:18**

The light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (R.V., marg.)

This may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God’s light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer’s life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God’s least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to his all-wise purpose.

Once again, notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigour to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord’s Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

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**William Arnot - The Path of the Just** “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.”—4:18, 19.

THE essentials of a just man’s character have been in all ages the same. The just in every dispensation have lived by faith, and walked with God: they have hoped for his salvation, and done his commandments (Psalm 119:166): they believe, and obey; they are bought with a price, and glorify God.

The path, the life course of such a man, is like the shining light. I do not think that the path of the justified is compared to the course of the sun, from the period of his appearance in the morning to the time of his meridian height. The sun is an emblem, not of the justified, but of the Justifier. I have always felt uneasy in hearing the life of a believer likened to the sun's course from horizon to zenith. The comparison does not fit. An effort to adjust the analogy either spoils its beauty, or gives a glory to man which is not his due. That grandest object in the visible creation is used as an emblem of the Highest One, and for his service it should be reserved. Christ alone is the source of Light: Christians are only its reflectors. The just are those whom the Sun of Righteousness shines upon. When they come beneath his healing beams, their darkness flies away. They who once were darkness are light now, but it is "in the Lord."

The new life of the converted is like the morning light. At first it seems an uncertain struggle between the darkness and the dawn. It quivers long in the balance. At one moment the watcher thinks, surely yonder is a streak of light: the next, he says with a sigh, it was an illusion: night yet reigns over all. When the contest begins, however, the result is not doubtful, although it may for a time appear so. The first and feeblest streaks of light that come mingling with the darkness, have issued from the sun; and the sun that sent these harbingers, though distant yet, is steadily advancing. Ere long the doubt will vanish, and morning will be unequivocally declared. Once begun, it shineth more and more unto the perfect day; and it is perfect day when the sun has risen, as compared with the sweet but feeble tints of earliest dawning. Sometimes there are irregularities and backgoings. Clouds deep and dark creep in between the sun and the world's surface. After the morning has so far advanced, the darkness may increase again; but, even in this case, the source of light is coming near without any faltering. The impediment which has partially intercepted his rays, is moveable, and will soon be taken out of the way. There are similar irregularities in the progress of a just man's course. Sometimes he halts, or even recedes. After experiencing the light of life, and exulting in a blessed hope, he again comes under a cloud, and complains of darkness. But the source of his light and life will not fail. He changeth not; and therefore that seed of Jacob, though distressed, will not be consumed (Mal. 3:6). The breath of his Spirit will drive the intercepting clouds away, and the law of the kingdom, relieved from hindering exceptions, will yet have free course: the path of the just will be like the morning; it will increase until dawn break into day. If a thousand years may in the Lord's sight be accounted one day, much more may the life course of a disciple from the first throes of the new birth, to the moment when faith is lost in sight. That day is an high day in the eternal life of the saved. It is a day much to be remembered in the circle of victors that surround the throne. Now that the Lord God and the Lamb are their light, they will think of the time when the earliest dawn began to struggle faintly in their breasts. The remembrance of its mysterious birth out of primeval darkness, and its gradual growth into perfect light, will make them say and sing of that day, in adoring wonder, What hath the Lord wrought!

The analogy holds good more exactly still, if we take into view the actually ascertained motions of the planetary system. When any portion of the earth's surface begins to experience a dawn diminishing its darkness, it is because that portion is gradually turning round toward the sun, the centre of light fixed in the heavens. While any part of the earth lies away from the sun, and in proportion to the measure of its aversion, it is dark and cold: in proportion as it turns to him again, its atmosphere grows clearer, until, in its gradual progress, it comes in sight of the sun, and its day is perfect then. The path of the just is precisely like this. Arrested in his darkness by a love in Christ, which he does not understand as yet, he is secretly drawn toward Him in whom that love in infinite measure is treasured up. As he is drawn nearer, his light increases until at last he finds himself in the presence of the Lord. Day is not perfect here in a believer's heart, and yet the light of the knowledge of God from the face of Jesus shines into a believer's heart while he sojourns here. The dark get light, the dead get life from the Lord—in the Lord before his glorious appearing. They who thus get light from a Saviour unseen, shall, at his appearing, be like Him, and see Him as He is. The machinery of the everlasting covenant is meantime going, softly and silently, as the motion of the spheres; and they that are Christ's here, whatever clouds may dim their present prospect, are wearing every moment further from the night and nearer to the day.

There follows a counterpart intimation fitted to overawe the boldest heart. "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble" (4:19). "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" (Matt. 6:23). Its greatness consists chiefly in this, that it is "in you." A dark place on the path might be got over; but darkness in his own heart, the traveller carries with him wherever he goes. To the blind, every place and every time is alike dark. It is an evil heart of unbelief. Because of this they stumble upon that very Rock which has been laid in Zion to sustain a sinner's hope. He who is a sanctuary to others, is a rock of offence to them. "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the

houses of Israel” (Isa. 8:14). Even when they fall they know not at what they stumble. Dreadful thought! to be crushed against Him, who has been given as a Refuge and a Rest to weary souls escaping from a sea of sin. The way to get light is to turn from evil. “The pure in heart shall see God.”

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Pr 4:18 The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

Looking at a picture of the great scholar Bertrand Russell in his later years made me feel sad. Although his face reflected courage, it was grim and showed no sign of joy or hope. He was born into a Christian home and taught to believe in God, but he rejected his training and became an outspoken atheist. His daughter, Katherine Tait, said of him, "Somewhere at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul, there was an empty space that once had been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it."

A picture of my Grandpa Vander Lugt, taken in his old age, presents a striking contrast. It reflects a beautiful serenity born of a deep faith in God nurtured for many years. When he was in his late eighties, he still played pranks and joked with us. And I remember how peacefully he talked with us as he lay dying.

Grandpa's life is an illustration of Proverbs 4:18, "The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day" On what path are you walking? Your choice will make all the difference in the world.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **THOSE WHO LIVE FOR ETERNITY CAN DIE WITH SERENITY.**

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#### **Proverbs 4:18 Treadmill**

In bad weather I get my exercise on a treadmill. But it's so boring! When the odometer says I've walked a mile, I've actually gone nowhere.

Life without God is like being on a treadmill. Generations come and generations go (Eccl. 1:4). The sun rises and sets day after day, year after year (Eccl. 1:5). The wind follows a repetitive course as it blows and swirls over the earth (Eccl. 1:6). Rivers flow into the sea, but it is never full (Eccl. 1:7). Like these natural phenomena, life is always moving but never arriving, always encountering changes but never finding anything really new. Then comes death. People without God are without hope and know they will soon be forgotten. What a dismal prospect!

How different for those who know God! Yes, they too sometimes experience routine, monotony, and difficulty, but instead of being on a treadmill they are on a journey. That's how Ernest Pike, an 83-year old friend of mine, viewed his life. Shortly before he died, he greeted me with a smile and said, "All my Christian life I've been preparing for heaven. Now I'm about to go there."

You too can have that hope. Admit you are a sinner. Receive Jesus as your Savior. He'll transform your life from a monotonous treadmill into a meaningful journey. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we commit ourselves to Christ  
And follow in His way,  
He'll give us life that satisfies  
With purpose for each day.  
--Sper

Life without Christ is a hopeless end;  
life with Christ is an endless hope.

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#### **“DO RIGHT” —Proverbs 4:18**

Let's face it, it's a challenge to walk righteously in such a seductive culture. The menu of choices that our world offers appeals to every desire and dream that lurks in our hearts. We are urged to do what we want to do, what is right in our own eyes, or what is culturally correct. Unfortunately, there is little on the menu that pleases God. What is really troubling is that many who fashion their lives after the "if it feels good, do it" philosophy of life seem quite happy and free. It's easy to wallow in self-righteous pity with the psalmist who complained as he saw the wicked prosper, "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure" (Psalm 73:13).

But before you get too down on righteousness, remember that the righteous who resist the deceitful lure of the world find their lives refreshed like that tree "planted by the rivers of water" (Psalm 1:3KJV).

What does it mean to be righteous? "He whose walk is blameless . . . who speaks the truth from his heart" (Psalm 15:2).

Unfortunately, few of us naturally make choices based on what is right and true. We are far more likely to launch the decision-making process with questions such as, What is best for me? What do I want to do? Will it make me happy? What is the most convenient and comfortable thing to do?

When the focus of our lives is on our own desires, our decision making inevitably becomes self-centered, which inevitably yields the unstable fruit of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).

At each intersection of life, the righteous followers step back from the immediate circumstances and self interests and measure what the right thing is to do before God.

When that happens life comes into conformity with God's standards and our lives to enjoy the purity of it all. As an old time evangelist often said, "Do right till the stars fall."

Enjoy righteousness in every area of your life, no matter how large or small. - Joe Stowell

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## **THE TWO PATHS. (Prov. 4:18, 19) - James Smith**

### **I. The Path of the Righteous.**

1. WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS? The law saith, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). Righteousness is imputed where there is faith (Rom. 4:23, 24). "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39).
2. WHERE DO THEY WALK? Their way is narrow; it is a path. This path is—
  - (1) A path of light. It is the awakening of a new day.
  - (2) A path of growing light. "It shineth more and more." It is going from strength to strength; a growing in grace and in knowledge of God.
  - (3) A path that leads to the perfect day. To the perfect day of a glorious resurrection, and of His eternal and unclouded presence.

### **II. The Path of the Wicked. This is the—**

1. WAY OF REBELLION. Thinking their own thoughts, they choose their own way, rejecting the Word and will of God.
  2. WAY OF DARKNESS. They have no light but the sparks of their own kindling, uncertain, treacherous.
  3. THE WAY OF IGNORANCE. "They know not." A blind man led by a blind dog. They know not where they are going, the future is all uncertain (Job 24:13).
  4. THE WAY OF DISAPPOINTMENT. "They stumble." They trip and fall even in the noon-day of Gospel light (Isa. 59:10). They love the darkness rather than the light, and go on stumbling through life till they stumble into death and hell.
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## **Proverbs 4:18a Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**

The light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

This may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God's light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer's life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God's least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to his all-wise purpose.

Once again, notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigour to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord's Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

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THE "path" which a man pursues signifies, according to the most usual meaning of the word, his style and manner of conduct, the principles according to which he acts. Thus is the word used in verse 11 of this chapter: "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." There is another sense in which we find the word "path" sometimes employed; it indicates the condition or destiny of a man; thus, in Job 8:11–13, "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." In the text "the path of the righteous" cannot properly be taken in either of these senses exclusively; it includes both. It signifies simply the just man's course through life, comprising the development alike of his own character and conduct and of his destiny as a child of light. The word "light" is used here in a peculiar and limited sense, to mean the dawn, the sunrise. So it is used, as our English Bible expressly indicates, in Nehemiah 8:3: "And he [Ezra] read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the light [from the morning] until midday." Only when we consider this do we perceive the full force and beauty of the text. "Perfect (i.e. steadfast, immovable) day" signifies, in the figurative language of the text, noon. And in this we have an example of the incompetency of that which is natural to express the spiritual and eternal. In the day of the soul there is no mere momentary noon, declining into afternoon and night. But what the thing could not properly express, the word translated "perfect" is fitted to suggest. Inverting the order of the text we shall consider, first, the way of darkness, and, secondly, the way of light.

## **I THE WAY OF DARKNESS**

"The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Proverbs 4:19)

These words present a picture of a man out on a dangerous mountain track. He has determined upon going this way. He has despised the advice and entreaties of the guides, although aware that his track is beset with dangers. He was told before he started of the deep ravines and yawning precipices. At times, while trying to find his way, he feels the peril that he has exposed himself to in venturing upon a path so dangerous, a path with which he is totally unacquainted. Now the darkness is coming on; but he still hopes to find his way. Presently the darkness has completely hidden the path, and made it doubly perilous. To stand still is to perish in the night; and yet he cannot hope to find his way now, but wanders on in the darkness. He does not know where he is, or where he is going; the man is lost in the dark; he goes stumbling on till suddenly he stumbles upon his fate and is lost in night.

### **1. The way of sin at the beginning.**

—Sin makes us do things we should never think of doing in our right senses. It makes us the subject of the cruellest delusion. To close our eyes against the light is to surrender to the devil, who leads us captive at his will into ever-deepening darkness.

¶ "There are none so blind as those who will not see," and it is really astonishing to notice how determined many people are not to see what their sinful course must lead to and must end in. I have very seldom known, indeed I do not remember a single case, in which either disease, or pain, or early death, or poverty, or disgrace, or imprisonment, or madness, or any other result of wrong-doing, acted to any great extent as a warning to others pursuing the same way to destruction. The effect, if there be any effect at all, soon passes off. Not a week passes but some one is detected in fraud and embezzlement, but every other thief thinks himself cunning enough to be safe. "Dead through excessive drinking" is the verdict given day by day, all the week through, and all the year round; but every other excessive drinker thinks that he does not drink to excess, or that he has a constitution that will stand it. Thus, verily, "the way of the wicked is darkness."

¶ Where chiefly the beauty of God's working was manifested to men, warning was also given, and that to the full, of the enduring of His indignation against sin. It seems one of the most cunning and frequent of self-deceptions to turn the heart away from this warning, and refuse to acknowledge anything in the fair scenes of the natural creation but beneficence. Men in general lean towards the light, so far as they contemplate such things at all, most of them passing "by on the other side" either in mere plodding pursuit of their own work, irrespective of what good or evil is around them, or else in selfish gloom, or selfish delight, resulting from their own circumstances at the moment. What between hard-hearted people, thoughtless people, busy people, humble people, and cheerfully-minded people, giddiness of youth, and preoccupations of age,—philosophies of faith, and cruelties of folly,—priest and Levite, masquer and merchantman, all agreeing to keep their own side of the way,—the evil that God sends to warn us gets to be forgotten, and the evil that He sends to be mended by us gets left unmended. And then, because people shut their eyes to the dark indisputableness of the facts in front of them, their Faith, such as it is, is shaken or uprooted by every darkness in what is revealed to them. In the present day it is not easy to find a well-meaning man among our more earnest thinkers, who will not take upon himself to dispute the whole system of redemption, because he cannot unravel the mystery of the punishment of sin. But can he unravel the mystery of the punishment of No sin?... We cannot reason of these things. But this I know—and this may by all men be known—that no good or lovely thing exists in this



world without its correspondent darkness; and that the universe presents itself continually to mankind under the stern aspect of warning, or of choice, the good and the evil set on the right hand and the left.

## 2. The way of sin as it continues.

—It is a road that runs through sombre passes, like some of those paths far in the heart of the mountains, on which the sun never shines. This is worse than the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for in the fearful path of sin there is no guiding hand and no protecting staff. The darkness of this course is exhaled from the evil committed upon it.

¶ The horrible features of Vanity Fair are carefully concealed from the young man or woman setting out in life. Satan appears then as an angel of light, with seductive air and promises of boundless pleasure and enjoyment. The unhappy victim soon begins to realize the deceitfulness of the tempter and the bitterness of sin. As he rushes with the crowd of pleasure-seekers into the haunts and circles of evil men, he becomes absorbed in their follies and fashions; opportunities of improvement are neglected, facilities of progress are forgotten, virtuous habits are thrown off, and care for higher things is neglected. By degrees, the mind and spirit become the mere vassals of animal passion or selfish gratification, and the day of life passes without any preparation for a blessed future. Amid the whirl and excitement of pleasure-seeking or money-hunting, there soon come hours of gloom and sadness. The fruits of sin are like the fabled apples of Sodom, fair to outside view but poisonous within. Many who frequent gay and festive scenes carry into them sad and heavy hearts, many of them cherish memories of days when innocence and truth gave brightness to their souls; many are haunted by lapses from virtue, and deeds of evil which were committed perhaps long ago, but which memory revives, until the heart sinks and the spirit writhes beneath the rankling of the wound. As life creeps on, the pursuit of sin becomes more irksome, the burden of a wounded conscience becomes more rankling; and unless by a heartfelt repentance, and an acceptance of mercy through Christ, the transgressor returns to the Father's house, the end comes in darkness.

¶ Of what Christians call "the Divine Government"—but which he regarded as "the sum of the customs of matter," Huxley believed it to be "wholly just." "The more I know intimately of the lives of other men (to say nothing of my own)," he wrote, "the more obvious it is to me that the wicked does not flourish, nor is the righteous punished. But for this to be clear we must bear in mind what almost all forget—that the rewards of life are contingent upon obedience to the whole law—physical as well as moral—and that moral obedience will not atone for physical sin, or vice versa. The ledger of the Almighty is strictly kept, and every one of us has the balance of his operations paid over to him at the end of every minute of his existence. The absolute justice of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact. The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun, and more so—for experimental proof of the fact is within reach of us all—nay, is before us all in our own lives, if we had but eyes to see it."

## 3. The way of sin as it ends.

—The sinner has no prospect of light beyond. There are no Beulah heights for him at the farther end of the gloomy valley. His night of sin will be followed by no dawn of blessed light. He presses on only to deeper and yet deeper darkness. If he will not return, there is nothing before him but the darkness of death. The one way of escape is backwards—to retrace his steps in humble penitence. Then, indeed, he may see the welcome light of his Father's home, and even earlier the Light of the world, the Saviour who has come out into the darkness to lead him back to God. For the sinner who persists in his evil course there can be no better prospect than that described by Byron in his poem on "Darkness"—

The world was void,  
The populous and the powerful was a lump,  
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless,  
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.  
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,  
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;  
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,  
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd  
They slept on the abyss without a surge—  
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,  
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;  
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,  
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need  
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

¶ The death of Lord Pembroke, whose character and aims Spencer estimated very highly, removed one more from the ever narrowing circle of his friends and acquaintances. To the Countess of Pembroke he wrote on 26th June 1895: "On the great questions you raise I should like to comment at some length had I the energy to spare. The hope that continual groping, though in the dark, may eventually discover the clue is one I can scarcely entertain, for the reason that human intelligence appears to me incapable of framing any conception of the required kind. It seems to me that our best course is to submit to the limitations imposed by the nature of our minds, and to live as contentedly as we may in ignorance of that which lies behind things as we know them. My own feeling respecting the ultimate mystery is such that of late years I cannot even try to think of infinite space without some feeling of terror, so that I habitually shun the thought."

## II THE SHINING WAY

"The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Pr 4:18)

### 1. The "path of the righteous" has all the great characteristics suggested by light, namely, truth, purity, joy, life.

Perhaps the leading idea is that of holy gladness. In Scripture the favourite emblem of heaven and the heavenly, of God and the godly, is light,—of the evil power and the evil place, darkness; and none could be more striking and expressive. It is expressive of all the phenomena of the two contrasted worlds, alike in their nature, in their origin, and in their consequences. And light, as symbolical of the good, speaks to us of enlightenment of the understanding, the purity of holiness, and true happiness, even as darkness speaks to us of the opposites. Light means wisdom and holiness; and thus the Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, uses it: "Ye were sometimes darkness" (i.e. foolish and unholy), "but now are ye light in the Lord": your ignorance, that is to say, has been dispelled by the knowledge in Christ of the Holy God and reconciled Father. "Walk as children of light"; act, that is, in accordance with those principles of heavenly wisdom wherewith your darkened understanding has been enlightened, and shine in the bright purity of holiness. The just man, then, is a child of light, first of all, because through Divine grace he has been endued with wisdom, and has the seeds of holiness implanted within him.

¶ The message of Fox was to make men realize that individual inspiration was not a thing of the past, and that true assurance and guidance were open to every man who would follow the inward illumination. Attention to this inner light resulted in the discovery of sin and of the overcoming life in Christ. "Every one of you hath a light from Christ which lets you see you should not lie, nor do wrong to any nor swear nor curse nor take God's name in vain, nor steal. It is the light that shows you these evil deeds: which, if you love and come unto it and follow it, will lead you to Christ who is the way to the Father, from whom it comes: where no unrighteousness enters nor ungodliness. If you hate this light it will be your condemnation: but if you love it and come to it, you will come to Christ." The important thing for men to realize is that they have the witness of God in their own hearts against moral evils. It is not any outward code, scriptural or social, which reveals sin as sin, but the light of God in the conscience. If men would humbly and patiently wait upon God, the path of obedience would be made plain and the power to obey be abundantly bestowed.

