

REROUTING

"EYES ON THE ROAD" PROVERBS 4:25-27

This Week's Core Competency

Single-mindedness – I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Matthew 6:33, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

A mountain climb or a wooded walk in extreme nature can be breathtaking. Peacefulness, serenity, and the sounds of wildlife can work wonders on your soul. But have you ever had this calm abruptly shift when you realize you have just lost your trail? You don't have to spend long in the rocks or trees to understand the importance of a well-defined trail. Getting off the beaten path may sound romantic or brave, but getting lost in the wilderness with no clear direction can range from frightening to deadly. Our GPS devices may assure us of a way through traffic, but they often fail on the wrong side of a mountain or in the darkness of tree cover.

Emerson is often quoted as boldly challenging the timid with: "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." This sounds great until the trail you

It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.

– Francis of Assisi

blaze leads you and others off a cliff and into an abyss. For most hikers, finding and keeping a well-established trail insures the best of hiking experiences. A trail saves time. When you have only so many hours of daylight to get back to camp, you don't want to be trailblazing your daylight away while getting lost.

Good trails also save resources. Swinging a machete might be fun for a while, but hacking and hiking take twice the effort and leave you exhausted long before your journey is ended.

Most important, good trails save lives. Getting lost is not fun, especially if other campers are depending upon you. Walking in circles, walking into hazards and walking where others have not is not a laughing matter, especially if you cannot find your way home.

If you have limitless time, inexhaustible resources, and multiple lives, then you have the luxury of blazing your own trail. If you want to get to your destination saving the most time, resources and limbs, then look for a well-defined path. Staying on a good path may well save your life. Finding that Good Path is essential for your soul, as well. Take caution; others may be following you on your path without you even knowing it.

day **1** **ENCOUNTER** – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Proverbs 4:25-27

25 Let your eyes look straight ahead;
fix your gaze directly before you.

26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.

27 Do not turn to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.

Cf., other proverbs using “path,” some of which use “way” also.

7:25

8:2, 20

10:9

11:5

12:28

15:10, 19, 24

16:29

21:16

22:5

23:19

28:10

1:15, 19

2:9, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20

3:6, 17

4:11, 14, 18, 26

5:6, 8, 21

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

*Circle each word that has to do with *sight* in vv. 25-27.

*Underline each word that has to do with *walking* in vv. 25-27.

*Draw lines between the words that are *parallel* (meaning the same thing) in v. 25.

*Double underline the words in v. 25 that provide *emphasis*.

*Draw lines between the words that are *parallel* (meaning the same thing) in v. 26.

*Double underline the words in v. 26 that provide *emphasis*.

*Box the words that provide *warning* in v. 27.

*Draw a circle with a bar across it around each thing to *avoid* in v. 27.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read all of Proverbs chapter 4. List some big ideas mentioned in this chapter.
2. Proverbs 4:25-27 is part of a larger unit (4:20-27). How does 4:20-24 relate to 4:25-27?
3. What does sight have to do with wisdom? (Prov. 4:25)
4. If you did not follow the advice of Proverbs 4:25, what would your life look like?
5. What happens to a person who does not give attention to where his or her feet land/walk?
6. What does it mean to be steadfast? Provide a practical example of being steadfast.
7. What is so wrong with turning to the right or to the left? Why the caution against this?
8. What is meant by the warning of keeping your foot from evil?
9. God is not mentioned in Proverbs 4:25-27 (nor in the rest of Proverbs 4). How is God present in these commands even though He is not mentioned?
10. Distractions (4:25), discouragements (4:26), dangers (4:27) - what is there in your life right now that would fall into one of these categories? What could you do change your outcome?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The Book of Proverbs is unique in biblical literature due to its subject matter and its method of delivery. The subject matter is wisdom and the avoidance of its opposite, folly. The style of the book is aphorism and cleverly crafted sayings. This collection of short sayings gives advice, warnings, and helpful observations about life and the way things work. The first nine chapters in Proverbs are the words of a loving father, giving advice to his younger children. Sections following this are sayings from Solomon and other great thinkers. "Solomon's own proverbs are deferred for the good reason that the reader needs preparation if he is to use them fruitfully" (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC, 235).

