**Proverbs chapter 4 (Lesson #5)**

**The Path of Wisdom (and the Wicked)**

By way of reminder, the book of Proverbs is broken into multiple sections. We are still in that first section**.** The first section starts inchapter 1 and carrying all the way to chapter 9. In it we have **ten speeches** or **ten appeals** from a **Father to his son**.

Also in the first section are four appeals or four **monologues**, where **wisdom is personified as a lady**, we will call her **lady wisdom**. Here in chapters 1-9 lady wisdom speaks to us four separate times.

Here in chapter 4 we find **three speeches** or **three parental appeals** from **the father**, **appeal 5 (verses 1-9**), **appeal 6 (verses 10-19)** and **appeal 7 (verses 20-27)**.

The Bible and in particular the book of Proverbs says a lot about wisdom, in fact the Hebrew word translated wisdom **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah) (*khok-maw)’***, is used 39 times in the book of Proverbs verses.

Because the Proverbs speak a lot about wisdom, it also says a lot about the **importance of obtaining** and the **value of acquiring wisdom**.

**Knowledge** alone is not **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)** wisdom

**Experience** alone is not **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)** wisdom.

**Moralism** alone is not **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)** wisdom.

**Even discipleship** alone **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)** is not wisdom.

Wisdom **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)** can only be acquired in a **spirit of dependance upon God** and **following God’s principles and teaching**.

You cannot read enough to obtain God’s wisdom, you cannot memorize enough scripture to obtain God’s wisdom, even discipleship alone, will not get you to God’s wisdom, it is **those things done with a spirit of dependance on God…**

Wisdom is God’s knowledge and God’s experience, **put into action**. It is the **craft** or the **art** of **living well in God’s world**.

I hope as we consider these things, we see our **desperate need**, above **anything else**, **to acquire wisdom**. You and I need wisdom!

So if wisdom is more than knowledge, more than experience, more than moral behavior, even more than one-on-one discipling, if it is all these and more. **Practically, HOW DO WE ACQUIRE IT?**

The first step in acquiring wisdom is to **ask God. Really, that seems rather simplistic!**

**5**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5, ESV).

Let me show this working out.

**5**At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” **6**And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. **7**And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. **8**And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. **9**Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

**10**It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. **11**And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, **12**behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. **13**I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. **14**And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” (I Kin 3:5-14, ESV).

I hope you see the **wisdom that God provides** is tied to **God’s revelation**, but it is also connected to our **dependance on God** to get it.

Have you ever met someone and you were just blown away by their wisdom. I would argue, that is a person who has spent time crying out to God for wisdom.

Wisdom will be conveyed, as we see Solomon explain to his sons, when we **earnestly seek it**, when we **diligently pursue it** and when we **follow God’s precepts**, and when we **do so with a humble spirit of reliance on God**.

**So with that in mind, let’s dive into these three speeches:**

**A Grandfather’s Wise Instruction – Speech #5**

**4:1-4a**Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, **2**for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. **3**When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, **4**he taught me and said to me…

**Vs 1 –** There are number of introductions here in Proverbs. This is the first one addressed to “sons.” Here Solomon is not speaking to one of his sons, but to more than one, multiple sons.

Hear and give attention my sons. Are we daily in the scriptures hearing God’s word, giving attention to what God says?

**Vs 2 –** Solomon gives good precepts, of course if that was true, **how much truer of the word of God**, good precepts that we should not forsake.

**Vs 3-4a –** When Solomon was a son, when he was a boy, when he was a child, Solomon writes “he taught me”, my dad (David) said me, my dad said to me and now sons, I am saying to you:

Here is **multi-generational teaching**, originating with **grandpa David** now be shared with Solomon’s sons!

Then it is a long quote: Verses 4b-9.

**But it seems Solomon is sharing what he memorized from his father David’s teaching. Here it is:**

4b - “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. **5**Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

**Vs 4b-5-** Let you heart hold fast to my words, keep my commandments and live.Get wisdom, get insight.

 **6**Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

**Vs 6-** Do not turn your back to wisdom, love wisdom and she will guard you! Your mind should be drawing a picture here of lady wisdom protecting those who love her!

 **7**The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. **8**Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

**Vs 7-8 –** **Get wisdom**, **prize** wisdom, **exalt** wisdom in your heart and with your life, **embrace her**.

 **9**She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

**Vs 9 -** **When we do this wisdom will honor us**, wisdom will **show up in our lives**, wisdom will **be a crown on our heads**, if we **seek for and prize wisdom** above all things.

**Again, this is meant to be visualized**, Get wisdom, seek wisdom, prize her highly and imagine her, lady wisdom, bestowing on you a beautiful crown!