### 2. The life of the righteous is a life of increasing lustre.

Like the light, it shineth "more and more." The day does not burst upon the earth at once. The night does not vanish and come to an end in a moment. There is a slow and gradual change; at first a very faint light far away in the eastern sky, while all the rest is dark; then it spreads gently wider and higher, and wakes up all things to a new life, bringing to sight mountains and valleys, streams and woods, which lay but now in the thick darkness, as though they were not. Then, at last, when all the shadows have grown pale, and the flood of shining light has poured its streams into every secret place, so that there is night and darkness no more—then the glorious sun comes forth, "like a giant refreshed," at first indeed made dim by the mists that still hang upon the earth, but soon breaking through, as it were, till he rides high in the clear sky, and, with the full power of his light and heat, pours down upon earth "the perfect day." But it is not always so. There are mornings of a different sort. Sometimes clouds and storms come with the breaking day. The sullen thunder-cloud, or the heavy gloom of mists and rain, half hide the feeble light. The sun passes behind great folds of heavy cloud, and you can see his rays only now and then through some rent or opening in the curtain that hides him from view. But he stays not, he changes not, in his course. He fulfils his daily round. He is the same, whatever else may be. And, whether it be in calm, or whether it be in storm, the light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Such is the parable of the text. The path of the righteous begins like the light of dawn. It is small in its beginning. The new-born Christian is like a rising sun struggling through the mists of morn. It must travel to its noon. Moving in the skies, far beyond all malign influence of earth, no hand but that of the Creator can stay it in its onward progress. Black clouds may steal it from the eye, but no cloud touches its fiery rim. Behind and above the cloud, it travels to its noon. For us its brightness may be absorbed in darkness, but in itself it shineth bright as ever. Even so is it with the Christian. Far above and beyond the malign influences of this sinful world, he too travels to his everlasting noon. No hand but the hand of the Almighty Redeemer, who set him forth on his glorious course, can

touch him. Clouds of sorrow, and it may be clouds of sin, may dim his glory to the earthly eye, or leave him even in black eclipse; but behind the darkness he proceedeth from height to height, climbing the heavens.

¶ “Divine grace” (says Leighton, on 1 Pet. 1:7), “even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed: throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it.” It belongeth then, by very necessity of nature, to the child of God that he grow—grow, so to speak, in bulk of spiritual life, grow in strength of all spiritual faculties, grow in largeness of spiritual result. Where there is no growth, there is no life. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more.

### **(1) Growth in the spiritual life is the gradual unfolding within of the powers of a life communicated to us.**

There is a supernatural life within the justified, for through union with the Incarnate Word we have received from Him the life that is in Himself. The life of God dwells without measure in the Son, and passes in measure into His members. In the justified this gift of life is no longer dormant, but is stirred up, and becomes an active principle within, as its presence is recognized and responded to. This life, thus willingly yielded to, is ever manifesting its vigour in the inward growth. As in nature, so in grace, the babe becomes the child, the child develops into the young man, the young man ripens into the father. But there cannot be this growth in the Divine life without the communication to us, through the Holy Ghost, of the life of God, and our surrender to it by repentance and faith. It will not do to imagine that a man may live and die in darkness, and that then a dazzling light will be shed upon him, like some splendid garment outside him, which will make him all at once meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No, the light must be within, kindled in the soul, growing there, cleansing and beautifying it; the soul must grow in the light. This is what we call the internal glory, the growth of the character in beauty.

¶ Throughout these pages [of his annotated Bible], we are constantly impressed by the large mental frontier of Smetham—his range of faculty, his many-sidedness. Here is a fragrant wild flower of the sermonic type, which crops up in that paradise of perfumed philosophy, Solomon’s Proverbs. It elucidates that celestial metaphor of the soul’s advancement, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The annotation is this: “The nature of the light remains the same. The first feeble ray of the morning has the same chemical elements as those of the brightest noon. So with Christian character.”

### **(2) To walk in the light gives expansion to all man’s capacities.**

There is no mental or moral faculty of human nature which is not improved and perfected by walking in the path which leads to eternal life. This results from close and constant association with the Christ, who is the treasury of wisdom and knowledge, and the sum of all excellence. Intimate fellowship with Him is health-giving in the highest degree. It means purity of atmosphere, for He takes us to the mount of vision above the fogs and vapours of impurity and sin; it means strength, because He is the Bread of Life, of which if a man eat he lives for ever; it means growth on every side of life, because the Christians say: “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Thus in Him and through Him the Christian is perfected.

¶ When Christian was passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death it was night, and he could scarcely see his way, but the day began to break as he came near the end of the first part of it, and the sun shone ever brighter and brighter upon the more dangerous part of the valley, so that he was able to walk more safely. Then said he, “His candle shineth on my head, and by His light I go through the darkness.” And so, while there may be but a feeble light on your path when you first begin to love and serve Jesus, it will grow brighter like the rising sun as you continue to do so.

### **(3) “Unto the perfect day.”**

At this point the simile of the text fails. Here the sun rises but to set; it travels to its midday splendour only to give place to midnight gloom. It is not so there: her “sun shall no more go down,” for “there is no night there.” Here light streams to us from God only through created media of His appointment. He “made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also” (Gen. 1:16), and through them light streams from Him to us. Hence it is in nature as it is in grace; light and darkness are constantly interchanged, whilst we receive His gifts through created media. But in the Heavenly Country there is no such change, because “the Lord himself is her everlasting light,” and the light that is in Him streams forth upon the children of light in one unending day. Blessed permanence of that unending day, that undecaying light! There is no night there, thank God! It is not advance and retrogression, but one unchecked progress; it is not the interchange of happiness and misery, but one unending song of the children of the day, revelling in the everlasting light.

This means not only glory, but also the development of humanity beneath the rays that stream from the light of God. It is there that the hidden powers of the intellect are developed, and the magnificence of mind is manifested. It is there that the capacities of the

heart to love are recognized, for there alone its hidden depths are sounded. It is there that the wondrous energies of the spirit are unfolded, in a degree now inconceivable to us, as it is flooded with the vision of God. There, and there only, is the grandeur of humanity realized, where the varied capacities of each created nature attain their perfection. In the imperfect there is no rest, but when we are perfect, "as he is perfect, in the perfect day," then shall be realized by us the joy of the sons of God.

¶ When the organism of the oak and the environment which fosters its growth unite to produce the sturdy king of the forest, we consider ourselves justified in concluding that God meant an oak-tree to be the outcome. And when we find a moral nature so constituted that it tends to develop along the line of rectitude, purity, and love, and an environment which offers the least resistance in the direction of righteousness, it is a safe inference that God purposed the development of that nature in the direction of righteousness. When He made the way of transgressors hard, and caused the path of the just to shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, God pointed the direction in which our race was to move. He indicated the destiny of man. He forecast the consummation of the work of the ages. He foreshadowed in that one fact the moral order and progress of man.

One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.

¶ Our destiny is potential within ourselves. Every man, woman, and child possesses this potentiality, this shaping spirit of prayer and the love of God. The golden stairs are in every home, in every house of business, and workshop, whereby, in deep communings like those of Jesus on the Galilean hills, we may bring down troops of joys and graces to fill the common day with song. It is our fault altogether if the lower chambers of life are dull and spiritless. The task is difficult no doubt. So much the more need for that steadfast communion with the Indwelling Love which gives the soul a power and persistence not long to be denied. Resolute always to see what good there is, and to throw the whole weight of our soul on to the side of that good, we shall find our love consuming the evil, and liberating kindred souls to co-operate with us.

Through love to light, O wonderful the way  
That leads from darkness to the perfect day!  
From darkness and from sorrow of the night,  
To morning that comes singing o'er the sea.  
Through love to light; through light, O God, to Thee  
Who art the Love of love, the eternal Light of light

#### **Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble.**

BGT Proverbs 4:19 α ὁ ὁ τ ν σεβ ν σκοτεινα ο κ ο δασιν π ς προσκ πτουςιν

NET Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like gloomy darkness; they do not know what causes them to stumble.

NLT Proverbs 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over.

ESV Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

NIV Proverbs 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

KJV Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

LXE Proverbs 4:19 But the ways of the ungodly are dark; they know not how they stumble.

ASV Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: They know not at what they stumble.

CSB Proverbs 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don't know what makes them stumble.

NKJ Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.

NRS Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what they stumble over.

YLT Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness, They have not known at what they stumble.

## THE CONTRASTING WAY OF THE WICKED

**The way** (cf Pr 4:14) **of the wicked is like darkness** - Darkness (term of comparison) is a simile that describes spiritual darkness, blindness, ignorance. **Wicked** in the Lxx is [asebes](#) which

The word for **darkness** is not slightly dark but utterly, totally dark and translates a word first used in Ex 10:21+ of one of the plagues over Egypt "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a **darkness** which may be felt." That's a good picture of where the wicked walk! It is fitting that this same word is used in Pr 7:9+ of the young man who goes to meet an adulteress "In the twilight, in the evening, In the middle of the night and in the **darkness**." Bad things happen in utter darkness! Satan is the prince of the power of the air over "the domain ([exousia](#)) of **darkness**" (Col 1:13+). These people are in desperate need of deliverance by the Gospel "to open their eyes so that they may **turn from darkness to light** and from the dominion ([exousia](#)) of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. " (Acts 26:18+)

**Steven Cole** - The root reason that people reject Jesus is that they are in spiritual darkness and they love it because their deeds are evil. As we saw in John 3:19+, "**men loved the darkness** rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." Those who do not follow Jesus are living in spiritual and moral darkness. The evidence of spiritual darkness is that you want to get rid of Jesus from your life (8:20). But eliminating Christ from your life does not eliminate God as the sovereign of the world. He is sovereign over all things, including the timing of the death of His Son (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). One day every knee will bow before Jesus, either for rewards or for condemnation (Phil. 2:9-11). The root reason that people reject Jesus is that they love their sin. They don't want the Light to expose their evil deeds. So Jesus' astounding claim (8:12), "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life," draws a line and asks, "Which side are you on?" (Jesus Light of the World)

**Darkness** ([0653](#))(**apelah**) means "darkness." "Like its counterpart (LIGHT), this word is used in a figurative sense. Even the instances of natural darkness are used to illustrate spiritual darkness. Moses warned the Israelites that if they did not follow the Lord, they would be like a blind man groping in the darkness (Deut. 28:29). Proverbs 7:9 warns against foolishness, comparing the unwise to those who go in to a prostitute after dark. The plague of darkness sent on Egypt was actual darkness (darkness "that could be felt" [Ex. 10:22]), but it was also a statement by Yahweh of Egypt's spiritual condition. Spiritual darkness is a lack of understanding of the ways of the Lord. Light, or walking in the light, is often used to illustrate having understanding. The comparison of spiritual darkness and light is a favorite of the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Like Amos, Joel 2:2+ and Zephaniah 1:5 describe the "[Day of the Lord](#)" as darkness. The coming judgment day being preached about in the Old Testament was often understood by the Israelites as a punishment of the surrounding nations. But the prophets described the Day of the Lord as darkness, because Israel would be judged for their sins also." ([Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#))

**TWOT** - Light and darkness are well-known opposites in Palestine. In that land the light does not fade gradually after twilight. Sunset is preceded by brightness, which is soon changed with the disappearance of the sun. Within an hour, sunset has given way to the darkness of night. There are symbolic uses of darkness as there are of light. As light presages glory, blessing, purity, so darkness foreshadows disaster.

**Apelah** - 10v - darkness(4), gloom(5), thick(1). Exod. 10:22; Deut. 28:29; Prov. 4:19; Prov. 7:9; Isa. 8:22; Isa. 58:10; Isa. 59:9; Jer. 23:12; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15

Isaiah 8:22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into **darkness**.

Isaiah 58:10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in **darkness** And your gloom will become like midday.

Isaiah 59:9 (Therefore justice is far from us, And righteousness does not overtake us; We hope for light, but behold, **darkness**, For brightness, but we walk in gloom.

Jeremiah 23:12 Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them, They will be driven away into the gloom and fall down in it; For I will bring calamity upon them, The year of their punishment," declares the LORD.

Joel 2:2+ A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Zephaniah 1:15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

**They do not know over what they stumble** - This is the result of the darkness. Why do they stumble? They are spiritually blind and they cannot see where they are going. This depicts the life of the wicked person as uncertain and perilous.

**Gilbrant** - Since the wicked (foolish) have chosen to go their own way, rejecting wisdom (Pr 1:20-32), and not obeying whatever instruction they may receive, they are doomed to a life of difficulty (Pr 13:21; 22:5). Choosing to walk in darkness, they cannot see the real nature of their road, and so stumble, not realizing that it is their own folly that blinds them (Luke 11:33-36). (Complete Biblical Library)

Jesus has an apt description of the wicked in Matthew 15:14 "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

John wrote "But the one who hates his brother is **in the darkness** and **walks in the darkness**, and does not know where he is going because the **darkness has blinded his eyes.**" (1 John 2:11+)

**UBS Handbook** - The life of those who disregard God is like the darkness of night. They fall down and do not know what made them stumble. But the life of those who obey God is like the sunrise; it becomes brighter and brighter until it is broad daylight.

**Guzik** - "Considering where each path leads should help a man or woman make the right choice. One of the tempter's chief strategies is to hide the consequences of our path, whether it is the path of the just or the way of the wicked." (Guzik)

**Matthew Henry** - The way of sin is as darkness, v. 19. The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with are works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can those have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in doing mischief? What sure guide have those that cast God's word behind them? The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble and yet know not at what they stumble. They fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never enquire wherefore God contends with them; they consider not that they do evil, nor what will be in the end of it, Psa. 82:5; Job 18:5, 6. This is the way we are directed to shun.

**Bridges** - The contrast is again repeated. (See the same contrast drawn by our Lord, Matt. 6:22, 23.—Schultens considers the original to express increasing darkness—thus answering to the increasing light of the opposite path. Comp. Job 15:23.) Each has his own way. The path of the just is glowing light and joy. The way of the wicked is darkness—without direction, comfort, safety, or peace—till "his feet at last stumble on the dark mountains"—till he falls into "the blackness of darkness forever." (Jer. 13:16, Jude 13. Comp. Job 18:5, 6, 18) His way is not only dark—but as darkness—a compound of ignorance, error, sin, and misery. The love of sin "rebels against the light." (Job 24:13, John 3:19. Comp. Isa. 5:20.) The darkness is wilful, and therefore accountable. There is no stumbling in the path of the just. So far as he is upright, the Lord keeps him. (Pr 4:12; 3:23, Psalm 91:11, 12) The wicked go on "groping as if they had no eyes;" (Isa. 59:10) hurrying on blindly into misery, that they can neither foresee nor avoid. (Job 5:14; 12:25, Jer. 23:12, Zeph. 1:17.) They know not at what they stumble. Oh! if they did, would they not startle, and shrink back? For they stumble on the very foundation of the gospel; making the rock of salvation the rock of offence. (Rom. 9:32, 33, 1 Pet. 2:8) Would they but listen to the merciful warning of their Lord!—"Yet a little time the light is with you, walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." (John 12:35, 36)

**McGee** - There are two ways that are set in contrast. One way is the way in which the righteous go. It is described as a "shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is another way, the way the lawless go. It is a way of darkness. It reminds us of the broad way that our Lord described, which I believe has been misunderstood.

I can remember when I was a boy that we would be taught about the broad way and the narrow way. Now if they had asked me which way I wanted to go, I would have said immediately, "I think you could have a lot more fun on the broad way." Unfortunately, I think that is the impression most often given. However, that is not accurate at all. The picture is altogether different.

The broad way is a wide one today. That is where the mob is. The crowd is having a "vanity fair" down that way all the time. The carnival is going on. (By the way, that word carnival comes from the word carnal, which has to do with the flesh.) Down there is the place where they indulge the flesh, and they call it the way of liberty. We hear today that we are living in a new age in which we can do as we please. That is certainly a broad way—that is, at the entrance. But notice that this broad way gets narrower and narrower and narrower. The way of the lawless is the dark way. "The way of the wicked is as darkness." There are the bright lights at the entrance, but down a little farther there are no lights. The people don't even know what they are stumbling over. That is the broad way that the Lord Jesus described. It is just like going in at the big end of a funnel and then finding that it gets narrower and narrower



until finally it ends in destruction.

In contrast, the narrow way is very narrow at the entrance. The Lord Jesus said, "... I am the way ..." (John 14:6, italics mine). It is so narrow that it is limited to one Person: Christ. No one can come to the Father but through Him. You just can't find a way any narrower than that. Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). The entrance is narrow, but after the entrance the way gets wider and wider, leading to an abundant life here and on into the light of heaven itself. My friend, we need to enter into the narrow end of the funnel, and that end is labeled, The Lord Jesus Christ.

That is exactly the picture we get from our verses here in Proverbs. There are two ways. There is the path of the just, and there is the way of the wicked. We will hear more of this in this book. The broad way is described in chapter 16: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25).

### Proverbs 4:20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.

BGT Proverbs 4:20 υ μ σει πρ σεχε το ς δ μο ς λ γοις παρ βαλε σ ν ο ς

NET Proverbs 4:20 My child, pay attention to my words; listen attentively to my sayings.

NLT Proverbs 4:20 My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words.

ESV Proverbs 4:20 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

NIV Proverbs 4:20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.

KJV Proverbs 4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

LXE Proverbs 4:20 My son, attend to my speech; and apply thine ear to my words:

ASV Proverbs 4:20 My son, attend to my words; Incline thine ear unto my sayings.

CSB Proverbs 4:20 My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings.

NKJ Proverbs 4:20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.

NRS Proverbs 4:20 My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

YLT Proverbs 4:20 My son, to my words give attention, To my sayings incline thine ear,

- Pr 5:1 6:20,21 7:1 Ps 78:1 90:12 Isa 55:3 Mt 17:5

#### EVEN DOGS "INCLINE" THEIR EAR

This recalls the orders in the military when recruits line up and the sergeant yells "ATTENTION!"

Sound words sounded forth are no guarantee they will be received. I like to think of our heart as like a radio receiver that is FM/AM. Let's say the world is broadcasting on the AM and God's Word (words, sayings) are on the FM band. We won't receive the God's signal if we don't switch to the FM band! And so the words of wisdom can be broadcast but sadly never received. It reminds me of the Jewish audience listening to Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, where Stephen said these Jews had "uncircumcised heart(s) and **ears...always resisting the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 7:51+) And then when Stephen's words were too convicting "they cried out with a loud voice, and **covered their ears** and rushed at him with one impulse." (Acts 7:57+).

**Matthew Henry** - We must have a continual regard to the word of God and endeavour that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, We must receive them readily: "**Incline thy ear to them**; humbly bow to them; diligently listen to them." The attentive hearing of the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped that those are resolved to do their duty who are inclined to know it.

**Tozer** - With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favored of all creatures."

**My son, give attention to my words** - In light of the danger of darkness Solomon gives two commands. Prick up your ears, sharpening them like a stag points his ears alertly listening for predators who would eat the herd's flesh alive. What a picture of the importance of the LIVING and ACTIVE WORD! Listen, give heed, pay attention. The root denotes the activity of hearing,

emphasizing either paying close attention or obeying (heeding). Saul wrongfully exalted the importance of sacrifice over obedience. (1 Sa 15:22;"heed than the fat of rams"). Through his prophets (Jer 6:17, 19), God repeatedly summoned his people to **heed** the warnings of impending judgment (Isa 28:23), but they did not (Isa 48:18; Je 6:19; Je 18:18).

**Give Attention** (07181)(**qashab**) means to incline (ears) to listen carefully, to pay (close) attention, to give heed, to obey. The root denotes the activity of hearing, emphasizing either paying close attention or obeying (heeding). The Septuagint translates **qashab** in Pr 4:1 and here in Pr 4:20 with **prosecho** in **present imperative** which is a command calling for giving continual attention. The corollary thought is that when we cease to give attention to the words (aka the Word of Truth and Life), we are vulnerable to falling prey to temptations!

**Incline your ear to my sayings** - This command reminds me of the picture of the RCA dog with an inclined ear to sound! A good example to emulate! The picture is "lean over and listen closely." An inclined **ear** is one which is "stretched out" toward or extending toward something (Moses "stretched out" His hand in Ex 7:19+), here of course figurative, to buttress the command to give attention. You can hardly give attention if you don't "stretch" your ear to God's words. The Septuagint translates **natah** with an rare verb **paraballo** (in **aurist imperative** = do this now! do not delay! it is urgent!) which is a nautical term of a ship approaching land and then figuratively of setting something side by side (in this case ears and sayings!) .Here **natah** refers to turning the ear toward truth and the use in Pr 4:27+ refers to not turning from truth (and turn aside from evil). The first use in Proverbs 4 was in Pr 4:5+ "Do not forget nor **turn away** from the words of my mouth."