Our passage (Prov. 4:25-27) is found in the middle of this nine-chapter collection of fatherly advice. There are warnings in these nine chapters about bad ways, bad habits and bad people. There are also exhortations to find the goodness of wisdom-good ways, good companions and good practices. In Proverbs 4, this goodness versus evil motif is framed in the imagery of a "way" or "path." The reader is encouraged to follow the good path of wisdom and avoid the dangerous path of evil. Specifically, Proverbs 4:20-27 prescribes a "physical examination" of sorts, making sure that numerous body parts are accounted for and are exhibiting wise actions and behaviors. Central to all of this "body-talk" is the mention of "the heart" in Proverbs 4:23. Protecting the heart from evil and its practice is perhaps the most important pursuit for all followers of wisdom.

One way to guard or protect our hearts from the harms of evil is to make sure we are headed in the right direction. Proverbs 4:25 encourages us as followers of wisdom to focus on things that are straight ahead. The idea is intensified with the idea of setting our "gaze" directly ahead, avoiding things that would distract or entice. We are inundated with distractions in our culture. There is always something competing for our attention. Pursuit of wisdom and the vibrancy of life will take focus and will require us to overcome the distractions that would keep us from pursuing wisdom with all our hearts (Prov. 4:4). Looking "straight" ahead (Prov. 4:25) leads to "straight paths" (Prov. 4:11).

Along with avoiding distractions (Proverbs 4:25), we are also challenged to take precautions as to how

we journey. Proverbs 4:26 challenges us to carefully strategize regarding our path. Proverbs 4:14 warns against walking in the path of the wicked. Proverbs 4:18-19 contrast the blessings and curses of landing on the wrong path. We need to avoid the discouragements of darkness and unevenness on a path of evil. Giving careful thought to our path involves the imagery of road building (Isaiah 40). Preparing a path by removing obstacles, valleys and pitfalls better ensures a secure journey. Planning a path is just as important as traversing a path. If a way is known to be too hazardous, perhaps we need to find another path. Building and establishing a way of wisdom is much better than just hoping we survive.

To finish the fatherly travel advice, the writer of Proverbs 4 encourages his protégés to avoid the dangers of evil. Swerving or be pulled to an extreme (right or left) is a constant hazard for us. Rather than lurching toward some alternate path, we are encouraged to keep or turn ourselves (our foot) away from evil. The path of evil is dark and full of stumbling blocks (Prov 4:19). The path of evil is tiresome and void of rest or satisfaction (Prov. 4:16-17). Evil ways only bring harm to self and others (Prov 4:17). Avoid the path of evil at all costs.

According to the fatherly advice of Proverbs 1-9, there are only two paths—one of wisdom or one of evil. I fear (I include myself with a capital "I") we are too casual with the paths we travel. Not wanting to appear legalistic or prudish, we often tolerate evil in our daily habits, thinking we are too mature or too sophisticated to be harmed by temptations, violence or vice. We can be easily sidetracked by seemingly benign distractions. Discouragements can trip us up and make us unsure and unstable. Darkness can cause us to swerve and turn away from God's ways. Self-control is often more about using my God-given power to get on and stay on the right path. I may not have enough power to dodge all the evil potholes of a bad path, but God has all the power I need.

Set your plans on following God's path. Be determined and steadfast in His wisdom. Don't let yourself be sidetracked with minor or major evils.