Here is the question, **do we pursue God,** do we cry out for **God’s wisdom** like it is **more valuable that any treasure**? Do we love it, **do we treasure it?** That is what Solomon is calling **his sons to** in this **fifth appeal**.

**QUESTIONS** or thoughts about the first speech?

**A Man-to-Man Talk About the Paths of Life - The Sixth Appeal**

**10**Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

**Hear my son!**

**Vs 10 –** The command to hear, to listen. The Hebrew word is **שָׁמַע‎ (shama‘) Listen up!** Accept and embrace the father’s words, for this is the promise of a long life. **What father wants to outlive his son? Walking in wisdom in God’s good world brings with it the possibility of a longer life.**

**11**I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. **12**When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

**Vs 11-12 –** Solomon tells his son I have taught you, I have led you in the paths or righteousness. If you follow this path you will not be hampered and if you run you will not stumble.

This the father says this is the path to **apply your feet to!**

**13**Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

**Vs 13 –** Keep a firm grasp on instruction, do not let go of her, guard her with your all for she is your life.

**Do we see wisdom like this, do we pursue it like this?**

 **14**Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. **15** Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. **16**For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. **17**For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

**Vs 14-17 -** Avoid the paths of the wicked, avoid them, for those that run on that path are wicked and violent. Hear your father as he speaks to his son. Hear your heavenly Father as He speaks to His son!

**18**But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. **19**The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

Vs 18 – The **juxtaposition is clear**, the path of the **righteous is like the dawn**, which gets brighter and brighter as the sun moves up on the horizon.

You walk this path and even on a bad day, it is a bright path, it is a path you are glad you are on.

Vs 19 – BUT, the way of the wicked is the exact opposite, it is devoid of light, it is a place of deep darkness and stumbling. Even when all is going fine, **you know you are on a dark path.**

The **father concludes this sixth speech**, seek wisdom stay on the path of light avoid the path of darkness.

**QUESTIONS** or thoughts about the sixth speech?

**Listen, Look, Keep, and Ponder - The Seventh Speech**

**As I review this final speech it is interesting to observe the advancement your ears, your eyes, and your heart there in verses 20-21.**

**20**My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. **21**Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

**Vs 20-21** Now for a moment picture you Solomon’s son, setting at the feet of Solomon. You are here at the feet of the wisest man in the Old Testament.

He says to you: Listen to what I am saying, tune your ears to hear my words, do not lose sight of them, but instead keep them with your innermost being, in your heart.

 **22**For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

**Vs 22 -** For they are life to those who find them, **does anyone else feel like that?** I mean like you were **not really living** until you found Jesus. I **have so many wasted years**, before my life really commenced, **which happened** **when I gave my life to the Son of God**.

You see the promise is not only of the good life today, but eternal life tomorrow.

More than life they are **healing for your flesh** (a healing that finds its final and utter consummation in the resurrection, for there is **no problem that a good resurrection cannot fix!**)

**23**Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

**Vs 23 –** Then the father looks you in the eye and says, **guard your heart**, **keep your heart**, for from your heart flows the **springs of life.**

The word **heart occurs 77 times** in the book of Proverbs. The heart is the real you, the inner man, your attitudes, your thoughts, your emotions, and your desires. The real inner you.

What John records that Jesus says In John 7 is extremely insightful: **37**On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **38**Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” **39**Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39, ESV).

Out of the heart of a believer flows **rivers of living water**, **springs of life**. Notice, Jesus makes a clear point about this verse in reference to the Holy Spirit. Life flows out of your heart, out of your attitudes, thoughts, emotions and desires.

The Holy Spirit brings out of each of us new things, things that are in line with the **fruit of the Spirit**.

There guard your heart. Watch your emotions, pay attention to your thoughts, sift them and make sure they are in line with the fruit of the Spirit. **KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL VIGILENCE.**

There is always something to be **angry about**, there is always something to be **afraid of**, there is **always a reason to be bitter**.

**But what would the Spirit say?** There is always a reason to **love**, there is always a reason to **forgive**, there is always a reason to be **joyful**, there is always a reason to **hope**.

**Keep your heart! Guard your heart!**

I want to do better this year at **guarding my emotions**, and guarding my thoughts. I want to do better this year at **keeping my heart**.

 **24**Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

Vs 24 – Put away crooked (lying) speech and put away devious or perverted talk.

 **25**Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. **26**Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. **27**Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

Vs 25-25 – Eyes forward and eyes on the path! Pay attention to the path, consider the path, ponder the path.

Do not swerve to the right or to the left. Turn your feet from evil.

**Three speeches from the Father**, but they are all about putting yourself under the instruction of God, on the path of God, reliant upon the Spirit of God.

For it is there, in that environment, that we will find wisdom **חָכְמָה‎ (chokmah)*. How to live well in God’s world in a way that glorifies HIM!***