**Incline** (stretched, outstretched, turned aside) (05186)(**natah**) means to stretch out, to extend; to pay attention. Most usages are figurative. One's heart may "turn away" (Solomon in 1 Ki 11:2-4, 9, 2 Sa 19:14). On the other hand one's heart may be inclined to God and his commands (Josh 24:23; 1 Ki 8:58; Ps 119:36). Also common is the expression "**to incline the ear**" (listen with intent to obey God) (Jer 7:24, 26; Jer 11:8; Jer 17:23 et al.). God inclining His ear toward men (2 Ki 19:16; Isa 37:17; Da 9:18). Men inclining their ear to the words of a sage (Pr 4:20; Pr 5:1, 13; Pr 22:17).

Uses of **natah** in Proverbs - Prov. 1:24; Prov. 2:2; Prov. 4:5; Prov. 4:20; Prov. 4:27; Prov. 5:1; Prov. 5:13; Prov. 7:21; Prov. 17:23; Prov. 18:5; Prov. 21:1; Prov. 22:17

**Believer's Study Bible** - Note the emphasis here on the body's involvement in temptation and the resistance of it. The "mouth" is one outlet for sin, since words follow thoughts (Pr 4:24). The "eyes" are a dangerous inlet to sin (Pr 4:25); this is demonstrated by Eve (Gen. 3:6), Achan (Josh. 7:21, note), and Lot's wife (Gen. 19:26). The "feet" are often the vehicle of sin unless directed by the Lord (cf.Pr 4:26, 27).

**NET Note** is similar to above - Commentators note the use of the body in this section: ear (Pr 4:20), eyes (Pr 4:21), flesh (Pr 4:22), heart (Pr 4:23), lips (Pr 4:24), eyes (Pr 4:25), feet (Pr 4:26), and hands and feet (Pr 4:27). Each is a **synecdoche** of part representing the whole; the total accumulation signifies the complete person in the process.

Guzik - Proverbs 4:20–27 make mention of the body at least 11 times (eyes, feet, and heart are mentioned twice, and ear, flesh, mouth, lips, and eyelids once each). It is a section that speaks powerfully on how we can dedicate each part of our body to wisdom and God's honor. Later the Apostle Paul wrote of yielding the parts (members) of our body to God (Romans 6:12–13+).

**Bridges** - These repeated injunctions (Pr 3:1; 5:1, 6:20, 21; 22:17) are an admirable pattern to the Christian Parent or Minister. The desire of wisdom—the first step in the path—is encouraged. The means of obtaining it, and the privilege when obtained, are pointed out. Eye then the treasury of wisdom habitually.

**Lawson** - When a preacher has truths of great importance to communicate, and sees many of his hearers asleep, he endeavours to rouse them up; so this wise man, knowing that we are dull of hearing, frequently renews his calls to us to hear and treasure up his words.

It is our duty to be frequently summoning the powers of our souls to attend with reverence to the words of God, our Maker and our Judge, and to pray to God that he may open our ears to discipline, and seal our instruction.

He that hath ears, let him hear. Let him place these necessary instructions before his eyes, that they may be a rule to his life, and let him lay them up in the midst of his heart, believing them to be the faithful sayings of God, and loving them with a cordial affection, because they are more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey from the comb.

The motives that call for our attention are exceedingly powerful. It is a father that speaks. The things which are spoken are of quickening and invigorating virtue. They are life to such as find them, and health not only to the soul but to the body; not to a particular part of it, but to all the flesh. A medicine effectual to the cure of a single member might soon enrich the inventor of it. Here is a medicine for all the flesh, and yet the physician that prescribes it without reward, finds so few willing to make use of it that he must proclaim its virtues again and again. He speaketh once and again, but man perceiveth it not. Are we then dead not only to every generous principle, but to every feeling of self-interest? Are life and death become matters of indifference to us? Is it all one in

our eyes whether we enjoy health in our bodies and spirits, or pine away under the power of deadly distempers? Here is healing balm. Here is a physician of infinite value. Attend to the directions which he gives for the management of our whole life.

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### Proverbs 4:20-27 Spiritual Checkup

Given a choice, I'd probably not voluntarily visit my doctor for a physical exam. I'm inclined to assume that everything is okay and not bother my doctor about it. But since my wife is a nurse, I don't have a choice. I go in for regular exams.

And given a choice, many of us are a little afraid of spiritual checkups as well. After all, if we check our spirit too closely, we might have to change a habit or two. We might need something like an "attitude-ectomy."

I suggest that we get over our reluctance. With God's guidance, let's undergo a spiritual checkup, using Proverbs 4:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 as a checklist.

- Ears (Proverbs 4:20): Are we hearing God's Word clearly and with understanding? Are we doing what those words tell us?
- Eyes (Proverbs 4:21,25): Are we keeping our eyes on the teachings that will guide us toward righteousness?
- Heart (Proverbs 4:23): Are we protecting our heart from evil?
- Tongue (Proverbs 4:24): Is our mouth clean and pure?
- Feet (Proverbs 4:26): Are we walking straight toward God's truth without wavering?

How did you do on your examination? Are there areas where you need to take action? Regular checkups will help to restore your spiritual vitality. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
Show me the way that Jesus has trod;  
Then I will tell of Your saving grace,  
Until the day when I see Your face.  
—Hess

A spiritual checkup is the key to spiritual health

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### Proverbs 4:20-27a Healthcare For The Heart

If you're over 40 years old, your heart has already beat more than 1.5 billion times. I know that when my heart stops, it will be too late to change my ways. So I've been trying to control my weight, get exercise, and watch not only what I eat but also what's eating me.

This last point relates to another vital organ called "the heart"—our spiritual heart. It too has throbbed millions of times with thoughts, affections, and choices. In the heart we determine how we will speak, behave, and respond to life's circumstances ([Proverbs 4:23](#)). Will we trust the Lord and choose to be gracious, patient, and loving? Or will we yield to pride, greed, and bitterness?

Today's Scripture reading emphasizes the importance of caring for our heart. Are we keeping spiritually fit?

- Weight: Do we need to lose the weight of unnecessary burdens and cares?
- Pulse: Are we maintaining a steady rhythm of gratitude and praise?
- Blood pressure: Is our trust greater than our anxiety?
- Diet: Are we enjoying the life-giving nutrients of the Word of God?

Have you checked your heart lately?—Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, You see what's in the heart—  
There's nothing hid from You;  
So help us live the kind of life  
That's filled with love for You.  
—D. De Haan

To keep spiritually fit, consult the Great Physician

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BGT Proverbs 4:21 πωρς μ κλ πωρ ν σε α πηγα σου φ λαρσε α τ ς ν σ καρδ

NET Proverbs 4:21 Do not let them depart from your sight, guard them within your heart;

NLT Proverbs 4:21 Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart,

ESV Proverbs 4:21 Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

NIV Proverbs 4:21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;

KJV Proverbs 4:21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

LXE Proverbs 4:21 that thy fountains may not fail thee; keep them in thine heart.

ASV Proverbs 4:21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; Keep them in the midst of thy heart.

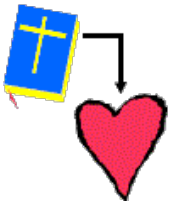
CSB Proverbs 4:21 Don't lose sight of them; keep them within your heart.

NKJ Proverbs 4:21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;

NRS Proverbs 4:21 Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

YLT Proverbs 4:21 Let them not turn aside from thine eyes, Preserve them in the midst of thy heart.

- **depart:** Pr 3:3,21
- **in the:** Pr 2:1 Ps 40:8



Psalm 119:9,11

## MEMORIZE THE WORD IT IS YOUR LIFE!

**Matthew Henry** - We must retain them carefully (v. 21); we must lay them before us as our rule: "Let them not depart from thy eyes; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them." We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man: "Keep them in the midst of thy heart, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing." Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

**Do not let them depart from your sight** (literally "your eyes") - ESV = "Let them not escape from your sight." **Depart** ([luz](#)) can have the sense of slipping from one's sight as in Wisdom's charge in Pr 3:21+ "let them not vanish (same Hebrew word [luz](#)) from your sight.". The Lxx translates luz here with [ekleipo](#) which means to depart from a place, to no longer be in existence. The implication is clear that you can let the **words** and **sayings** (Pr 4:20) depart from your sight. Sleepy eyes (re the Word) can soon lead to sinful steps! When you open your eyes in the morning, open your Bible, and look with the eyes of an open, hungry heart. So here we need to "keep them in our sight" and in the next phrase "keep them in our heart."

**A neglected Bible is the melancholy proof of an heart "alienated from God."**

**Bridges** - A neglected Bible is the melancholy proof of an heart "alienated from God." For how can we have a spark of love to him, if that Book, which is the full manifestation of his glory, be despised? And yet a superficial acquaintance with it is of no avail. If our ears were bored to the door of the sanctuary; if the words never departed from our eyes; yet, except they were **kept in the heart**, our religion would be a notion, not a principle; speculative, not practical: conviction, not love. Nor even here must they possess the mere threshold. Let that be for the world; let the word be kept in the midst of the heart. Here only can it be operative; (Pr 23:26, Psalm 40:8, 119:11) "for out of the heart are the issues of life." (Pr 4:23) Here it becomes lively and substantial truth. Here then let a home be made for it ( Col. 3:16)—a consecrated sanctuary in the most honored chambers—in the midst of the heart. This inhabitation of the word is a covenant promise, the test of our interest in the Lord and in his people. (Jer. 31:33.)

**Keep them in the midst of your heart** ([lebab](#), Lxx-[kardia](#)) - **Keep** means to guard ([shamar](#) used also in Pr 4:4, Pr 4:6) and in the Septuagint is [phulasso](#) in the [present imperative](#) a command calling for continual keeping with the sense of guarding them. Don't let

them out. Don't let godless ideas in.

What better way to keep the Word of God in the midst of your heart. in your inner man, then by memorizing it! When was the last time you memorized a verse? How do you expect to be able to keep it in the midst of your heart if you do not memorize? The heart is our control center of thoughts, words, actions. Let the control center marinate ([meditate](#)) on the Word. (See [Memorizing His Word](#))

**THOUGHT (MEN)** - If you keep the Word of Life on the screen of your mind, you will be much more likely to be protected from the Women of Licentiousness on the screen of your desk. In other words if your affection is centered on your Holy God and His Holy Word, the Holy Spirit will protect you from focusing on the lurid images of this world (cf Ro 8:13+). For more on this important Biblical principle see [The Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#).

The psalmist extols the value of keeping God's words and saying in the midst of the inner man...

"The law of his God is in his heart. His steps do not slip." (Psalm 37:31)

**Spurgeon comments:** "The **best thing** in the **best place**, producing the **best results**. Well might the man's talk be so admirable when his heart was so well stored. To love holiness, to have the [motives](#) and desires sanctified, to be in one's inmost nature obedient to the Lord -- this is the surest method of making the whole run of our life efficient for its great ends, and even for securing the details of it, our steps from any serious mistake. To keep the even tenor of one's way, in such times as these, is given only to those whose hearts are sound towards God, who can, as in the text, call God their God. Policy slips and trips, it twists and tacks, and after all is worsted in the long run, but sincerity plods on its plain pathway and reaches the goal."

**John Trapp** adds: "He hath a Bible in his head, and another in his heart; he hath a good treasure within, and there hence bringeth good things."

**McGee** - The psalmist said this about the Word: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). God's words are the words of life. It has been said of the writings of a great man of the past that if his words were cut, they would bleed. This can truly be said of the words of God. They are living words—if you cut them, they will bleed. "For they are life unto those that find them." They will bring life and light to you. They bring instruction and direction and joy. All this comes through the Word of God.

#### Related Resources:

- [Memorizing His Word](#)
- [Memory Verses by Topic](#)

#### Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those who find them And health to all their body.

BGT Proverbs 4:22 ζω γ ρ σtiv το ς ε ρ σκουσiv α τ ς κ α π σ σαρκ ασις

NET Proverbs 4:22 for they are life to those who find them and healing to one's entire body.

NLT Proverbs 4:22 for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.

ESV Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

NIV Proverbs 4:22 for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.

KJV Proverbs 4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

LXE Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

ASV Proverbs 4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, And health to all their flesh.

CSB Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body.

NKJ Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

NRS Proverbs 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

YLT Proverbs 4:22 For life they are to those finding them, And to all their flesh healing.

- **life:** Pr 4:4,10
- **health:** Heb. medicine, Pr 3:8 Pr 12:18 Jer 33:6

## WORDS OF LIFE

Moses in some of his last words instructed Israel -

he said to them, "**Take** to your heart (AKA "MEMORIZE") **all the words** with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully (DISCIPLE THEM), even **all the words** of this law. 47 "For (TERM OF EXPLANATION - WHY THE WORD IS SO IMPORTANT) **it** is not an idle **word** for you; **indeed it is your life**. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (Deut 32:46-47).

**Matthew Henry** - As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained. We could not live without it; we may by faith live upon it.

**For they are life to those who find them** - Moses could not have been more on point stating "it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life."

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, do you believe God's Word is **your life**? Do you believe Jesus Who said "'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" " (Mt 4:4+, Lk 4:4+). If you say you believe Moses and Jesus, then does your practice prove your profession. Saying you believe it and not spending quality time in the Word is [disingenuous](#), even hypocritical! But worst of all, it is to the detriment of your spiritual life!

Jesus referred to His word and its importance in regard to life

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears **Myword**, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal **life**, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into **life**.(John 5:24, cf Jn 6:68)

And again in John 6 Jesus declared

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

Ultimately Jesus is the Word of Life (1 John 1:1<sup>±</sup>).

Paul told the believers at Philippi they were to be lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation "holding fast **theword of life**, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.." (Php 2:16+).

**Matthew Henry** -They are health to all their flesh, to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are health to all flesh, so the Septuagint. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are a medicine to all their flesh (so the word is), to all their corruptions, for they are called flesh, to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

**And health to all their body** - Spiritual health, physical health, mental health. Holistic health!

**Bridges** - This keeping of the word will be life to those that find it (see Pr 4:4, 10, 13; 3:18). Vigorous and healthy will be the soul (Pr 3:8), that feeds upon this heavenly manna. (Some medicines are good for one part of the body, some for another. This is good for the body and the soul. We will enjoy vigorous health as we feed on this heavenly manna.) We shall not then bear our religion as our cross, as a cumbrous appendage. We shall not drag on in Christian duties as our chain. Godliness will be to us an element of joy. The functions will be free and lively. The spirit will feel a vital glow. The mind will be enriched with Divine wisdom. The heart will be established with gospel grace.

**Proverbs 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.**

BGT Proverbs 4:23 π σ φυλακ τρει σ ν καρδ αν κ γ ρ το των ξοδοι ζω ς

NET Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the sources of life.

NLT Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.



ESV Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

NIV Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

KJV Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

LXE Proverbs 4:23 Keep thine heart with the utmost care; for out of these are the issues of life.

ASV Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life.

CSB Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.

NKJ Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

NRS Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

YLT Proverbs 4:23 Above every charge keep thy heart, For out of it are the outgoings of life.

- **Watch:** Pr 22:5 23:19 28:26 De 4:9 Ps 139:23,24 Jer 17:9 Mk 14:38 Heb 12:15
- **with all diligence:** Heb. above all keeping, Pr 4:7 3:21 11:16 13:3 Ec 5:13
- **for:** Mt 12:35 15:19 Mk 7:21-23 Jas 1:14,15

## THE MOST IMPORTANT WATCH IN YOUR LIFE

Every morning (empowered by the Spirit, indwelt with the Word) post a sentry on duty at the door your heart.

**Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life- See Proverbs 4:23 Commentary for an in depth study of this critically important passage.**

**Wiersbe** - "The Bible warns us to avoid a double heart (Psalm 12:2), a hard heart (Proverbs 28:14), a proud heart (Proverbs 21:4), an unbelieving heart (Hebrews 3:12), a cold heart (Matthew 24:12), and an unclean heart (Psalm 51:10)...."If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread; before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame."

**NET Note on springs** - The word תוצאות (tots'ot, from יצא, yatsa') means "outgoings; extremities; sources." It is used here for starting points, like a fountainhead, and so the translation "sources" works well.

As Satan keeps special watch here, so must we keep special watch as well.

-- Charles Bridges

**Bridges** - The rules laid out in verses 23–27 constitute an invaluable safeguard for our Christian lives. Since we are attacked at every point, every possible place where sin may gain a foothold has to be guarded against—the heart, the mouth, the eyes, the feet. First the **heart**, man's citadel, the center of his dearest treasure. It is frightening to think about its many assailants. Let it be guarded carefully. Never let the guard sleep at his post (Deuteronomy 4:9). The **heart** must be known, so that it may be kept safe. Nothing is more difficult, but nothing is more necessary. If we do not know our hearts, it will be as if we knew nothing at all. Whatever else we know, to neglect this knowledge is to be a prize fool. If we do not know our weak points, Satan is well aware of them, "the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:2). Then, when I know my heart and feel that it is in the middle of so many dangers, the question arises, can I guard my own heart? Certainly not. This is God's work, though it is carried out through the agency of man. He works through our efforts. He implants an active principle and sustains the ceaseless exercise. When this is done in his strength and guidance, all the means of our preservation are greatly increased. Watch and pray. Nurture a humble spirit and a dependent spirit. Live in the atmosphere of the Word of God. Resist the evil world, even in its most plausible forms. This will be a conflict until the end of our lives. "The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and after conversion to keep it with him" (Flavel). "What is there," asks Mede, "that will not entice and allure so fickle a thing as the heart from God?" Above all else, exhorts the wise man, guard your heart. **As Satan keeps special watch here, so must we keep special watch as well. If the citadel is taken, the whole town must surrender. If the heart is captured, the whole man—affections, desires, motives, pursuits—will be handed over. The heart is the vital part of the body. If the heart is wounded, that means instant death. Spiritually as well as naturally, the heart ... is the wellspring of life.** It is the great vital spring of the soul, the fountain of actions, the center and the seat of both sin and holiness (Matthew 12:34–35). The natural heart is a fountain of poison (Matthew 15:19); but the purified heart is a well of living water (John 4:14). As the spring is, so will be the streams. **As the heart is, so will be the mouth, the eyes, and the feet. Therefore, above all else, guard your heart. Guard the spring so that the waters are not polluted.**

If the heart is not guarded, everything else is of no avail.

- Charles Bridges



**Matthew Henry** - We must keep a watchful eye and a strict hand upon all the motions of our inward man, v. 23. Here is, 1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom: Keep thy heart with all diligence. God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them: Man, woman, keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit, Deu. 4:9. We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt, from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep a conscience void of offence; keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds. Keep them with all keepings (so the word is); there are many ways of keeping things—by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, Jer. 17:9. Or above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes (Job 31:1), keep our tongues (Ps. 34:13), keep our feet (Eccl. 5:1), but, above all, keep our hearts. 2. A good reason given for this care, because out of it are the issues of life. Out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good products, to the glory of God and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

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**Spurgeon** - You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since otherwise, that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt.

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**Cawdray** - The heart of man is a furnace continually burning. If thou wilt nourish it with meditations of the love of God, there will appear a bright flame of love to God and man; but if thou maintain it with thoughts of self-love, then it will be full of vile smoke, stench, and darkness.

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**William Arnot - The Fountain and its Streams** “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”—4:23–27.

FIRST the fountain, then the streams: first the heart, and then the life-course. The issues of life are manifold: three of their main channels are mapped out here—the “lips,” the “eyes,” and the “feet.”

The corruption of the heart, the pollution of the spring-head, where all life’s currents rise, is a very frequent topic in the Scriptures. It occurs in many places, and in many forms. In proportion to the opposition which it is fitted to excite, is the doctrine reiterated and enforced. The imaginations of man’s heart are only evil, and that continually. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. As a fountain casteth out her waters, Jerusalem casteth out her wickedness. God foreknew that a deceitful heart would be unwilling to own its deceitfulness, and therefore the truth is fortified beyond most others in the word.