The Message of the Passage

Keep moving forward on God's path of wisdom, avoiding the distractions, discouragements and dangers of evil.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the first two "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“Eyes on the Road”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 25 **straight** "Uprightness of conduct symbolized by straightforwardness of look, in contrast with the devious and crooked ways of wickedness (4:24). The serious man fixes his gaze on the goal and suffers nothing to turn it aside" (Crawford Toy, *Book of Proverbs*, ICC, 98).

v. 25 **gaze** Lit., "eyelids is here put metaphorically for 'gaze.' When a man's gaze is fixed intently upon a goal, his eyelids are naturally unmovable" (G. Currie Martin, *Proverbs*, Century Bible, 47). 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" (NET Bible, *Notes on Proverbs 4*, 54).

v. 26 **careful thought** ". . . 'make . . . a plane, solid road in life.'" The figure is taken from the preparation of a highway for a king or an army (Isa. 40:3-4)-hills are cut down and valleys filled, crooked roads are made straight and rough places smooth, so that there shall be no need to turn aside from the highroad. Even so must a man arrange his path in life, walking in the straight and smooth way of rectitude" (Toy, 98-99). The same idea in a negative example is found in Proverbs 5:6, where an evil person is not able to consider a better way. We need to be living in such a way that our paths are not crooked or unethical. A solid path keeps us from stumbling ourselves and from being a stumbling block to others. Clearing the road hazards will take careful thought and determination.

v. 26 **path** Found repeatedly in Proverbs 4 (4:11,14,18), this word gives the imagery of route or road that people travel. This imagery is a picture of life and a helpful way to think about our time here on Earth as a walk or path of service and gratitude. "Two paths are set before us... the way of wisdom and the path (or way) of the wicked... the two paths are compared" (Kidner, 897).

v. 26 **steadfast** I.e., "establish, build a foundation or structure." In Proverbs 3:19 the LORD established the heavens. The term is one of strength, faithfulness and endurance.

v. 27 **turn** I.e., "to stretch out, extend or lean towards or away or to bend down." Same word used in 4:5. "The father ends this instruction by repeating his father's charge to not swerve either to the right or left... In the view of the teachers, one 'turns' to do evil" (Paul Kopak, *The NIV Application Commentary: Proverbs*, 4:27).

v. 27 **keep** I.e., "turn aside, go away, remove yourself from." Actively seek to remove yourself from the presence, practice or celebration of evil.

v. 27 **foot** I.e., external body part (in contrast with the internal heart, 4:16) that is found in the path or the way. The foot is the last member of the body mentioned in Proverbs 4. Ears, eyes and heart are mentioned earlier. A foot is on the path and is symbolic of the direction a body is traveling. Keeping your foot from evil is keeping your entire body and heart from evil.

v. 27 **evil** I.e., associated with evil people (Prov. 4:14), evil consumptions (Prov. 4:17), wicked ways (Prov. 4:19), and corrupt words (Prov. 4:24). Keeping yourself from evil would involve keeping yourself free from these expressions or celebrations of evil.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

It is with great relief and joy that I report that my youngest child now has his driver's license and is on the road. While having driving teenagers is a source of concern for me, I am so thankful that the process is over. We coached our teenagers through the at home driver's education course. While it was certainly less expensive and gave us an opportunity to watch their progress closely, it was grueling! I am pretty sure I now yell out, "Keep your eyes on the road!" in my sleep. I understand how the things going on around them were distracting. There was a cool car that passed going too fast. A cute dog was sitting on the side of the road. It's hard to pay attention when you are looking for a Chick-fil-A. Or, if someone you know pulls up next to you at a stoplight you can forget to go when the light turns green. All of these distractions can easily cause us to take our eyes off the road. But in order to stay safe, we must focus on the road. We have to know where we are going, how to get there and avoid distractions. While my driving instructor days are over, my role as spiritual instructor is not. I am committed this year to helping my kids keep their eyes on the path of righteousness. I'm praying for you as you do the same!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Proverbs 4:25-27

1. Where are you to fix your eyes?
2. Fill in the blanks. "Make _____ paths for your feet and take only ways that are _____." (v. 26)

What Do You Think

1. What does it mean to make "level paths for your feet" and how do you do that?
2. What are some things that could distract you from following Jesus?

What R U Going To Do

Ask your parents to help you come up with a plan to read your Bible and memorize your memory verses this year. Growing in your relationship with Jesus will not happen unless you put some effort in it! Commit to it this year!!

Core Comp

Single-mindedness - I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

Memory Verse

Heb 12:1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed Scrolls _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

**Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org**

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

Eric Wright (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary) guest author.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.