

Instructions for Pursuing Wisdom

Proverbs 4

Group ¹	C	V	Description
A Father's Instruction	4	1-9	Parents to teach children to seek wisdom
		10-19	Contrast of remaining faithful to wisdom and those who don't
		20-27	God's word gives life: ear, body, heart, mouth, eyes, and feet.

Reflections

In this chapter, we find three sections of which each builds on the previous. In the first, Solomon explains why that he is following the example given to him by his father in teaching him to pursue wisdom. Next, the student is encouraged to remain faithful to the instruction instead of pursuing the unrighteous living of others. Finally, the health benefits, mostly spiritual, of making wise choices is extolled.

Just like any parent who wants their children to learn from their instruction, Solomon again reminds his son why he is giving him this instruction in wisdom. He is also noting that he was instructed in the same manner. The implied lesson from this first section that should be learned is that we should teach each generation to be faithful to godly wisdom.

In the second section, the folly of following one's evil desires only leads to a life of chaos and despair. This evil pursuit doesn't only effect the individual but also others, especially those who they seek to take advantage of (v16). This results in the pursuit of selfish, worldly passions: "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16).

Finally, the instruction turns to the health benefits of keeping wisdom and making wise choices. Admittedly, they are largely spiritual in nature but we also know that pursuing the worldly passions above can result in physical sickness and even death to the pursuer. This is a way to think about when you consider the greatest commandment, the Shema.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NASB "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Mark 12:29-30 NASB Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

The soul is best understood as our physical being and so in the last section the student is told to use every part of his body to be active in keeping and following the wisdom that is to be gained from the instruction.

- Incline your ear
- sight ... heart
- health to ... body
- watch over your heart
- put away ... a deceitful mouth ... devious speech
- let your eyes ... your gaze
- path of your feet ... your ways
- turn your foot

¹ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

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Yes, God is gracious and compassionate but He also fervently desires for us to live holy lives. I know that for me this is one of the most difficult parts of life. Some days I do much better at making sure every part of my body is keeping faithful to godly wisdom found in God's word but some days I still choose to pursue those worldly passions, all the while desiring to be faithful to God.

Repetition of phrases are usually an indicator that something might be worth considering. So what are some of the phrases in this chapter which we might want to consider.

Acquire wisdom	<p>4:5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.</p> <p>4:7 "The beginning of wisdom <i>is</i>: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.</p>
Do not...	<p>4:2 For I give you sound teaching; <u>Do not abandon</u> my instruction.</p> <p>4:5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! <u>Do not forget</u> nor turn away from the words of my mouth.</p> <p>4:6 "<u>Do not forsake</u> her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you.</p> <p>4:13 Take hold of instruction; <u>do not let go</u>. Guard her, for she is your life.</p> <p>4:14 <u>Do not enter</u> the path of the wicked And <u>do not proceed</u> in the way of evil men.</p> <p>4:15 Avoid it, <u>do not pass by it</u>; Turn away from it and pass on.</p> <p>4:19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; <u>They do not know</u> over what they stumble.</p> <p>4:21 <u>Do not let</u> them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart.</p> <p>4:27 <u>Do not turn</u> to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.</p>
The beginning of...	<p>1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.</p> <p>4:7 "The beginning of wisdom <i>is</i>: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.</p> <p>9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.</p>

There is only one reference to "the beginning of" in this chapter but I thought it would still be worth noting as it is so important to the theme of the book of Proverbs.

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study²: *my LOG vs others SPECK*. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

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P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

2 *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

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- E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?
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- C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?
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- K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?
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Key Words: Old Testament, Wisdom/Poetry, Proverbs, Wisdom, Parents, Instruction, Health, Faithfulness, Wickedness



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Bibliography

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