“**Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.**” This precept of the Proverbs sounds very like some of the sayings of Jesus. The king’s ear caught prophetically before the time, what we have heard historically after it, as if the word had echoed either way. You may stand in the morning on a height so great that you see the sun’s disc emerging from the eastern horizon some time before he has risen upon the plain. Solomon, as a teacher of righteousness, was elevated far above the common level of humanity. By special gift, and by the Spirit’s intervention, he was exalted much above other men in all knowledge, and especially the knowledge of divine truth. So high was the mountain-top he stood upon, that, like Abraham, he saw Christ’s day afar off, and felt a beam from the Sun of Righteousness long before he had personally arisen upon the world.

A greater than Solomon has said, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries.” Keep therefore according to Solomon’s precept,—keep with all diligence that prolific spring. Here, as in all other cases, prayer and pains must go together. We cry to God in the words of David, Create in me a clean heart; and He answers back by the mouth of David’s son, Keep thy heart. We must keep it, otherwise it will run wild. The Almighty Lord will bruise Satan; but it is “under your feet:” yourselves must tread on his writhing folds.

“**Keep it with all keepings**” is the word. Leave no means untried. Out of our own conduct will we be condemned if we do not effectually keep our own hearts. We keep other things with success as often as we

set about it in earnest—good things from getting, and bad things from doing, harm. One who loves his garden, keeps it so well that travellers pause as they pass and look admiring on. You keep your family, your house, your money, and you keep them well. Even your clothes are kept, so that no stain shall be seen upon them. On the other side, dangerous creatures are kept with a firm hand and a watchful eye from doing evil. We keep in the horse or mule with bit and bridle. Even the raging sea is kept back by the skill of men, and ripening fields bask safely in the autumn sun below the level of its waters, and within hearing of its roar. In other keepings man is skilful and powerful too; but in keeping his own heart, unstable as water, he does not excel.

**Keep it with all keepings.** Keep it from getting evil, as a garden is kept; keep it from doing evil, as the sea is kept at bay from reclaimed netherlands. Keep it with the keeping of heaven above, and of the earth beneath—God's keeping bespoken in prayer, and man's keeping applied in watchful effort. Keep it with all keepings, for out of it are the issues of life. The true principle on which an effectual restraint can be put upon the issues of the heart is indicated in the 21st verse—"Keep" my words "in the midst of thine heart." The same prescription for the same disease occurs in that great hymn of the Hebrews (Psalm 119:11)—"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The word of life is the salt that must be cast into these bitter springs of Jericho, to save the surrounding land from barrenness.

**1. The first of the three streams marked on this map as issuing from an ill-kept heart is "a froward mouth."** The form of the precept, put it away, reveals a secret of our birth. The evil is there at the first in every one: he who is free of it was not born free. We have not a clear ground to begin upon. When a man would erect a temple to God within his own body, the first effort of the builder is to clear the rubbish away. Of the things from the heart that need to be put away, the first in the order of nature is the froward mouth. Words offer the first and readiest egress for evil.

The power of speech is one of the grand peculiarities which distinguish man. It is a wonderful and precious gift; wanting it, and all that depends on it, man would scarcely be man. While we use the gift, we should remember the Giver, and the purpose for which he bestowed it. While we speak, we should never forget that God is one of the listeners. Men sin in comfort when they forget God, and forget God that they may sin in comfort. If the Queen were present, hearing every word, on a given day, in a given company, a restraint would be put upon every tongue; gravity and gentleness would breathe in every sentence: yet that same company is not refined and sobered by the presence of the King Eternal. Like Israel, in a backsliding time (Mal. 1:8), we bring unto God the blind and the lame, sacrifices that we would not offer to our sovereign; and that she would not accept at our hands. He who has a tongue to speak should remember that the bestower of the gift is listening, and keep back whatever would displease Him. Take the principle of Hagar's simple and sublime confession, accommodated in form to the case in hand, "Thou God, hearest me." If our words were all poured through that strainer, how much fewer and purer they would be! If all the words of our week were gathered and set before us at its close, the boldest head would hang down at the sight. When all the words this tongue has uttered are written and opened in His sight on that day, how shall I appear, if the dark record remains still mine? While for that reckoning we must trust all and only in the blood of Christ, that taketh sin away, we should diligently set about the business of watching and restraining the perverseness of our own lips. The work is hopeful. They who try it in the right way will be encouraged by seen progress. A vain, a biting, an untruthful, a polluted, a profane tongue cannot be in the family of God, when the family are at home in the Father's presence. The evil must be put away; the tongue must be cleansed; and now is the day for such exercises: that which remaineth for the people of God is a Sabboth on which no such work is done, in a heaven where no such work is needed.

**2. The next outlet from the fountain is by the "eyes."** The precept is quaint in its cast—"let thine eyes look right on;" and yet its meaning is not difficult. Let the heart's aim be simple and righteous. No secret longings and side glances after forbidden things: no crooked bye-ends and hypocritical pretences. Both in appearance and reality let your path be a straightforward one. In a mercantile community especially this is the quality that should be chiefly in request. Much mischief is done when men begin to look aside instead of straight before them. A manufacturer glances to the side one day, and sees a neighbour making as much by a lucky speculation in an hour as he has won by the regular prosecution of his business in a twelvemonth. He throws for a prize, and draws a blank. In the speculation the capital which sustained his business has disappeared: his legitimate creditors are defrauded, and his family ruined.

Deviations from the straight line have become so many and so great, that the deviators, keeping each other in countenance, begin to defend their own course, and whisper a desire to establish a new code of laws which may coincide with their practice. We have here and there met with an appalling measure of obtuseness in comprehending the first principles of justice, which should regulate all commercial transactions. Men may be

found amongst us holding their heads high, and conducting business on a large scale, who have not gotten the alphabet of honesty yet. It is ground of thankfulness, indeed, that these are the exceptions. The body politic of commerce is in a much sounder state than it appears to a superficial observer, judging from instances whose abnormal criminality has thrust them more prominently into view. If the life were not on the whole robust, it could not bear diseased tumours so many and so great; but the body whose beauty they mar, and whose strength they waste, should, for its own health's sake, be ashamed of the deformities, and intolerant of their growth. With this view, let every man, besides joining in the general condemnation of full-grown detected dishonesties in other people's transactions, search for and crush incipient secret aberrations in his own.

When the eye is single, the whole body will be full of light. Straightforwardness is the fairest jewel of our commercial crown. Those who spend their life in traffic should be jealous of themselves, and lean hard over from the side on which sly, sinister selfishness lies. Anything on the right side; uprightness, even downrightness, if you will; but let us keep far away from every form and shade of duplicity. It is true that mercantile pursuits tend to develop some noble qualities of humanity; but let it not be forgotten that some noxious weeds can thrive in the riches of its soil. Love and cultivate, by all means, the generous plants; but carefully watch the weeds, and resolutely cast them away.

**3. The last of these issues is by the "feet."** Ponder, therefore, their path. The best time to ponder any path, is not at the end, not even at the middle, but at the beginning of it. The right place for weighing the worth of any course, is on this side of its beginning. Those who ponder after they have entered it, are not in a position either to obtain the truth or to profit by it. Those who rush headlong into a path of conduct because they like it, and then begin to consider whether it is a right one, will probably either induce themselves to believe a lie, or refuse to follow discovered truth.

The injunction applies to every step in life, great and small. Ponder well what family you will be a servant in, what trade you will learn, what business you will engage in, what colony you will emigrate to. Every step is great, because it affects the destiny of an immortal soul. More particularly, by way of example, ponder your path at that great step which binds you for life to another human being as one flesh. God has made marriage a weighty matter—let not man make it a light one. Weigh well itself and all its accessories. Those who take this leap in the dark, may expect to find themselves in a miry pit. Those who weigh it in thought, until they find the burden all too heavy for their strength, and cast it therefore on the Lord, will be led out of their temptations, and through their difficulties. Most true it is that "marriages are made in heaven;" for the dear children refer the matter implicitly to their Father there, and he undertakes for them.

But the value of weighing anything depends all on the justness of the balance and the weights. Many shamefully false balances are in use and in vogue for weighing paths and actions. "Fashion," and "use and wont," are the scales into which most people throw their intentions, before carrying them into fact. These are the instruments which quacks supply, and fools employ. They are mean and contemptible cheats; and yet the multitude trust them. If nothing valuable were risked, one might be content to smile at their silliness, and pass on; but the path which these false balances induce their dupes to take, leads to perdition. Although the acts be transparent folly, we cannot afford to turn them into mirth. We dare not laugh at the stupidity of the entrance whose issue is in woe. These false balances are ruin to men, and abomination to the Lord! Cast them away. Here is a standard weight stamped as true by the imperial seal of heaven. By the word of God paths and actions will be weighed in the judgment: by the word of God, therefore, let paths and actions, great and small, be pondered now.

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## **James Hastings - Great Texts of the Bible - THE HEART—Prov. 4:23**

### **1. IN the Bible, and more especially in the Book of Proverbs, the word "heart" is among the most pregnant in all language.**

As the heart physically is the central organ of the body, it is often used to denote the life, the soul itself. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God." Then there is a large group of passages which show that the heart in the Bible stands for the seat of the emotions, as in the popular phraseology of every language. But in Hebrew it also represented the seat of intelligence, the tone and quality of the character, as when a clear, pure, sincere heart is ascribed to any one, or when it is said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Further, it stands for will or purpose: "Do all that is in thine heart" means "in thine intention or desire." Because the heart is thus the focus of the personal life, the secret laboratory in which every influence which penetrates thither is reacted upon, so that it passes out charged with the colour and quality of the inner life, it is natural that it should be spoken of here as the central fact of our nature, and that God should demand it for His own. When we give our heart to Him, we give Him the most precious, because the most determinative, element in our life.

**2. The Greek version, which was very generally used in our Lord's time, had a beautiful variation of the text** "In order that thy fountains may not fail thee, guard them in the heart." It was after all but a new emphasis on the old teaching of the Book of Proverbs when Jesus taught the necessity of heart purity, and when He showed that out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, and all the things which defile a man. Yet this lesson of inwardness has always been the most difficult of all to learn. Christianity itself has always been declining from it and falling into the easier but futile ways of externalism; and even Christian homes have usually failed in their influence on the young, chiefly because their religious observances have fallen into formalism, and, while the outward conduct has been regulated, the inner springs of action have not been touched.

¶ Visit the electrical power-house of any large town. Watch the whirling dynamo. Here is the energy that drives the car; here is generated the spark that lights the night; here is born the impulse that begets the motion and brightness outside. Musing thus, you will understand what is meant by the heart. Press the illustration further; mark how this monster is guarded and controlled, and then think of the last thunderstorm you can remember. In the engine-house the power is in subjection, watched with all diligence; outside in the wide universe it is untamed, uncontrolled, wrecking and damaging and contorting. On the one hand, assisting commerce, giving brightness and cheerfulness—the issues of life. On the other, devastation and ruin—the issues of death. Life and death by the same power. Controlled, life; uncontrolled, death. This power is analogous to the heart of man.

## I THE CENTRE OF LIFE

**1. The heart that we carry in our body may rightly be called the centre of life.** The physical heart is a large bunch of muscles, placed between the two lungs and acting as a fountain of life to the whole body. How wonderful it is in its structure—its auricles, and ventricles, its valves and blood-vessels! "The blood is the life"; and every moment it is being driven by the unresting stroke of the heart's pump into the great arteries and all through the body. The heart is the central organ of the human frame; and the health of the body depends upon its soundness and its proper action. Only when this action is healthy and true will the whole body be full of power, energy, and beauty. When, on the other hand, the heart is feeble or diseased, it will send languor and mischief through the whole system. This organ, in short, is the mainspring, the determining factor in the life of the body. The other organs work well or ill according to the state of the heart.

**2. But the Old Testament locates in the heart the centre of personal being.** It is not merely the home of the affections, but also the seat of will, of moral purpose. As this text says, "the issues of life" flow from it in all the multitudinous variety of their forms. The stream parts into many heads, but it has one fountain. To the Hebrew thinkers the heart was the indivisible, central unity which manifested itself in the whole of the outward life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The heart is the man. And that personal centre has a moral character which comes to light in, and gives unity and character to, all his deeds.

**(1) Out of the heart are the issues of life.** It is not the mind, the thought-power, the judgment-forming part of our nature that holds the primacy and sits upon the throne. The mind, with its thoughts, its judgments, its ideas, is the servant of our practical needs. The mind, in fact, came into being, was organized and developed because of our practical needs. It is not the regal and aristocratic member of our being that it has sometimes been assumed to be. It is a veritable slave and lackey, serving in homespun, continually driven, and made to work overtime at the whip's end of the dominant forces of life. Because primitive man was conscious of hunger, he contrived a way to till the ground, to plant, to reap, to grind and bake. The mind did not invent bread, and then coax the appetite to eat, because bread forsooth was good. Man was hungry; the appetite was imperious master, and it compelled the mind to find some way of satisfying that need. Because man was naked, he also invented dress, first from the skins of wild beasts, then from their woolly covering," woven into a fabric. Because he was subjected to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the frost, he drove the thinking part of him to devise a tent and a roof, a protecting shelter from the prowling lion, or a stockade against human foe. Here is the invariable order: need—invention—satisfaction. And this is actually all that the mind, with its knowledge, has ever done for man; in the last analysis it will always reduce to this—the discovery of a way, continuously a better way, between these two terms; need, and the satisfaction of the need. Out of the heart have been the issues of life from the outset. The needs, the desires, the great passions, the urgent impulses—these have been in control. It is they who have sat on the throne.

**(2) The condition of the heart determines our influence.** The world over, the most potent force is not thought, but love. Argument often convinces while affection sways in a contrary direction. A teacher's wisdom, with all the fascinations of the schools, moves us less than a mother's pleading and tears. Even where masses of men bow before eloquent oratory, it is the power of sincerity and earnestness in the speaker that moves even those who differ. We all instinctively feel that the secret of heroism is noble affection, unselfish love, and sacrifice. There is a sort of righteousness that only awakens a cold admiration; while goodness, which is righteousness touched with love, leads men to die for its possessor.

¶ When Wilberforce, the great apostle of liberty in Europe, was turning the world upside-down, one man asked another, "What is the secret of the power of Wilberforce? There are many men with more brains and more

culture.” And his friends answered, “The secret of Wilberforce is that he has a heart full of sympathy.” And that is the secret of multitudes of people who are doing great good in the world. Do not keep guard over your heart with the purpose only of keeping bad things out of it, but keep watch over it to see that the fountains of sympathy and brotherly kindness are open and flowing day by day. (L. A. Banks, *The Problems of Youth*, 85)

**(3) That which goes so far to mould character and to shape influence, must determine destiny.** When the great judicial scales of the Universal Judge are at last hung, it cannot be otherwise than that the central affections should settle which way those scales preponderate: what we have most truly loved must have vital connexion with the eternal future—not only with the entrance into Heaven, but the capacity for its joys. Our affections both reveal what character essentially is and forecast what it is to be—even more than our thoughts; for the affections largely prompt our habits of thought, determining what images we love to contemplate. The essence both of sin and of holiness is largely here; for the acts both of sin and of saintliness could have little moral quality were there no moral preference behind them. It is the love of evil that makes sin so damning, and the love of holiness that is the heart of sainthood. But for this heart affection for evil, how could the imagination be employed as sin’s artist, or memory as its treasure gatherer, or the will as its marshal? But for this, even the Devil’s hook would be bare of bait, and his wiles would find no response in us, as they found none in our tempted Master.

¶ In a letter to his mother at Scotsbrig. Carlyle writes from Craigenputtock, in September 1833: “But I must tell you something of myself: for I know many a morning, my dear mother, you ‘come in by me’ in your rambles through the world after those precious to you. If you had eyes to see on these occasions you would find everything quite tolerable here. I have been rather busy, though the fruit of my work is rather inward, and has little to say for itself. I have yet hardly put pen to paper; but foresee that there is a time coming. All my griefs, I can better and better see, lie in good measure at my own door: were I right in my own heart, nothing else would be far wrong with me. This, as you well understand, is true of every mortal, and I advise all that hear me to believe it, and to lay it practically to their own case.” (J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1795–1835*, ii. 368.)

¶ In the course of a walk in the park at Edgeworthstown, I happened to use some phrase which conveyed (though not perhaps meant to do so) the impression that I suspected Poets and Novelists of being a good deal accustomed to look at life and the world only as materials for art. A soft and pensive shade came over Scott’s face as he said, “I fear you have some very young ideas in your head; are you not too apt to measure things by some reference to literature—to disbelieve that anybody can be worth much care who has no knowledge of that sort of thing, or taste for it? God help us! what a poor world this would be if that were the true doctrine! I have read books enough, and observed and conversed with enough of eminent and splendidly cultivated minds, too, in my time; but, I assure you, I have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends and neighbours, than I ever yet met with out of the pages of the Bible. We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling and destiny, unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine, compared with the education of the heart.” (Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ch. lxiii.)

¶ Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the heart, the moral nature, was the beginning and the end; and that truth, knowledge, and insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the true and first apostasy,—when in council and synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows under the name of Theology, or at best a bare Skeleton of Truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these, therefore, there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances. Thus among the learned the Substance of things hoped for passed into Notions; and for the unlearned the Surfaces of things became Substance. The Christian world was for centuries divided into the Many that did not think at all, and the Few who did nothing but think,—both alike unreflecting, the one from defect of the act, the other from the absence of an object. (Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*.)

## II THE KEEPING OF THE HEART

“Keep thy heart above all keeping.” God guards very carefully the heart He has put in our body. He has put the strongest bones all round it, so that, though other parts may be easily hurt, the heart is safe. Well, the text says that we should guard the heart of our real lives in the same way “with all diligence,” above everything else; because, if the heart goes wrong, the whole life goes wrong with it.

¶ One of the most famous and valuable diamonds in the world is the “Koh-i-nur,” or Mountain of Light, which belongs to the British Crown. This gem was exhibited in the Great Exhibition of 1851, and was an object of special interest. It lay upon a little cushion in a case with glass panels, the inside being lighted up with gas.

And there was always a group of people crowding to see it. But it was also an object of peculiar care. For while the whole of the Crystal Palace, which contained so many treasures, was well guarded, a special watchman paced to and fro by day and night to guard the “Koh-i-nur.” Even so ought every Christian, above all other valuables that he has to guard, to “keep” his heart, for it is the citadel of his life. (C. Jerdan, *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 63)

**1. Our nature is evidently not a republic, but a monarchy.** It is full of blind impulses, and hungry desires, which take no heed of any law but their own satisfaction. If the reins are thrown on the necks of these untamed horses, they will drag the man to destruction. They are safe only when they are curbed and bitted, and held well in. Then there are tastes and inclinations which need guidance and are plainly meant to be subordinate. The will is to govern all the lower self, and conscience is to govern the will. Unmistakably there are parts of every man’s nature which are meant to serve, and parts which are appointed to rule, and to let the servants usurp the place of the rulers is to bring about as wild a confusion within as the Preacher lamented that he had seen in the anarchic times when he wrote—princes walking and beggars on horseback. As George Herbert has it—

Give not thy humours way;  
God gave them to thee under lock and key.

¶ Savage tribes not only fight with poisoned arrows; they have been known to creep into another tribe’s country, and put poison into the wells, so that when the tired soldier, the thirsting woman and child, and the poor beasts of the forest came to the well to slake their thirst, they drank death in every drop of water that passed their lips. Now, would you think a chief stern, or too particular, if at war-time he ordered his people to guard the wells? Would not such an order be a kind one? Would not the meaning of it be, “Save your own lives, and the lives of your wives and children”? Well, your heart, your mind, is the well of your life. If that is poisoned, your best life will die. And the Book that bids you guard it well is not a stern book, but a kind, loving book, that wishes you well, and is your best friend. (J. M. Gibbon, *In the Days of Youth*, 32.)

**2. Keeping or guarding is plainly imperative,** because there is an outer world which appeals to our needs and desires, irrespective altogether of right and wrong, and of the moral consequences of gratifying these. Put a loaf before a starving man, and his impulse will be to clutch and devour it, without regard to whether it is his or not. Show any of our animal propensities its appropriate food, and it asks no questions as to right or wrong, but is stirred to grasp its natural food. And even the higher and nobler parts of our nature are but too apt to seek their gratification without having the licence of conscience for doing so, and sometimes in defiance of its plain prohibitions.

¶ Many telegraph wires run under and over our streets, over the mountains and under the oceans, coming from scenes of war and of peace, of industry and of learning, of sorrow and of joy, each carrying some swift current. And these wires are gathered at last into some central office of many clicking instruments. The operator translates these currents into intelligence, and sends them out in the form of messages of commerce, of war, of crime, or of love. So our five senses are main wires going out into the world about us, gathering observations, sensations, and experience from the streets of the city, the scenes of the country, the companions we meet, the books we read, the pictures at which we look. Another wire goes down, like an ocean cable, into the depths of our own nature, bringing up mysterious messages given by our own consciousness, speaking of God and good, of right and wrong, and of judgment to come. Thus there are wires from heaven above, on which God and good angels are sending messages; wires from hell below, on which the devil and his angels are sending suggestions, promptings; wires from men and women about us, conveying subtle trains of thought and of feeling. And the heart of man is the central office into which these wires run, pouring in there this raw material of thought-stuff. (R. Mackenzie, *The Loom of Providence*, 248)

### III THE KEEPER OF THE HEART

**1. The inherent weakness of all attempts at self-keeping** is that, keeper and kept being one and the same personality, the more we need to be kept the less able we are to effect it. If in the very garrison there are traitors, how shall the fortress be defended? In order, then, to exercise an effectual guard over our characters and control over our natures, we must have an outward standard of right and wrong which shall not be deflected by variations in our temperature. We need a fixed light to steer towards, which is stable on the stable shore, and is not tossing up and down on our decks. We shall cleanse our way only when we “take heed thereto, according to thy word.” For even God’s viceroy within, the sovereign conscience, can be warped, perverted, silenced, and is not immune from the spreading infection of evil. When it turns to God, as a mirror to the sun, it is irradiated and flashes bright illumination into dark corners, but its power depends on its being thus lit by radiations from the very Light of Life. And if we are ever to have a coercive power over the rebellious powers within, we must have God’s power breathed into us, giving grip and energy to all the good within, quickening every lofty desire, satisfying every aspiration that feels after Him, cowing all our evil and being the very self of ourselves.

¶ To know that God does not depend upon our feelings, but our feelings upon God, to know that we must claim a certain spiritual position as our right before we can realize it in our apprehensions, to be assured that we have the Spirit of God within us, and that He is distinct from all the emotions, energies, affections, sympathies in our minds, the only source and inspirer of them all, this is most necessary for us, the peculiar necessity, if I am not mistaken, of this age. The confidence of a power always at work within us, manifesting itself in our powerlessness, a love filling up our lovelessness, a wisdom surmounting our folly, the knowledge of our right to glory in this love, power, and wisdom, the certainty that we can do all righteous acts by submitting to this Righteous Being, and that we do them best when we walk in a line chosen for us, and not of our choosing, this is the strength surely, and nothing else, which carries us through earth and lifts us to heaven. (The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, i. 246.)

## **2. The heart will not be satisfied till it is given to the highest and best.**

It demands a permanent investment for its affections; wealth, earthly ambition, the happiness that comes from without are only a loan at the best, and capital and interest will be demanded at death. The heart demands something substantial; glory, praise, reputation are full of promise till they are ours; and then, a last year's nest, out of which the bird has flown! In one word, the heart demands a person greater, nobler, purer, stronger than itself, in whose affections and favour it can live and move and have its being; and God, as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, is the only One whose nature is great enough to environ the soul with perfect peace and feed it with unfailing strength, in whose favour is life, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

¶ The wise Augustine, who, after many wild wanderings, in which he had drained the fountain of knowledge, and quaffed to the dregs the cup of earthly delights, and given himself to every device by which the libertine and the fool endeavour to slake their souls at the salt pools of death, came back to God, like a bird to its forsaken nest, and said, "O Lord, broken is our heart and unquiet, and full of sorrow it must be, till it finds rest in Thee!" (E. Griffith-Jones, in *Comradeship and Character*, 261.)

¶ "I wish you would change my heart," said the chief Sekomi to Livingstone, "Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always." He would not hear of the New Testament way of changing the heart; he wanted an outward, mechanical way—and that way was not to be found. (R. F. Horton, *The Book of Proverbs*, 58)

## **3. That Divine Power is exerted for our keeping on condition of our trusting ourselves to Him and trusting Him for ourselves.**

And that condition is no arbitrary one, but is prescribed by the very nature of Divine help and of human faith. If God could keep our souls without our trust in Him, He would. He does so keep them as far as is possible, but for all the choicer blessings of His giving, and especially for that of keeping us free from the domination of our lower selves, there must be in us faith, if there is to be in God help. The hand that lays hold on God in Christ must be stretched out and must grasp His warm, gentle, and strong hand, if the tingling touch of it is to infuse strength. If the relieving force is victoriously to enter our hearts, we must throw open the gates and welcome it. Faith is but the open door for God's entrance. It has no efficacy in itself any more than a door has, but all its blessedness depends on what it admits into the hidden chambers of the heart.

¶ **"To conquer," said Napoleon, "you must replace." You cannot expel bad thoughts by no thoughts.** "Whatsoever things are pure, think on these things." (Php 4:8) One thought there is which above all others is fruitful and powerful, and which should be familiar to every tempted Christian soul; it is the thought of the Cross and of Christ Crucified. "In hoc signo vinces." David slew the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, but the sling was ready in his hand, and foresight had caused him to fill the bag with stones out of the brook. To the soul which fights the faithful battle in the realm of thought, and cries aloud in the darkness of its night to Christ Crucified, what wondrous light and power are given by the merits of the Cross and Passion.

Here is the heart's true bulwark found!

And here is rest secure;

And here is love's most certain ground,

And here salvation sure.

¶ O how well he is guarded and armed against the snares of the devil and evil thoughts and impure imaginations, who has the image of the Crucified fixed in his heart, penetrating all his interior: and always and everywhere urging to the thought and performance of every good! Then inwardly consoled with wondrous sweetness of heart from the presence of Christ shall he be able justly to say, what holy David with great joy sang to God: "I have run the way of thy commandments; when thou didst enlarge my heart." (Thomas à



### Spurgeon - The Great Reservoir - Proverbs 4:23

IF I should vainly attempt to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes, out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were wont to march. As was the city, such were her armies, as was her inward strength, such were they who came forth of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart, because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the citadel and armory of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy, and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil, the whole land must be overrun thereby. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform, by a humble metaphor and a simple figure, which will be easily understood; I shall endeavor to set forth the wise man's doctrine, that our life issues from the heart, and thus I shall labor to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart, and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, "If a man's life be wrong, it is better to alter the principles upon which his conduct is modeled: we had better adopt another scheme of living; society must be re-modeled, so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues, and less temptation to indulge in vice." It is as if, when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid, some sage counsellor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up, and fresh pipes laid down, so that the water might run through fresh channels; but who does not perceive that it would be all in vain, if the fountain-head were polluted, however good the channels. So in vain the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives; in vain the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness, unless the heart be right, the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground, and fail to effect its design. Others say, "Well, if the life be wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right: you must inform man's judgment, educate him, teach him better, and when his head is well informed, then his life will be improved. Now, understanding is, if I may use such a figure, the stopcock which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them; and it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on, in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be obviated. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams, until we had first of all purged the cistern whence they flowed. The Arminian divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man's life. He deals with the will. He says, the will must first of all be conquered, and if the will be right, then every thing will be in order. Now, will is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountain-head along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwellings. The learned counsellor proposes that there should be a new steam-engine employed to force the water along the pipes. "If," says he, "we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well." No, sir, if the stream be poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds, and you may have a machine that is made of gold, and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accomplished your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain, and purged the issues of life which flow therefrom. The wise man in our text seems to say, "Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place." It is very necessary the understanding should be right; it is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance; it is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition; "but," says he, "if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and when you have purged it, when you have made its waters pure and limpid, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water; but not till then." Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, "Is my heart right in the sight of God?" For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, our heart is full of rottenness, filth, and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin, if it be real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in thine ear:—"It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell therein. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labor to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?"

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let, me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the stream of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

**I. First, keep the heart full.** However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to

provide us with an abundant supply of water, unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; and let the machinery be never so accurate, let every thing else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people— (you are sure to meet with them in your own society, and your own circle; for I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances)—whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing emptiness. They never accomplish anything; they have no mental force; they have no moral power; what they say, nobody thinks of noticing; what they do is scarcely ever imitated. We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable, that even their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves, and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people, who if they were to espouse a cause, and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck. Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office, without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a *duit*. If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just the flats, preyed on by the sharpers in the world; they have no manly strength, no power at all. See these people in religion: it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments, it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of others. Put them in the pulpit: they are the slaves of the deacons, or else they are over-ridden by the church; they never have an opinion of their own, can not come out with a thing; they have not the heart to say, "Such a thing is, and I know it is." These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned, they might almost as well never have been created, except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men's heads: "Such a one," they say, "could not get on; he had a small head; it was clean impossible for him to prosper, his head was small, he could not do anything; he had not enough force." Now, that may be true; but I know what was truer still—he had got a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man's force in the world, other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man: if he be erroneous, then he is powerful for error; if the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious, even though it may be a downright falsehood. Let a man be never so ignorant, still if his heart be full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object, because he has got heart-power, heart-force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object, and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated, and will glory in his defeat. HEART IS POWER. It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. Men do not feel what they are at. Now, the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business, is more likely to prosper than anybody else. That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head—the more he knows the better; but, after all, give him a big heart; and when his heart beats, if his heart be full, it will, under God, either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him; or else make them conscious that he is laboring hard to compel them to follow. O! if we had more heart in our Master's service, how much more labor we could endure. You are a Sunday-school teacher, young man, and you are complaining that you can not get on in the Sunday-school. Sir, the service-pipe would give out plenty of water if the heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. O, strive to love your work more, and then when your heart is full, you will go on well enough. "O," saith the preacher, "I am weary of my work in preaching; I have little success; I find it a hard toil." The answer to that question is, "Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching, and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching; and your heart being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment. O for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question—"But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If thou hast all thy springs in God, thy heart will be full enough. If thou dost go to the foot of Calvary, there will thy heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If thou dost frequent the vale of retirement, and there talk with thy God, it is there that thy heart shall be full of calm resolve. If thou goest out with thy Master to the hill of Olivet, and dost with him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will thy heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If thou dost continually draw thine impulse, thy life, the whole of thy being from the Holy Spirit, without whom thou canst do nothing; and if thou dost live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of thy having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer—he who lives with little prayer—he who seldom reads the Word—he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high—he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God—who spends much time in holy retirement—who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High—whose soul is given up to Christ—who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent—such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a life that will speak from the sepulcher, and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and thou mayest as well not have lived at all.

**2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full, if they did not also keep them**

**pure.** I remember to have read a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town, that a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company, large eels having crept down the pipe, and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean; and unless the water comes from a pure spring, and is not impregnated with deleterious substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail of satisfying or of benefiting its customers. Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure; for if the heart be not pure, the life can not be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy; when he speaks he lards his language with oaths; his mind is low and groveling; none but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him, for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life; but still, at the same time he likes filthiness; any low joke, anything that will in some way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires. For the ways of God he has no relish; in God's house he finds no pleasure, in his Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family connections—because of the situation in which he stands—because of his early education, and all that. No, no; the simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other inquiry; the heart is not right; for, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor:—"A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained; and this led him to observe. We have here an emblem of our thoughts, words, and works. Our heart is defiled by sin, and hence a taint of sinfulness cleaves unfortunately to everything we take in hand; and although, from the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the omniscient, holy, and righteous God." Whence come our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. O how needful that the main-spring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition.

Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. Thou sayest, "How can I do this?" Well, there was of old a stream of Marah, to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink; and when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though their tongues were like torches, and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree on which the Saviour hung, the cross. Take that tree, put it into your heart, and though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature, and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us sanctification. Elijah cast salt into the waters; but we must cast the blood of Jesus there. Once let us know and love Jesus, once let his cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight, the heart will beam its cleansing, and the life will become pure also. Oh! that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the cross in the heart! Christian man! love thy Saviour more; cry to the Holy Spirit that thou mayest have more affection for Jesus; and then, how ever gainful may be thy sin, thou wilt say with the poet,

"Now for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss;  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross."

The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, "for out of it are the issues of life."

**3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention; that is to say, if their water be pure, and the reservoir be full, they need not care to keep it peaceable and quiet, for let it be stirred to a storm, we should receive our water in the same condition as usual.** It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm doth not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves. Let us just understand this, first, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember, that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled the whole life must be troubled too. There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison, and had there exhibited, to the wonderment of all who saw him, the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of execution, brought out, and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position he craved permission to speak once more to the Judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, was required to be also present at the execution.

After repeatedly refusing, the judge at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus: You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles' Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end). Now, then, sir, he proceeded to say, I have but one last request to make, which is, that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast and then upon your own, and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with alacrity and joy, to go and be with Christ, in whom I have always believed; what your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself. The judge could make no answer, and commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr."

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, "David's heart smote him." The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt; it is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night, and with a full confession of sin, express your faith in Christ, then you may "dread the grave as little as your bed." Rise in the morning and give your heart to God, and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein, and you may go into the world, and were it full of lions and of tigers you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion's den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the second place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives, and as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men—I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there—men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight—always quarreling, and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way—that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at, and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble, because we should be mortally offended, because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities. I do not know whether that is true of all of us, but it is of some. You can not sit with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against every body and every thing they saw. They talk about ministers: one man's doctrine is too high, another's is too low; one man they think is a great deal too effeminate and precise, another they say is so vulgar they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people; of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? Whence arises this continual snarling? The heart must again supply the answer, they are morose and sullen in the inward parts, and hence their speech betrayeth them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell in their hearts—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the eleventh commandment was never written there. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That they forgot. Oh! dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love, and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged, so that you may have enough to send out service-pipes to all God's people throughout the habitable globe; so that whenever you meet a man who is a true-born heir of heaven, he has nothing to do but to turn to the tap, and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep thine heart peaceable, that thy life may be so; for out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again, we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee lake said to the storm "Be still," can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto him. He still sleeps in the vessel with his church. Ask him to awake, lest your piety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto him that he may give your heart peace and happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful; spend ye it where ye may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the water-works company have gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to, and that is, they must take care they do not attempt too much, or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city, and another main pipe to serve another, and the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams, what would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, man's heart is after all so little, that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow; and my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, Keep your heart undivided. Suppose you see a lake, and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it: why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country; there will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer, and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream. Now, a man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. Ye must not give half your love to Christ, and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the heart to serve the two. Alas! many people try this, and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world, and another part he allowed to drip into the church, and

the effect has been this: when he came into the church he was suspected of hypocrisy. "Why," they said, "if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did, and then come and profess so much to-day?" The church looks upon him as a suspicious one: or if he deceive them they feel he is not of much use to them, because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him, and the church will not have him; he wants to go between the two, and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man: he tried it, and it was very awkward work indeed; but I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street, and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them, or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing. Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them, and I would not pretend to be religious; but if Christ be Christ, and if God be God, let us give our whole hearts to him, and not go shares with the world. Many a church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner: His sun is very low indeed—it has not much light, not much heat, and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows, and this man stands on the world's side of the street, and casts a long shadow right across the road, to the opposite side of the wall just across the pavement. Ay, it is all we get with many of you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine; you are capsized; you join the church; and what we get is just your shadow; there is your substance on the other side of the street, after all. What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its slough behind. They give us their slough, their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was, and then they go themselves hither and thither after their own wanton wills; they give us the outward, and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this, Christian! Thy master gave himself wholly for thee; give thyself unreservedly to him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of thy heart; labor to have but one object, and one aim. And for this purpose give God the keeping of thine heart. Cry out for more of the divine influences of the Holy Spirit, that so when thy soul is preserved and protected by him, it may be directed into one channel, and one only, that thy life may run deep and pure, and clear and peaceful; its only banks being God's will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by: "Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parceled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honor, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts, that shared him among them, now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldst know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew."

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one perhaps. Once upon a time, when one of our kings came back from a captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water, they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say, that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. Ye have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard's life was not like our poor common lives; he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus: when you talked yourself, you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff; but when he talked to you, there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity, and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctuous as the words of such an one! Oh! I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color, and as pure a taste as the acts of so-and-so. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house, instead of my poor dross," Well, Christian, this should teach thee to keep thine heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make thy heart rich with precept, rich with understanding; and then thy conversation, when it flows from thy mouth, will be like thine heart, rich, unctuous, and savory. Make thy heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from thy hand will be just as rich and generous as thine heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in thine heart, and then out of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christians, to the great mine of riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make thy heart rich unto salvation. So shall thy life and conversation be a boon to thy fellows; and when they see thee, thy face shall be as the angel of God. Thou shalt wash thy feet in butter and thy steps in oil; they that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see thee, and men shall do thee reverence.

But one single sentence, and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts of stone. Do you feel today that you have a stony heart? Go home, and I pray the Lord hear my desire that thy polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, "Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh;" for a stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, an unpeaceful heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty-stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness, and thou canst neither bless thyself nor others, if thy heart be such. O Lord Jesus! wilt thou be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Wilt thou break the rock in pieces, and put flesh instead of stone, and thou shalt have the glory, world without end!

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## Proverbs 4:23 — Spiritual Heart Care

You're up at the crack of dawn, doing your exercises. You're not going to let your heart get weak! You've trimmed the fat from your diet. You get regular cholesterol checks. And you're exercising four times a week to keep your cardiovascular system in peak condition.

But you've let your spiritual heart turn to mush. Preoccupied with the temporary, you've neglected the eternal. You seldom read the Bible anymore. Your prayers are lists of requests to God to make your life more comfortable and pain-free. By the time you reach the church door after the sermon, you can't recall what the pastor said because you were thinking about something else.

If this describes you, it's time to get into a spiritual heart-care program. It begins where David (a man after God's own heart) was in Psalm 139—by acknowledging that God knows all about your heart. It continues in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And it results in the prayer of Psalm 19:14, "Let ... the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."

Taking care of your body makes sense, but it makes even more sense to gain spiritual fitness by walking with the Lord. That's an exercise program with eternal value! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,  
And grant me this, I pray:  
That I through Your sweet love may grow  
More like You day by day.  
—Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, keep walking with the Lord.

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## Transformed Hearts Proverbs 4:23

During the early 1970s in Ghana, a poster titled "The Heart of Man" appeared on walls and public notice boards. In one picture, all kinds of reptiles—symbols of the vile and despicable—filled the heart-shaped painting with the head of a very unhappy man on top of it. In another image, the heart-shape was clean and serene with the head of a contented man. The caption beneath the images read: "What is the condition of your heart?"

In Matthew 15:18-19, Jesus explained what pollutes a person. "The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (niv). That is the condition of a heart separated from God—the situation ancient Israelites found themselves in when their sins forced them into exile (Ezek. 36:23).

God's promise in Ezekiel 36:26 is beautiful: "I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart" (nlt; see also 11:19). God will take away our stubborn hearts that have been corrupted by all kinds of evil and give to us a clean heart that is responsive to Him. Praise God for such a wonderful gift.

Father in heaven, thank You that when we confess our sin to You, You give us a new heart and a new life. I pray that the life I live reflects the goodness of Your gift and that others may see the difference a new heart has made in me.

For a new start, ask God for a new heart.

INSIGHT: Today's text gives two reasons why God is going to rescue and redeem the people of Israel. He will do it for the sake of His holy name (v. 22) and so the nations will know He is the Lord (v. 23). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## Proverbs 4:23 The Secret Garden

By Dennis Fisher

The Secret Garden, a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, tells the story of Mary, a young girl who goes to live with her wealthy uncle Archibald on his estate in England. Mary gets to know Dickon, a working-class boy who loves nature. The two children discover a fenced-in garden that Mary's uncle has locked up because it reminds him of his deceased wife. The garden looks dead because of neglect, but Dickon assures Mary that, with proper tending, it will recover with new life. With the children's help, "the secret garden" eventually bursts forth with colorful, fragrant blooms.

All of us have a secret garden of the heart. How we tend it will determine what speech and behavior it produces. Proverbs wisely admonishes us: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The word keep means “to watch or guard with fidelity.” Guarding what we take into our hearts and monitoring our response will determine what takes root there. As we remove the thorns of resentment, weeds of lust, and roots of bitterness, we can replace them with the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Are you tending the garden of your heart? ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Think not alone of outward form;  
Its beauty will depart;  
But cultivate the Spirit’s fruits  
That grow within the heart.  
—D. De Haan

God wants you to water the seed He’s planted in your heart.

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### **Proverbs 4:23 Heart Matters**

By Poh Fang Chia

Our hearts pump at a rate of 70-75 beats per minute. Though weighing only 11 ounces on average, a healthy heart pumps 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day. Every day, the heart creates enough energy to drive a truck 20 miles. In a lifetime, that is equivalent to driving to the moon and back. A healthy heart can do amazing things. Conversely, if our heart malfunctions, our whole body shuts down.

The same could be said of our “spiritual heart.” In Scripture, the word heart represents the center of our emotions, thinking, and reasoning. It is the “command center” of our life.

So when we read, “Keep your heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23), it makes a lot of sense. But it’s difficult advice to keep. Life will always make demands upon our time and energy that cry out for immediate attention. By comparison, taking time to hear God’s Word and to do what it says may not shout quite so loudly. We may not notice the consequences of neglect right away, but over time it may give way to a spiritual heart attack.

I’m thankful God has given us His Word. We need His help not to neglect it, but to use it to align our hearts with His every day. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,  
And grant me this, I pray:  
That I through Your sweet love may grow  
More like You day by day.  
—Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, consult the Great Physician.

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### **Proverbs 4:23,26 — The Cost Of Neglect**

I read about a Detroit man who couldn’t find his house. He had gone to the right address but all he found was an empty lot. Completely baffled, he asked the Detroit Free Press to help him figure out what was going on. A newspaper reporter learned that not only was the house gone, but the deed to the empty lot was in someone else’s name.

What had happened? For one thing, a few years had passed since the homeowner had left the city without providing a forwarding address. In addition, he had failed to make arrangements for someone to keep the property in repair. So the house was torn down because a city ordinance called for the removal of neighborhood eyesores.

The homeowner’s neglect illustrates the practical truth of Proverbs 24:30-34. Neglect leads to loss. This principle also applies to our daily walk with God. If we neglect our times of prayer and fellowship with the Lord, our relationship with Him will deteriorate and we will no longer experience His favor. We would never want that to happen, but we allow it when we become preoccupied with anything that comes between us and Christ.

We need to establish priorities that honor God. Then we’ll avoid the loss that comes from neglect. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC](#)



Unless we're occupied with Jesus  
And seek to do His will each day,  
We're sure to know the loss and sorrow  
That comes when we neglect His way.  
—Anon.

If you shirk today's tasks, you increase tomorrow's burdens.

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### **Proverbs 4:23 Care Of The Heart**

My father-in-law took a rocky, barren hilltop in Texas and transformed it into a beautiful homesite with a shaded green lawn. After removing thousands of rocks, he added topsoil, planted trees and grass, and kept it watered. Since his death, it has lacked his consistent care. Today when I visit and work around that house, battling the invading thistles, thorns, and weeds, I ponder the state of my own heart.

Am I like that neglected yard, or perhaps the field and vineyard described in Proverbs 24—overgrown with thorns, covered with nettles, its stone wall broken down? (Pr 24:31). The owner is lazy and lacks understanding (Pr 24:30), perhaps putting off today's tasks for a more convenient time.

Along with the practical instruction about diligence in work, I find an application for the care of my soul. The thistles of self-interest grow naturally within me, while the fruit that pleases God requires constant weeding and watering through prayer, confession, and obedience to the Lord. Without these, the soil of my heart will become choked with the thorns of trivial pursuits and greed.

"Keep your heart with all diligence," Solomon wrote, "for out of it spring the issues of life" (Pr 4:23). That requires constant care. — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

One little sin, what harm can it do?  
Give it free reign and soon there are two.  
Then sinful deeds and habits ensue—  
Guard well your thoughts, lest they control you. —DJD

The garden of our heart needs constant weeding and care.

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### **Proverbs 4:23a THE FORTRESS OF THE HEART**

#### **F. B. Meyer. Our Daily Walk**

IN MOST of the old castles there is an inner keep, which is protected, not only by mighty walls and bastions, but by the portcullis at the gate, and sentries at every approach, who challenged every one that passed in and out. So the heart is continually approached by good and evil, by the frivolities and vanities of the world and the insidious suggestions of the flesh. It is like an inn or hostelry, with constant arrivals and departures. Passengers throng in and out, some of them with evil intent, hoping to find conspirators, or to light fires that will spread until the whole being is swept with passion, consuming in an hour the fabric of years to ashes.

We need, therefore, to be constantly on the watch; we must keep our heart above all else that we guard, for out of it are the issues of life (R.V. marg.). Our Lord says that "out of the heart of man come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts," etc. The devil and the world without would be less to be feared, if there were not such strong tendencies to evil within—many of them inherited from long lines of ancestors, who, alas! pass down to us the worst features of their characters equally with the best.

Keep it Clean. Just as the eye of the body is perpetually washed with tear-water, so let us ask that the precious blood of Christ may cleanse away any speck of impurity. Remember how delicate a thing the heart is, and how susceptible to the dust of an evil thought, which would instantly prevent it becoming the organ of spiritual vision. Sursum Corda! Lift up your hearts! We lift them up unto the Lord!

The Sentinel of Peace. Then the Peace of God will become the warden or sentry of the heart, and it passeth understanding! We can understand the apparent peace of some men. They have made money, and their gold-bags are piled around them as a fortress; they have rich and influential friends, within whose protection they imagine they will be sheltered and defended; they enjoy good health, and are held in high esteem. We can understand such peace, though it often proves ephemeral! But there is a peace that passeth understanding! It is to this that our Lord refers when He says, "My Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER - Keep me, Heavenly Father, as the apple of Thine eye; defend me by Thine Almighty power; hide me from this strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May my heart be as the palace which the Stronger than the strong man keeps in perfect peace. AMEN.

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### **Proverbs 4:23b SELF-WATCH!**

#### **F. B. Meyer. Our Daily Walk**

SAID PETER to our Lord, "Spare Thyself this death of which Thou speakest--this bitter suffering and anguish shall never be Thine!"

These words are continually spoken still, and many are the voices that bid us spare ourselves--the voices of our friends who love us; the voices of prudence and worldly wisdom; the voices of our own wayward hearts.

Do not spare your judgment of yourself. Never permit yourself to do things which you would be the first to condemn in others. Never suppose that there are reasons for you to do a wrong, which, under no circumstances would you tolerate in your neighbour.

Do not spare yourself in confessing your sins and mistakes. Confession is one of the tests of nobility. Not a few are willing to confess to God, who never attempt to confess to men. It is a serious question whether that sorrow for sin is genuine and deep enough which does not lead the offender to ask his fellow-man for pardon, even as he asks his God. Nothing could be clearer than Christ's words, that whenever we remember that our brother has aught against us, we are to leave our gift at the altar, and go first to seek reconciliation with him, before we offer our sacrifice to God.

The supreme test of goodness is not in the greater but in the smaller incidents of our character and practice; not what we are when standing in the searchlight of public scrutiny, but when we reach the firelight flicker of our homes; not what we are when some clarion-call rings through the air, summoning us to fight for life and liberty, but our attitude when we are called to sentry-duty in the grey morning, when the watch-fire is burning low. It is impossible to be our best at the supreme moment if character is corroded and eaten into by daily inconsistency, unfaithfulness, and besetting sin.

You cannot really help people without expending yourself. The only work that tells must cost you something. Gold, silver, and precious stones can never be built into the new Jerusalem unless you are willing to part with them from the stores of your own life.

PRAYER - Most loving Father, may love fill and rule my heart. For then there will spring up and be cherished between Thee and me a likeness of character, and union of will, so that I may choose and refuse what Thou dost. AMEN.

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### **Proverbs 4:23c SPIRITUAL HEART CARE**

You're up at the crack of dawn, doing your exercises. You're not going to let your heart get weak! You've trimmed the fat from your diet. You get regular cholesterol checks. And you're exercising four times a week to keep your cardiovascular system in peak condition.

But you've let your spiritual heart turn to mush. Preoccupied with the temporary, you've neglected the eternal. You seldom read the Bible anymore. Your prayers are lists of requests to God to make your life more comfortable and pain-free. By the time you reach the church door after the sermon, you can't recall what the pastor said because you were thinking about something else.

If this describes you, it's time to get into a spiritual heart-care program. It begins where David (a man after God's own heart) was in Psalm 139 -- by acknowledging that God knows all about your heart. It continues in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And it results in the prayer of Psalm 19:14, "Let... the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."

Taking care of your body makes sense, but it makes even more sense to gain spiritual fitness by walking with the Lord. That's an exercise program with eternal value!-- David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,  
And grant me this, I pray:  
That I through Your sweet love may grow  
More like You day by day.  
-- Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, keep walking with the Lord.

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### **Proverbs 4:23 J R Miller**

Every one carries in himself the elements of his own happiness or wretchedness. It is the heart that gives color to our skies and tone to the music we hear. A badly kept heart makes pain for the life. A well-lived life stores away memories which make celestial music to cheer the declining years.

Norman McLeod said: "Nothing makes a man so contented as an experience gathered from a well-watched past." We can insure full happiness only by living no day whose memory will make us ashamed or give us pain, when we sit in the eventide and recall it.

The time to secure a "well-watched past" is while the early days of life are fleeting. We never can change any yesterday. An unholy life yields a harvest of wretchedness in old age. But a life of obedience to God, of faithfulness to duty, of personal purity and uprightness, and of unselfish, Christ-like service, will make old age like a garden of fruit and flowers.

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### **Proverbs 4:20-27b Hostile Heart**

Beware the hostile heart. That's the warning of Dr. Redford Williams from Duke University's Behavioral Medicine Research Center. He has been saying for years that having a hostile personality can kill us--most often by heart disease but also by injuries and accidents. Anger speeds the heart rate, raises blood pressure, and disrupts the coronary arteries.

Some indicators of a hostile heart are impatience with delays, mistrust of co-workers, annoyance with the habits of family members or friends, and a persistent need to have the last word in arguments or to get even when wronged.

In Proverbs 4, a wise father urged his son to listen closely to his words. He said, "They are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Pr 4:22-23).

Our wise heavenly Father issues the same call to us about His life-giving words recorded for us in the Bible. The transformation of a hostile heart begins as we listen to God, meditate on His Word, and allow Him to alter our behavior and speech. It's a prescription I need to follow today. How about you? —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I want my heart to be in tune with God,  
In every stage of life may it ring true;  
I want my thoughts and words to honor Him,  
To lift Him up in everything I do.  
--Hess

Let God's Word fill your mind, rule your heart, and guide your tongue.

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### **Proverbs 4:23e Dean O'Bryan Guard Duty**

Imagine a mountain village sitting at a high elevation. The little village is situated such that its water resources are very limited. Aside from collected rain water, it has only one source -- a sparkling clear, spring-fed lake just up from the village. Every person and animal in the village gets drinking water from that lake. Water for cooking, washing, crops -- and every other need, comes from that single source. There's no where else to get the life-sustaining substance.

Because it's the lone source, that spring-fed pool is essential and valuable. Every attempt is therefore made to protect it from any kind of pollution -- because of the significant impact the pollution would be so significant to everyone.

The Bible describes your heart in a similar way. It informs us that the heart is a critical center of life which touches and impacts all we are and all we do...

Somebody wrote this: "heart worship, heart love and heart obedience are far more difficult to recognize than the outward forms and duties of religion, because they are unseen, unrecognized and unrewarded of men. Not only is heart work difficult, it is constant."

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### **Proverbs 4:23, 26 The Cost Of Neglect**

I read about a Detroit man who couldn't find his house. He had gone to the right address but all he found was an empty lot. Completely baffled, he asked the Detroit Free Press to help him figure out what was going on. A newspaper reporter learned that not only was the house gone, but the deed to the empty lot was in someone else's name.

What had happened? For one thing, a few years had passed since the homeowner had left the city without providing a forwarding address. In addition, he had failed to make arrangements for someone to keep the property in repair. So the house was torn down

because a city ordinance called for the removal of neighborhood eyesores.

The homeowner's neglect illustrates the practical truth of Proverbs 24:30-34. Neglect leads to loss. This principle also applies to our daily walk with God. If we neglect our times of prayer and fellowship with the Lord, our relationship with Him will deteriorate and we will no longer experience His favor. We would never want that to happen, but we allow it when we become preoccupied with anything that comes between us and Christ.

We need to establish priorities that honor God. Then we'll avoid the loss that comes from neglect. —Mart De Haan [Our Daily Bread](#).  
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Unless we're occupied with Jesus  
And seek to do His will each day,  
We're sure to know the loss and sorrow  
That comes when we neglect His way.  
—Anon.

If you shirk today's tasks, you increase tomorrow's burdens

**Proverbs 4:24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth And put devious speech far from you.**

BGT Proverbs 4:24 περ ελε σεαυτο σκολι ν στ μα κα δικά χε λη μακρ ν π σο πωσαι

NET Proverbs 4:24 Remove perverse speech from your mouth; keep devious talk far from your lips.

NLT Proverbs 4:24 Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.

ESV Proverbs 4:24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

NIV Proverbs 4:24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

KJV Proverbs 4:24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

LXE Proverbs 4:24 Remove from thee a froward mouth, and put far away from thee unjust lips.

ASV Proverbs 4:24 Put away from thee a wayward mouth, And perverse lips put far from thee.

CSB Proverbs 4:24 Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don't let your lips talk deviously.

NKJ Proverbs 4:24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.

NRS Proverbs 4:24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

YLT Proverbs 4:24 Turn aside from thee a froward mouth, And perverse lips put far from thee,

- **Put away:** Job 11:14 Eze 18:31 Eph 4:25-31 Col 3:8 Jas 1:21,26 1Pe 2:1
- **a deceitful mouth,** Pr 8:8,13 17:20 1Ti 6:5

## KEEPING OUR HEARTS SHOULD AFFECT OUR WORDS

### Related Passages:

Psalms 141:3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.

Ephesians 4:29 **Let** no unwholesome ([sapos](#) - ROTTEN, CORRUPT) word **proceed** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Pr 6:12+ A worthless person, a wicked man, Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth,

Pr 19:28 A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice, And the mouth of the wicked spreads iniquity.

James 3:6+ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

See comments on this verse by [Arnot above](#).

**Matthew Henry** - We must set a watch before the door of our lips, that we offend not with our tongue. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness, and foolish talking, all which come from a crooked mouth.

**EBC** - Righteousness will control the tongue by averting it from twisted and crooked speech. This step is the next logical one to take; it is not enough to guard the heart without watching what the heart produces, for words flow out of the heart. Wisdom produces truthful speech (Pr 8:13; 10:32; et al.).

**Put away from you a deceitful mouth** - **NET** = "Remove perverse speech from your mouth" **BDB** says the Hebrew **iqqeshuth** (from verb **aqash** = to twist - DOES THIS GIVE YOU A GOOD PICTURE OF THEIR WORDS?) for **deceitful** means "crookedness" and so the idea is "crookedness of the mouth." The Septuagint translates this rare Hebrew word (also Pr 6:12)

The Hebrew word for **put away** (**sur**) is translated in the Lxx with periaireo which literally means to take away or remove and figuratively to stop or do away with and is in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for immediate cessation!

**Deceitful** (iqqeshuth) means perverted, fraudulent speech and is used to describe a mouth that speaks without integrity, that does not speak truth but rather deception and is a mark of an evil, worthless person (only 2 uses in Bible = Pr. 4:24; Pr 6:12). The Lxx translates it with [skolios](#) which literally refers to that which is bent, crooked, curved or winding and figuratively refers to turning off from the truth to that which is morally crooked, bent or twisted and thus unscrupulous (unprincipled), dishonest, unfair, perverse. Skolios was used metaphorically of anything that deviates from a standard or norm, and in Scripture, it is often used of things that are morally or spiritually corrupt. In secular Greek skolios was used literally of rivers and roads meaning "winding" or "twisted." **Skolios** also referred to the movement of snakes. Secular Greek transferred the literal meaning to denote what is "crooked" or dishonest. Kittel adds that "Deceit (of skolios) spoils things, bondage leads to crooked action, and an ambiguous oracle is skoliós.

**NET NOTE** on **deceitful** - Heb "crookedness." The noun מְשֻׁבָּט ('iqqéshut) refers to what is morally twisted or perverted. Here it refers to things that are said (cf. NAB "dishonest talk"; NRSV "crooked speech"). The term "mouth" functions as a metonymy of cause for perverse speech. Such perverse talking could be subtle or blatant.

**Guzik** - To stay on the path of the just, one must give attention to what they speak. Deceitful and perverse words are used to cover deceitful and perverse actions, and lead one further along the way of the wicked. If one could actually never speak in an impure or perverse way and determine to never do things that must be covered with a deceitful mouth, they would go a long way to avoiding the works of the wicked.

**Kidner** - Superficial habits of talk react on the mind; so that, e.g., cynical chatter, fashionable grumbles, flippancy, half-truths, barely meant in the first place, harden into well-established habits of thought.

**Bridges** - As we guard our hearts, we must not forget to guard the outlets of sin. What a world of evil the heart pours out from the mouth (James 3:5–6). Commit, therefore, both heart and mouth to divine discipline. Then let prayer and faith be the way you keep watch. Do not just shun but put away—yes, far away from you—perversity from your mouth.

**And put devious speech far from you** - When the heart harbors attitudes of deceit and deviousness, it comes out through our lips. Jesus says you can assess a man's heart by his words? He taught, in Luke 6:45+ "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

**Put** ([rachaq](#)) means to become far or distant, to separate oneself from (used 6x in Proverbs - Prov. 4:24; Prov. 5:8; Prov. 19:7; Prov. 22:5; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 30:8) and in the Lxx is [apothéo/apotheomai](#) which is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for one to push aside, thrust off from oneself, drive away, an interesting picture. **Devious** ([lazuth](#)) is translated in the Lxx with [adikos](#) which means lacking integrity, dishonest, untrustworthy.

**Henry** - "All manner of tongue sins, we must, by constant watchfulness and steadfast resolution, put from us, put far from us, abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil and fearing to learn any such words."

**McGee** - The issues of life will proceed from the heart, but it is the mouth and the lips that will do the speaking. Someone has put it like this: "What is in the well of the heart will come up through the bucket of the mouth." How true it is that sooner or later the mouth will reveal what is in your heart. Our mouths give us away. Mrs. McGee and I were having lunch in a little town in the Northwest and were talking to each other. We noticed that the waitress seemed very much interested and pretty soon she interrupted us. "Aren't you Dr. McGee?" I answered, "Yes, how did you know me?" She said, "I've never seen you before, but I listen to you on the radio." Later my wife told me, "You had better be very careful what you say. You are recognized by people when you have no idea that you

are being recognized.” How true that is, but the care has to begin with the heart. What is in the well of the heart will come up through the bucket of the mouth. Our mouths will give away what is being harbored in our hearts.

**Lawson** - A wry mouth is a great deformity to the countenance; a perverse tongue is a more ugly blemish to the conversation. The tongue is a world of iniquity, and needs a world of care to manage it. We must not only refrain from evil discourse, but put it far from us, avoiding every thought and feeling that might set an evil tongue in motion, and refusing to listen to evil speakers, that we may not be tempted by them to retail their infamous slanders.

It is a sad thing to think evil, for that corrupts ourselves; but if we have done foolishly in thinking evil, let us lay our hands upon our mouths, lest we corrupt others also.

We must repent bitterly of evil imaginations, but the manifestations of pardoning grace restore complete comfort and calm serenity to the wounded spirit. But when we have given our tongues a license, whereby others also have been drawn into sin, we must remember that, though pardoning mercy may clear our consciences from the terrors of guilt, deep remorse must still be felt for the irreparable injury done to others. Who can tell how far its baneful influence may have spread?

### Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look directly ahead And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

BGT Proverbs 4:25 ο φθαλμο σου ρθ βλεπ τωσαν τ δ βλ φαρ σου νευ τω δ καια

NET Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look directly in front of you and let your gaze look straight before you.

NLT Proverbs 4:25 Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you.

ESV Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

NIV Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

KJV Proverbs 4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

LXE Proverbs 4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids assent to just things.

ASV Proverbs 4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

CSB Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead.

NKJ Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.

NRS Proverbs 4:25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

YLT Proverbs 4:25 Thine eyes do look straightforward, And thine eyelids look straight before thee.

- Pr 23:5,33 Job 31:1 Ps 119:37 Mt 6:22

PUT ON THE BLINDERS!

## MAKE A COVENANT WITH YOUR EYES

### Related Passages:

Job 31:1+ “I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?

Psalms 119:37+ Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Your ways.

Matthew 6:22+ “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

See comments on this verse by [Arnot above](#).

**Matthew Henry** - Let the eye be fixed and not wandering; let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thy eye be single and not divided; let thy intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not askew at any by-end.” We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high calling, and direct all towards that. Oculum in metam—The eye upon the goal.

**Bridges** - After the heart and the mouth we come to the **eyes**: Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.



The eyes are "the lamp of the body" (Matthew 6:22). **Yet, all too often they are a most dangerous inlet to sin** (Genesis 3:6; 6:2; 39:7; Matthew 5:28; 2 Peter 2:14). Therefore, like Job, we need to make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1+). Place them under heavenly restraint (Psalm 119:37). Let your eyes look straight ahead, "like one plowing, who must not look back" (Cartwright). Fix your gaze directly before you. If Eve had done so, she would have looked on God's command and not on the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:2–6+). Had Lot's wife looked straight ahead instead of behind her, she would, like her husband, have been a monument of mercy (Genesis 19:17, 26). Achan was ruined by neglecting this rule of wisdom (Joshua 7:21). David's example calls us to godly jealousy (2 Samuel 11:2–4). The pleasures of sin and the seductions of a tempting world do not lie on God's road. So they would not meet the eyes if his people were looking straight ahead. It is only when Christians linger, turn off the path, or turn back that they come into sight. Follow the motto of runners—"one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). Get your goal in focus and concentrate on it. Go onwards, upwards, heavenwards.

**Let your eyes look directly ahead And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you-** In effect put "blinders" on like the horse do (see pictures) so that you are not distracted! One excellent way to let your eyes look directly ahead is for us to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2+) It is worth noting that the verb for fix in Hebrews 12:2 is [aphorao](#) means to look away from all else and to look steadfastly, intently toward a distant object, in this case the best object, JESUS! The idea is to direct one's attention without distraction. The idea is putting some things away (behind) to go with a forward-gaze.

**Henry** - "Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful."

**Kitchen** - The wise man knows where he is headed and maintains his focus on the goal. The fool gets distracted by allurements that call to him from off the path (Prov. 17:20). The eyes, once indulged, are never satisfied (Prov. 27:20). One peek, one lingering glance, will never assuage the appetite for more. It is not the first look that creates sin, but the second, lingering look of lust (Matt. 5:28). It is the lust for more that moves us to waste our energies upon that which will never last (Prov. 23:5).

**NET Note on gaze** is interesting - Heb "your eyelids." The term "eyelids" is often a poetic synonym for "eye" (it is a metonymy of adjunct, something connected with the eye put for the eye that sees); it may intensify the idea as one might squint to gain a clearer look.

**Constable** - We must be single minded in our pursuit of wisdom (v. 25; cf. Ps. 101:3; 119:37).

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### **C H Spurgeon - "EYES RIGHT."—Proverbs 4:25.**

THESE words occur in a passage wherein the wise man exhorts us to take care of all parts of our nature, which he indicates by members of the body. "Keep thy heart," says he, "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." It is clear that every part of our nature needs to be carefully watched, lest in any way it should become the cause of sin. Any one member or faculty is readily able to defile all the rest, and therefore every part must be guarded with care. We have selected for our meditation the verse which deals with the eye. These windows of light need to be watched in their incomings, lest that which we take into our soul should be darkness rather than light; and they need to be watched in their outgoings, lest the glances of the eye should be full of iniquity, or should suggest foolish thoughts. Hence the wise man advises, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Have eyes and use them. Using them, take care to use them honestly.

Some persons are always as if they were asleep. They go through the world mooning about, seeing nothing, or seeing men as if they were trees, with a sight which is not sight, but blindness hidden. The shadows of this transient life impress them, and that is all: they have never awakened yet to the true life and its solemn realities. They have never seen anything in very truth; for it is faith that sees, and of faith they have none. That which is apart from faith is not visible to the soul, however clear it may be to the eye. We have thousands around us who need to be startled out of that slumber in which they see the fabrics of their dreams, and the unsubstantial fancies of the hour. They say, "We see," but scales are on their eyes. I fear we have such in all our congregations, lulled to sleep even by the preacher's tones, to whom the fact of coming to their accustomed seat, and listening to the usual hymns, tends rather to confirm them in a sluggard's slumber than to stir their souls to action. O ye sluggards, may God awaken you by grace, lest he arouse you by the thunderbolts of his vengeance! It is time that your eyes began to look right on, and your eyelids straight before you.

Many others are somewhat awake mentally, but they are not looking right on, neither do their eyelids look straight before them. They are staring about them, star-gazing, wondering what will be seen next: always ready, like the Athenians, to hear and see some new thing. They move, it is true, but it is in a labyrinth which leads to nothing, in a circle which ends where it began; they toil and slave, but it is all in the shadow land: of substantial work they do nothing. An active idleness, a diligent laziness, is all that their life is made



up of; for, as yet, they have no purpose—no purpose worth being the aim of an immortal soul. An arrow will never strike the mark if it travels in a zigzag direction; and the man whose life has no aim whatever, who pursues this, and then that, and then the other, what will he achieve? Are not many like “dumb driven cattle,” going they know not where? They have never yet discovered that this life is a preface to a life of diviner mould. They do not regard the present as the lowly porch of the glorious edifice of the future. They have not thought that time is but the doorstep of eternity, a thing of small account, save that it is linked with the endless ages; and so they seek after this, and then after that, and then after the other; and always after that which is too poor, too trifling to be the object of a mind capable of fellowship with God. How many there are whose spirit is agitated by a mere nothing, resembling

“Ocean into tempest tost  
To waft a feather or to drown a fly”!

To beings who lead such purposeless lives we would address the words of the wise man, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Have something to do, and do it. Have something to live for, and live for it. Get to know the right way, and, knowing the right way, keep to it with full purpose of heart and concentration of faculty. O man, see whither thou art going, and go that way, with thine eyes open, resolutely marking every step as thou takest it. Look where thou oughtest to look, and then follow thine eyes, which shall thus be useful outriders to thy life, and help to make thy way safe and wise. When thou hast sent thine eyes before thee to make sure of the way, it will be safe to follow. Look before you leap, and only leap when looking bids you do so.

If a man is to let his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him, then he is to have a way, and that way is to be a straight way, and in that straight way he is to persevere. You cannot see to the end of a crooked way. You can only see a small part of a way that twists and winds. Choose, then, a direct path which has an end which you dare think of and look upon. Some men’s lives are such that they dare not think of what the end of them must be. They would not long pursue their present track if they were forced to gaze into that dread abyss, which is the only possible close of an evil course. The way of transgressors is hard in itself, but it is hardest of all when we behold their dreadful end. “Surely thou hast set them in slippery places. Thou castest them down into destruction.” You need to have a way, and a straight way, and a way whose end you dare contemplate, or else you cannot carry out the advice of Solomon, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.”

Every wise man will conclude that the best way for a man is the way which God has made for him. He that made us knows what he made us for, and he knows by what means we may best arrive at that end. According to divine teaching, as gracious as it is certain, we learn that the way of eternal life is Jesus Christ. Christ himself says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”; and he that would pursue life after a right fashion must look to Jesus, and must continue looking unto Jesus, not only as the author, but as the finisher of his faith. It shall be to him a golden rule of life, when he has chosen Christ to be his way, to let his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him. He need not be afraid to contemplate the end of that way, for the end of the way of Christ is life and glory with Christ for ever. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” A friend said to me the other day, “How happy are we to know that whatever happens to us in this life it is well!” “Yes,” I added, “and to know that if this life ends it is equally well, or better.” Then we joined hands in common joy to think that we were equally ready for life or death, and did not need five minutes’ anxiety as to whether it should be the one or the other. Brethren, when you are on the King’s highway, and that way is a perfectly straight one, you may go ahead without fear, and sing on the road.

With all my heart I invite any who have never yet begun to live after a right fashion, to take Christ to be the way of life to them; and then I entreat them to let their eyes look straight on, and their eyelids straight before them, and to follow Jesus without giving a glance either to the right hand or to the left till it shall be said of them, even in glory, “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

I. I shall make my earnest appeals to the heart and conscience by beginning with this first exhortation: **LET CHRIST BE YOUR WAY.** You that are young, let him be your way from your youth. You that have hitherto gone the wrong road until your hairs have grown grey in the service of iniquity, turn, I beseech you, and take to the way of salvation. May his Spirit turn you, and you will be turned, then will Jesus become your way from henceforth.

If Christ be your way, you will begin first to seek to have Christ. “How shall I have him?” says one. Dost thou desire him? Wilt thou accept him? He is thine. The act of accepting Christ secures Christ to us; for the Father freely gives him to all who freely accept him. Some are troubled through ignorant and unbelieving fears, and are saying, “I wish I could lay hold on Jesus! I wish I knew that Christ was mine!” Art thou willing to have him? Who made thee willing? Dost thou desire him? Who made thee desire him? Who but the Spirit of the Lord? Wilt thou now take Jesus to be thy Saviour, to save thee from thy sin? Then depend on it he is thine. There was never any difficulty with him to give himself to thee; the difficulty was to bring thee to receive him; and now that thou dost receive him, remember this—“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Jesus himself has said it, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”; and therefore, since thou comest, thou shalt never be cast out. Jesus has accepted thee, for thou hast accepted him. But I pray you, none of you rest until you have Christ. Let

your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you, till you find him. Look nowhere else but to him and after him. Shut yourself up in your room: determine not to come out again until you have him, and it shall not be long before you find him. Concentrating all your gaze upon the Crucified, light shall come from him, causing the scales to fall from your eyes, and you shall see him, even you that could not see; and you shall cry in delight, "He is mine, he is mine." Remember how David said to his son, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Think of the words of the prophet, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

When you have Christ, the next business of your life must be to know Christ. Seek to know more of him, to know him better, to know him more practically, to know him more assuredly. "That I may know him," said the apostle, after he had been a believer in him for fifteen years. That same man of God speaks of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," even his knowledge, which was of the fullest sort; so that he meant to go on learning more and more of Christ, and he did not count himself to have attained. Christian men and women, you do not know your great Master yet. Here have some of us been nearly forty years in his service, and yet we could not describe him to our own satisfaction. Why, we hardly know the power of the hem of his garment yet. We have not descended far down into the mines of his perfections. How little know we of our hidden wealth in Christ Jesus! Oh, that we studied Scripture more, that we were more teachable, and waited more humbly upon the Lord for the light of his Spirit from day to day! Well says our singer

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"Hoard up his sacred word,  
And feed thereon and grow;  
Go on to seek to know the Lord,  
And practise what you know."

In this matter let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you. Other men may have their pursuits, this is yours; stick to it earnestly. The science of a crucified Saviour shines like the moon in the midst of the stars as compared with all the other sciences which men may know; study it with your whole power of mind and heart. The angels on the mercy-seat of the ark stood always looking downward, and bending over. Hence the apostle says, "Which things the angels desire to look into"; and if they desire to look into the ark of the covenant and its sacred mysteries, how much more should we!

When you come to know somewhat of what he is, then go on to obey Christ. Is there anything that he has bidden you do? Do it. Some Christians have never yet been baptized: how will they answer for wilful neglect of a known duty? Others have been Christians for years, and yet have never communed at the Lord's table. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Do they keep his commandments? It was his dying request, "This do in remembrance of me," and yet they will not fulfil it. Even such a tender request they slight, as though it were of no importance whatever, as if their Lord was a mere nobody whose wishes might well be overlooked. What shall I say of many of the biddings of our holy gospel, many of those sweet precepts which are to be used in the family, and in the business, and in the field? What forgetfulness there is of them! What refusings to follow Christ! He might come to us and say, "If I be a Master, where is mine honour?" Truly, it ought to be one of the first thoughts of a Christian to find out the Lord's will; and when he knows it, obedience should follow immediately. His eyes should look right on, and his eyelids straight before him. What said the blessed, virgin to those who were at the feast? Note the words, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." It was well spoken of the favoured mother, and it remains as a golden precept for us all—"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Make no reserve, exercise no choice, but obey his command. When you know what he commands, do not hesitate, question, or try to avoid it, but "do it": do it at once, do it heartily, do it cheerfully, do it to the full. It is but a little thing that, as our Lord has bought us with the price of his own blood, we should be his servants. The apostles frequently call themselves the bond-slaves of Christ. Where our Authorized Version softly puts it "servant" it really is "bond-slave." The early saints delighted to count themselves Christ's absolute property, bought by him, owned by him, and wholly at his disposal. Paul even went so far as to rejoice that he had the marks of his Master's brand on him, and he cries, "Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." There was the end of all debate: he was the Lord's, and the marks of the scourges, the rods, and the stones were the broad-arrow of the King which marked Paul's body as the property of Jesus, the Lord. Now, if the saints of old time gloried in obeying Christ, I pray that you and I, forgetting the sect to which we may belong, or even the nation of which we form a part, may feel that our first object in life is to obey our Lord, and not to follow a human leader, or to promote a religious or political party. This one thing we mean to do, and so follow the advice of Solomon, as he says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Beloved, let us endeavour to be obedient in the minute as well as in the greater matters, for it is in details that true obedience is best seen. Let us copy the faintest touches in the life of our great Exemplar.

That being attended to, remember, if Christ be your way, you have further to seek to be like him, not only to do as he did, but to be as he was; for "as he was, so are we in this world." What a man does is important, but what a man is is all-important. The ring of the metal is something, but if its ring could be imitated by a base coin, it would be nothing. It is, after all, the substance of the metal that decides its value. O man, what art thou? If thou be a twice-born man, thou art a partaker of the nature of Christ; but if not, thou art under the curse which cleaves to the old nature as leprosy cleaves to the leper. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; and we must begin to bear that heavenly image even now. As born again into the headship of

the Second Adam, we should seek to be as much like the Second Adam as we are already by nature like the first Adam, through our first birth. The second birth should be as operative to produce the image of the second Adam, as the first was to produce the image of the first Adam. Alas! "the earthy" is impressed upon us very distinctly; we cannot spend an hour without discovering the clear stamp of nature's die. Oh, that "the heavenly" could be quite as clearly discerned! This, therefore, we must aim at, though as yet we have not attained it. Here is something to be thought of very carefully, and I charge you, by the Holy Ghost, let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you, that you may be transformed from glory to glory into the image of the Lord. God grant that it may be so with every one of us!

Now, supposing that we have attended to all this, if Christ is our way, and our model, there is something more, namely, that we seek to glorify Christ, and labour to win others to him. Here is a grand field for all our energies. O Christian people, what are we left in this world for, except to bring others to Jesus? Are we not left in this wilderness that we may find out more of the good Shepherd's stray sheep, and work for him and with him to bring them in. I fear we forget this. Are not some of you indifferent as to whether your fellow-men are lost or saved? Have not some of you, in your families, come to this pass—that you see your brother an infidel, your sister frivolous, your parents godless, and yet it does not fret you? I think that if I had a godless relative, it would break my night's rest, not now and then, but always. A brother, a father, a child unsaved! What mean ye by taking your ease? If the spirit of Christ be in us, the tears that fell from the eyes of Jesus will find their like upon our cheeks. We shall weep day and night because men are not gathered unto eternal life. Nor will this be a loss to us, for blessed are the mourners in Zion. Blessed are they that mourn because others abide in sin and reject the Lord!

Now, concerning the salvation of our fellow-men; we shall never compass it unless our eyes look right on, and our eyelids straight before us. Before we win souls, we must live for souls. We need men and women who live to convert others to Christ. The minister had better quit his pulpit if it be not his one burning desire to bring hearts to Jesus' feet. If a divine impulse be not upon him, driving him to seek the souls of men, let him go elsewhere with his windy periods. Professors have little right to be in Christ's church, unless they are passionately in earnest to increase his kingdom by the salvation of their fellow-men. O my brothers and sisters, on whom is the blood-mark of redemption, I charge you concerning this matter to "let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you"! Seek souls as dogs hunt their game; eye, nostril, ear all open, and every muscle strained. Converts are not gained by dreamers. We cannot imitate Jesus as a Saviour of men by being dull and heartless. In any point in which we follow our Lord let us do it with all our soul.

Thus much upon the first point: let Christ be your way in all things, and keep to that way.

II. Following the text again, only working it a little differently, the second exhortation is, **SET YOUR EYES ON HIM AS YOUR WAY.** If Christ be your way, and you follow him to have him, to know him, to obey him, to be like him, and to glorify him, then set your eyes on him as the way. Think of him, consider him, study him, and in all things regard him as first and last to you.

First, that you may know the way of life, let your eyes be fixed on him. Soul, art thou in the dark? Kneel down and pray, and look Christward. Saint, art thou bewildered? Go by the way of the cross, the way of the Crucified, for that is the true and sure path. Sinner, art thou burdened? Wouldst thou be rid of thy burden? Run Christward. Any direction given thee to go anywhere else will misdirect thee. I say not to any one I meet to-night, "Go to the wicket-gate." Neither will I bid you look to any light within, and run that way. My only direction is, "Go to Jesus." You see that cross, and him who bled thereon! Stand still, and look that way, and your burden shall fall from your shoulders. Where Jesus died, you shall live. Where Christ was wounded, you shall be healed. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you." Know the road; you will never know it too well: the more you know it the happier you will be in it. "To Christ!" "To Christ!" To Christ! "That is the sole inscription upon every finger-post of the road to heaven. Keep you to the King's highway.

Since Christ is the way, let your eyes be fixed on him as the way that you may follow him well, may follow him wholly. Gather up all your faculties to go after your Lord. Be not like Lot's wife, who longed, and looked, and lingered, and was lost. Away, away, away from Sodom, altogether away: let no eye steal in that direction. Away, away, away to Christ, to Christ alone. All eyes must be for Jesus, who cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." As the ploughman looks to the end of the furrow, and keeps right on, even so must you look only to Jesus. What hast thou to do with anything but Christ, sinner? I tell thee that thou hast nothing even to do with thine own sins, but to lay them down at his feet. He is all; the beginning and the end. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

Look alone to Jesus, and do this to keep your spirits up. Some men's eyes do not look right on, and their eyelids do not look straight before them, for they look back upon that part of the road which they have traversed, and grow content with that which they have already attained. They live in retrospection. When you begin to look back at what you have done, and rub your hands, and say with self-satisfaction, "I remember when I did right well," wisdom warns you that this is not the right kind of look. What have you to look back upon? Poor, weak creature! Forget that which is behind, and press forward to something better and higher. When you sinful souls get looking back upon your past bad lives I am glad of that, but still I do not want even you to keep your eyes always in that direction. You will get no comfort in looking into the foul ditch of your own transgressions. Look, look, look before you! Look where

the cross stands. Run that way. Let thine eyelids look straight before thee to the atoning sacrifice; away from the past, which he will graciously blot out, to Jesus only.

Some spend much of their time in what is called introspection. Now introspection, like retrospection, is a useful thing in a measure; but it can readily be overdone, and then it breeds morbid emotions, and creates despair. Some are always looking into their own feelings. A healthy man hardly knows whether he has a stomach, or a liver; it is your sickly man who grows more sickly by the study of his inward complaints. Too many wound themselves by studying themselves. Every morning they think of what they should feel: all day long they dwell upon what they are not feeling; and at night they make diligent search for what they have been feeling. It looks to me like shutting up your shop, and then living in the counting-house, taking account of what is not sold. Small profits will be made in this way. You may look a long while into an empty pocket before you find a sovereign, and you may look a long time into fallen nature before you find comfort. A man might as well try to find burning coals under the ice, as to find anything good in our poor human nature. When you look within, it should be to see with grief what the filthiness is; but to get rid of that filthiness you must look beyond yourself. I remember Mr. Moody saying that a looking-glass was a capital thing to show you the spots on your face; but you could not wash in a looking-glass. You want something very different when you would make your face clean. So let your eyes look right on—

“To the full atonement made,  
To the utmost ransom paid.”

### **Forget yourself, and think only of Christ.**

Some not only unduly practise retrospection and introspection, but they carry much too far a sort of circumspection. They look all around them: they look upon their past, and their present, and their fears and their doubts, and from all these things they judge their condition, and decide their state of mind. You recollect Peter. He cried to his Lord, “Bid me come unto thee on the water.” He receives permission. Down the side over the boat goes Peter. To his intense surprise he is standing on a wave. Peter had never done such a thing before in his life as walk on the water. He might have kept on standing on the wave, and he might have walked all the way to Jesus, if he had kept his eyes on his Master until he reached him. The waters would have borne him up as well as a granite pavement; but Peter began to look at the billows, and he listened to the howling of the wind, and then to the beating of his own heart; and down he went; and then he had to cry to his Master. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee”: thou canst walk the waters all the way to the golden shore, if thou canst but stop thine eyes to all things else.

Surely I may use the text as an illustration of that closing of the eyes. “Let thine eyes look right on.” “I understand that,” says one, “for I trust. But you cannot look with your eyelids.” What can that mean? Remember that you can shut your eyes with your eyelids to a great many things, and so cease to see them; and in the matter of faith-sight a great many things are best not seen. So, when you would otherwise see the danger, and all the difficulties and the doubts, do not look with your eyes, but look with your eyelids. Not to look at the difficulties at all is all the look they deserve. Let your eyelids shut out the view which would create distrust. Do not see, do not feel, “only believe.” Believe Christ, and believe nothing else. “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” If all the sins thou hast ever done should come rolling up like Atlantic billows, and if all the devils in hell should come riding on the crests of those waves, howling as they come, take no notice of them. Christ has said, he that believeth in him hath everlasting life; believe thou in him, and thou hast the everlasting life as surely as Christ is the Christ of God. Draw down the blinds, and see nothing, know nothing, believe nothing but the living word of the living Saviour. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” When thou closest thine eyes to consider, thou canst see a good deal with closed eyes, but still look thou right on to the one and only trust.

You must also let your eyes look right on, dear friends; for if you begin to look two ways at a time, you will miss the Lord Jesus, who is your way. Under the Jewish law no man who had a squint was allowed to be a priest. He is described as one who had “a blemish in his eye.” I wish they would make a similar law with regard to spiritual sight in preachers nowadays, for certain of them are sadly cross-eyed. When they preach free grace they squint fearfully towards free-will; and if they look to the atonement, they must needs see in it more of man than of Christ. See how they look to Moses and to Darwin; to revelation and to speculation! A great many people would fain be saved, but they squint: they look a little towards sin, and the flesh, and the world, and they make provision for personal gain, and personal ease. In this case they fail to see Christ’s strait and narrow way of the denial of self, and the crucifixion of the flesh. If thou wouldst have salvation, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Look not a little this way, and a little that way, or thou wilt never run aright. “I could believe that I was a Christian,” says one, “if I felt more happy. I could trust Christ if I felt my nature changed.” That is a squint which ruins the faith-look. That is trying to look two ways at once. You cannot do it: it will ruin you. It would spoil the beauty of the sweetest countenance if we could use our eyes to look otherwise than straight on. We have some friends who, if they wish to see us, look over there, and yet we are not there. Avoid this spiritual blemish; it has no advantages—“Let thine eyes look right on.” Look to Christ alone, to him as thy whole salvation. Have nothing to do with thy good works as a ground of trust, or thou art a lost man. I charge thee, have nothing to do even with thy faith and thy repentance as a ground of trust. Trust not thy trust, but trust alone in what Christ has done. If thou shalt trust thy best feelings or thy worst feelings, thy prayers or thy praises, thy almsgivings or thy consecration in any degree, thou hast made an antichrist of them. Strip thyself of

thy last rag, and let Christ clothe thee from top to toe. Be thou hungry unto famishing, and clean out the last crumb thou hast in the pantry, for then only wilt thou feed on Christ, the bread of life. Let him be both bread and wine, and make up the whole of a feast for thee. Thou shalt have salvation surely enough if this be what thou dost. But let not Jesus bring the bread, and carnal confidence the wine: take a whole Christ to be all thy salvation and all thy desire, and thy peace shall be unbroken. Let the Holy Spirit bring thee to that oneness of trust which makes both eyes meet at their proper focus, and let that focus be the Lord Jesus. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

III. But my time has almost expired, and I have only to lay emphasis on one more matter. **LET YOUR EYES DISTINCTLY AND DIRECTLY LOOK TO CHRIST ALONE.**

I have gone over this before, but I need to hammer at it again, in order to clench the nail. Look not to any human guide, but look to Christ Jesus alone. We have no faith in priests; but it is a very easy thing to fix your faith upon a minister, and hear what he says, and believe it because he says it. I charge you, believe nothing that I tell you if it cannot be supported by the Word of God. I am content to stand or to fall by this: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." I will quote the authority of no other book, whoever may have composed it; no ancient book, let it belong even to the earliest days of the church. This one inspired volume is the text-book of our religion. Follow Holy Scripture, and you have an infallible chart. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one apostle and high priest of our profession; follow him. Not even mother or father, or the brightest saint that ever lived, must divide you from your perfect Guide. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you," and hear the gracious words of him who bought you with his blood as he cries, "Follow me."

Then, again, look to Christ directly and distinctly for yourself. I warn you against putting any trust in national religion, or in family and birthright godliness. A personal Christ must be laid hold of by a personal faith. You must yourself repent, yourself believe, yourself get a grip of him, and of none but him. You must use your own eyes: "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you."

Again, look not to any secondary aims. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In seeking Christ, make no bargain with gain or reputation; be content to lose all gold and all honour if you may but win Christ. To follow religion for pelf would be a mean act of hypocrisy, and to leave it for the same reason is equally vile. Let your eyes be fixed on following your Lord, and as to any worldly consequences, bring your eyelids into use, keep them fast closed, and go right on in implicit obedience to your Lord.

Forget all things else when seeking Christ, and when you have found Christ. It is no ill thing for a man, when he is under concern of soul, to let his business and everything go till he finds his Saviour. I urge no one to such a course, but I have noticed many converts who have done this who have soon found rest. If a captain were busy about the comfort of his passengers in their cabins, but all the while knew that there was a great leak in the ship, and it would soon go down, and to this he paid no heed whatever, you would say to him, "How foolish you are to mind the little, and neglect the great!" But if he told the passengers, "Breakfast cannot be prepared with our usual care, for all hands are pumping or repairing the vessel," you could not blame him when you knew that every man's help was needed to save the ship from going down. In times of extreme danger, secondary things must give place to the main thing. If this house were to take fire you would not stay to sing the last hymn, even if I gave it out. May the Holy Spirit lead some of you to feel that you must be saved! You must be saved, and therefore you must put other things into a second place. Remember how Bunyan pictures the man running for his life, and when his neighbours called to him to stop, he put his fingers in his ears, and as he ran he shouted, "Eternal life! Eternal life! Eternal life!" That man was a wise man. Imitate him; if you have not found eternal life, run for it, with your "eyes right on, and your eyelids straight before you."

And, lastly, take care that you continue gazing upon Christ until you have faith in him. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Go on hearing the Word of God till faith come thereby. Do you ask me how faith comes? It is the gift of God, but it usually comes in a certain way. Thinking of Jesus, and meditating upon Jesus, will breed faith in Jesus. I was struck with what one said the other day of a certain preacher. The hearer was in deep concern of soul, and the minister preached a very pretty sermon indeed, decorated abundantly with word-painting. I scarcely know any brother who can paint so daintily as this good minister can; but this poor soul, under a sense of sin, said, "There was too much landscape, sir. I did not want landscape; I wanted salvation." Dear friend, never crave word-painting when you attend a sermon; but crave Christ. You must have Christ to be your own by faith, or you are a lost man. When I was seeking the Saviour I remember hearing a very good doctrinal sermon; but when it was over I longed to tell the minister that there was a poor lad there who wanted to know how he could be saved. How I wished he had given half a minute to that subject! Dr. Manton, who was usually a clear and full preacher of the gospel, when he preached before the Lord Mayor, gave his lordship something a cut above the common citizens, and so the poorer folk missed their portion. After he had done preaching his sermon, an aged woman cried, "Dr. Manton, I came here this morning under concern of soul, wanting a blessing, and I have not got it, for I could not understand you." The preacher meekly replied, "The Lord forgive me! I will not so offend again." He had overlooked the poor, and had thought mainly of my Lord Mayor. Special sermons before Mayors, and Queens, and assemblies are seldom worth a penny a thousand. The gospel does not lend itself to show performances. I am not here to give you intellectual treats: my eyes look right on to your salvation. Oh that yours may look that way! Go after Christ, dear friend. Seek after Christ with

your whole heart and soul. Feel that the one thing you must have is to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Keep on with that cry, "None but Christ: none but Christ." Make this your continual litany—

"Give me Christ, or else I die;  
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Then you will soon find him. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you," and you shall see the Lord of grace appearing to you through the mist and through the cloud, that self-same Saviour who stands in the midst of us even now, and cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

### Proverbs 4:26 Watch the path of your feet And all your ways will be established.

BGT Proverbs 4:26 ρθ ς τροχι ς πο ει σο ς ποσ ν κα τ ς δο ς σου κατε θυνε

NET Proverbs 4:26 Make the path for your feet level, so that all your ways may be established.

NLT Proverbs 4:26 Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path.

ESV Proverbs 4:26 Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.

NIV Proverbs 4:26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.

KJV Proverbs 4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

LXE Proverbs 4:26 Make straight paths for thy feet, and order thy ways aright.

ASV Proverbs 4:26 Make level the path of thy feet, And let all thy ways be established.

CSB Proverbs 4:26 Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established.

NKJ Proverbs 4:26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.

NRS Proverbs 4:26 Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure.

YLT Proverbs 4:26 Ponder thou the path of thy feet, And all thy ways are established.

- Ponder: Pr 5:6 Ps 119:59 Eze 18:28 Hag 1:5,7 Eph 5:15,17
- let all thy ways be established: or, all thy ways shall be ordered aright, Ps 37:23 40:2 1Th 3:13 2Th 3:3 1Pe 5:10



Ancient Footwear

## STAY ON THE NARROW PATH

See comments on this verse by [Arnot above](#).

**Watch the path of your feet** - The Hebrew word for **watch** (**palas**) means to weigh, make level and then to ponder (the sense in this passage). The idea is to calculate the weight of something literally but applicable to the figurative sense. Some translations favor ponder (KJV, YLT, ESV) and others make a level path (NET, NRSV). How would you make level paths? Remove every moral hindrance (cf Pr 4:11,12+).

The Septuagint is "**Make** (**poieo** in the [present imperative](#) = commands this to be our lifestyle to) straight paths for thy feet, and order thy ways aright."

**NET NOTE** - The verb **watch** "The verb is a denominative Piel from the word **בָּלַע** (**palas**), "balance; scale." In addition to telling the disciple to keep focused on a righteous life, the sage tells him to keep his path level, which is figurative for living the righteous life.

**Waltke** - "The son must take care that every step conforms with that way; one false step could prove fatal. Your foot (ragleka) calls

attention to every step taken in the road of life.”

**Lawson** picks up on the sense of "watch" meaning "weigh" writing "Our actions will be weighed by God in an even balance at last, and it is necessary for us to weigh them now in the same balance. As we ought to compare our past actions with the word of God, in order to know what occasion there is for repentance; so in like manner those which we design to perform, that we may know whether it be lawful to perform them or not. This is necessary for the direction and establishment of our ways. They that ponder not their paths are like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed; but in the hearts of such as receive and apply it to the cleansing of their way, the word of God has an establishing efficacy\*."

The Hebrew word for **path** ([magal](#)) means an entrenchment or track and is translated in the Lxx with the noun [trochia](#) literally refers to the track of a wheel and thus a "rut" left by a cart or chariot. Other travelers would follow this "rut" or path. In this passage **trochia** is used figuratively of one's way of life and/or conduct. The idea is literally make straight wheel tracks for the feet, i.e. live in the right way, behave correctly. Hebrews 12:13+ quotes the first half of this proverb.

A good prayer to pray to help us **watch the path** is Psalm 119:5+

Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes!

**EBC** - Here the focus is on the foot. The imagery of the level, firm, and straight path is used again in these final verses to advise the disciple to avoid evil actions. There is **no middle way**: one must reject the wrong way and follow the right way every step on the road of life.

**Bridges** - Lastly, guard your feet. Has not experience, let alone Scripture, shown that you need to walk carefully? Traps are laid on every path—yes, for every step you take. The wicked attempt to snare your eating, your drinking, your calling, and perhaps most of all, your serving God. You should take great care as you travel along such a dangerous path. “The habit of calm and serious thinking makes the real difference between one man and another” (Dr. Abercrombie).

**Matthew Henry** has a good word picture based on the meaning of "watch" (to weigh) - Ponder the path of thy feet, weigh it (so the word is); “put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord and whether it will end well.” We must consider our past ways and examine what we have done, and our present ways, what we are doing, whither we are going, and see that we walk circumspectly. It concerns us to consider what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages and what the dangers, of our way, that we may act accordingly. “Do nothing rashly.”

**And all your ways will be established** - NIV has a different rendering "and take only ways that are firm." **NLT** has "stay on the safe path." These renderings agree more with the **Septuagint** which reads "**order** thy ways aright," where "**order**" is [kateuthuno](#) ([present imperative](#) = command to make this your lifestyle) which means to cause to go straight, direct. to guide in the right way. or journey to a place. The idea is that of conducting one straight to a place, and not by a round-about course. **Kateuthuno** gives a picture of opening up the way by removal of obstacles so that the desired goal may be reached.

The NAS and NET see this as the purpose of straight paths, so NET has "so that all your ways may be established." ESV agrees and has "all your ways will be sure."

#### **Proverbs 4:27 Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.**

NET Proverbs 4:27 Do not turn to the right or to the left; turn yourself away from evil.

NLT Proverbs 4:27 Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.

ESV Proverbs 4:27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

NIV Proverbs 4:27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

KJV Proverbs 4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

LXE Proverbs 4:27 Turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left, but turn away thy foot from an evil way: [for God knows the ways on the right hand, but those on the left are crooked:] and he will make thy ways straight, and will guide thy steps in peace.

ASV Proverbs 4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: Remove thy foot from evil.

CSB Proverbs 4:27 Don't turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil.



NKJ Proverbs 4:27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

NRS Proverbs 4:27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

YLT Proverbs 4:27 Incline not to the right or to the left, Turn aside thy foot from evil!

- **Turn:** De 5:32 12:32 28:14 Jos 1:7
- **Turn your foot:** Pr 16:17 Isa 1:16 Ro 12:9 1 Th 5:21-22

## MORE ADVICE ON GUARDING OUR FEET

**McGee** - Oh, how careful a young man needs to be! A man told me the other day that he ruined his whole life by being arrested when he was a young man. He has a record against him, and that record has confronted him again and again down through the years. In this day when the use of drugs and liquor is so prevalent, especially among young folk, how careful he should be. How tragic it is to see multitudes of youngsters who are destroying themselves because they do not “ponder the path” of their feet.

### Related Passage:

1 Th 5:21-22+ But **examine** everything carefully; **hold fast** to that which is good; **abstain** from every form of evil. (Note all three commands are [present imperative](#) each calling for us to [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#))

Romans 12:9+ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

**Matthew Henry** - halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; turn not to the right hand not to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point if he prevails to draw us aside either way.

Moses spoke several times of right and left...

Deuteronomy 5:32; “So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; **you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left.**”

Deuteronomy 17:11 “According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; **you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left.**”

Deuteronomy 17:20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and **that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left,** so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

Deuteronomy 28:14 and **do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left,** to go after other gods to serve them.

Garrett comments that “Of particular interest is Proverbs 4:27, the warning to swerve neither to the right nor to the left. Deuteronomy 5:32; 17:11; 28:14; and Joshua 23:6 are similar. The idea is that one should not be distracted from the way of wisdom.”

**Do not turn to the right nor to the left**- First the negative instruction. **ESV** has “Do not **swerve** to the right or the left,” which almost pictures one driving a car. **Turn** is the same verb [natah](#) used in Pr 4:20+ (“**Incline** your ear to my sayings.”) The first use in Proverbs 4 was in Pr 4:5+ “Do not forget nor **turn away** from the words of my mouth.” A literal rendering would be something like “do not lean (incline) toward the right or the left.” (WHERE ARE YOU *LEANING* TODAY? AN ASSOCIATION WITH SOMEONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, AN ADDICTIVE HABIT, ETC? REMEMBER IF YOU *LEAN* TOO MUCH, YOU MAY END UP TAKING A SERIOUS FALL!) Thus anything on the right or left are at best distractions and at worst disaster compared to what lies directly ahead in the will of God which is good, and acceptable and perfect.

**Kitchen** says “The call is to keep from becoming captivated by competing calls or entertaining options, but rather to stay focused on God’s primary call and best course”

**NET NOTE** on **foot** - Heb “your foot” (so NAB, NIV, NRSV). The term רַגְלֶךָ (raglékha, “your foot”) is a synecdoche of part (= foot) for the whole person (= “yourself”).

Does this not remind us of the passionate pursuit of Paul when he wrote

That I may know Him (THERE IT IS-OUR GREATEST GOAL IN THIS SHORT TIME ON EARTH! TO KNOW JESUS!) and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**(Php 3:10-14+)

**Lawson** - It is dangerous to turn either to the left hand or the right from the way of God's commandments. On each side of the King's highway are those crooked paths, which are full of precipices and pitfalls. Men may be destroyed by being righteous, as well as by being wicked overmuch. The Pharisees in the days of Christ's flesh, sinned as much by adding to God's law as by taking from it. To add to God's precepts, is a reflection upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver; to violate them, is an insult upon his authority. It commonly happens, that when men have the presumption to make some new articles of religion, they make compensation to themselves for their additional restraints on their liberty, by straitening the law of God in some other points, and thus make it on the whole much easier to flesh and blood, than it was made by God.

**Henry** - Be very careful to remove thy foot from evil; take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil,

**Turn your foot from evil** - Here is the point - To not turn to the right or left and so to stay on the path of righteousness, we must make the conscious choice to turn away from evil, even the suggestion of evil. So the command is to keep from "swerving" off the "highway of holiness" one must assiduously avoid evil! **NLT** paraphrases it as "keep your feet from following evil," which gives the picture that Evil Personified is seducing us to follow.

**Turn** (depart, remove, take away) is the Hebrew verb [sur](#) which means to change direction, to turn away, to quit, to keep far away. The Septuagint verb is [apostrepho](#) in the [aorist imperative](#) (do this now! do it effectively! it is urgent!) means to change from incorrect to correct behavior.

**Lawson** - Our foot must be removed from all evil. Sin must not be indulged in thought, word, or action. No degree of this abominable thing is to be allowed in our practice. Saints have fallen into some of the greatest sins, but it is inconsistent with holiness to take liberty in the least\*. Even the garment spotted by the flesh must be hated by us.

**Bridges** - Here, then, is the voice of wisdom. Beware of mistaking presumption for faith, temptations for God's providence. Never deviate from a straightforward command for an uncertain command. Judge each step you take so that it is in line with God's will. The pleasures of sin lie to the right or the left. So your eyes need to keep looking straight ahead in order to keep your foot from evil. May we all have grace and wisdom to ponder these sound practical rules. The man of God must only have one standard (Isaiah 8:20+). He must not think about anyone "from a worldly point of view" (2 Corinthians 5:16). He must often put the church to one side, no less than the world, in order to listen more carefully to God's command. He must discern and crush the first sign of sin, guarding every avenue of sin—the senses, the memory, the imagination, the touch, the taste. He must walk by the straight rule of the Gospel, or else he will not only make himself stumble but the church as well (Galatians 2:11–14+).

Lawson has a good closing word on how we can practice the preceding precepts - From this whole directory, we may see our need of pardoning mercy; for which of us can say, "We have made our hands clean, or kept our tongues from every evil thing?" But the blood of Jesus is a fountain opened to cleanse from all sin. Without renewing grace (AND I WOULD ADD THE ENABLING POWER OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GRACE - Heb 10:29+), our labour in guarding our **hearts**, and restraining our **tongues** and **feet** from evil, will be as vain as to attempt washing an Ethiopian white. The old heart cannot be reformed, but God hath promised to give us a new heart, and to put a new spirit within us (See below).With our vigilance, faith and prayer must be joined.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you (GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY) and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY). (Ezekiel 36:26-27+)

**THOUGHT** - See discussion of the [Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible' \(100/100\)](#)