

STICKS + STONES

"WORDS FROM THE HEART"

PROVERBS 18:21; 4:23

This Week's Core Competency

Self-control – I have the power, through Christ, to control myself. Titus 2:11-13, *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

Self-control and discipline are related ideas. That said, if wisdom could be acquired solely by praying for it, the Bible's wisdom books in general and the book of Proverbs in particular with its specific commands and instructions would be pointless. Nevertheless, many prefer the words of James, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (1:5) to the words of the father and teacher in the book of Proverbs, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (Pr 4:7). There's a price to pay for wisdom, it seems; too bad, too many would rather pray than pay that price! When it comes to getting wisdom, Proverbs teaches that it isn't acquired by chance or by accident but, as one writer puts it, "by *catechism*" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs*, NICOT, 287 italics added). It has to be taught and learned.

A major part of godliness lies in dogged attentiveness to familiar truths.

– Derek Kidner

True, "the LORD gives wisdom" (2:6), but true, as well, it's acquired by effort (2:1-5). It comes in large part by paying attention to the instruction of the father/teacher directed to his son/s. In the opening nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, this wise father repeatedly tells his sons to "listen," "accept," "do not forget," "keep," "pay attention," "gain," "lay hold of," "do not forsake," "store up," and "guard" his words. In one particularly poignant passage, he declares: "When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, 'Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and he will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor'" (4:3-9). An implication of all of this is that giving and getting wisdom is a family affair involving the exercise of discipline on everyone's part.

One author writes, "The father (and mother), not the professional teacher or the pastor or government official, has the most profound responsibility and opportunity to lead a young man [or young woman] in the right way. Only a parent can implore the young man to do what is right with the depth of love and concern displayed here [Pr 4:1-27]. This text more than any other brings out this urgency of parental love. In addition, this passage illustrates how wisdom is an inheritance that may be passed

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from generation to generation. It can preserve a whole family line through the passing of years. It is, however, an inheritance *that each generation must choose to receive*. If the chain is broken and the way of wisdom is rejected, the results will be disastrous for the family" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 86, italics added).

Sons inherit all kinds of things from their fathers—virtues and vices. Who hasn't heard the adage, "Like father; like son" or "The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree?" What did you inherit from your dad—your ambition, sense of humor, love for the game, career interest, work ethic, temper, good looks, a bad habit, or what? Ideally he shared godly wisdom with you. Proverbs assumes that that's what dads do. But dads can't faithfully give what they haven't received; neither can their sons get what their dads don't have. The solution to this problem resides with fathers rather than their sons. Fathers who aren't full of wisdom can top up their tank by playing the role of the son in Proverbs who listens to the words of the father. Should dads pray for wisdom? Of course, but praying alone isn't enough. Dads need to acquire wisdom through their own disciplined pursuit of it, a pursuit that begins by reading, memorizing, and meditating on biblical wisdom, and teach their children to do the same.

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

READ:

Proverbs 18:21

*The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 4:23

*20 My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.*

*21 Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;*

*22 for they are life to those who find them
and health to one's whole body.*

*23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.*

*24 Keep your mouth free of perversity;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.*

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

*26 Give careful thought to the 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.*

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

* Circle "them" and "they" in vv. 21, 22.

* Bracket "turn" in v. 20 and "keep" in v. 21.

* Underline v. 21a.

* Highlight "heart" in vv. 21, 23.

* Circle "health" in v. 22.

* Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 22, 23.

* Circle "guard" in v. 23.

* Double underline the various body parts mentioned in vv. 24-27.

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. Identify the implied "father" and "son" in this lecture.
2. To what do the pronouns "them" (v. 21) and "they" (v. 22) refer?
3. What makes the father's claim in verse 22 true? (Cf., verse 11.)
4. Why should the son "listen closely" to his father?
5. Verse 23 serves as the hinge (or "janus") linking verses 20-22 to verses 24-27. How so?
6. The term "heart" is used *figuratively* in verses 21 and 23. To what does it refer?
7. Put what "guard your heart" means in your own words.
8. The son should guard his heart because it is the "wellspring of life." Put what that means in your own words.
9. Explain the relationship of verses 24-27 to verse 23.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about why Ryan Lochte needs to hear the message of this passage.

day 3

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

Proverbs 4:20-27 contains the father/teacher's seventh lecture to his son/student on the virtue of wisdom's way versus the vice of the way of the wicked. Before looking at the details of these verses, an overview of the entire lecture and its place in the opening chapters of Proverbs will no doubt be helpful. In his first lecture, the father warns his son against the wicked (1:10-19), graphically presenting their reprehensible actions by portraying them as cold-blooded murderers of an innocent person, men "who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways" (v. 13), or in other words, men who leave the path of wisdom to walk in the way of foolishness (cf., 4:13-19). He then goes on to say that neither they nor those who walk in the way of the adulteress, that is, those who walk in the way of foolishness personified, attain life (1:16-19).

In his seventh lecture, the father/teacher echoes the same theme, placing his emphasis on the virtue of wisdom when he tells his son to pay attention to his wise words, because "they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body" (v. 22). He admonishes the youth to walk straight ahead on the straight path and to not swerve from it either to the right or to the left. On the structure of the passage, one commentator writes: "This unified poem consists of the typical introduction, including address, admonitions to heed the teaching (vv. 20-21) with substantiating motivations (v. 22), and the lesson to dedicate his heart (v. 23), words (v. 24), attention (v. 25), and actions (vv. 26-27) to the straight way" (Waltke, 295).

Verse 23 serves as the *hinge* verse of this passage that looks *backward* to verses 20-22 and *forward* to verses 24-27. The repetition of term "heart" links it to the preceding verses, while the phrase "wellspring of life" links it to the following verses. In the preceding verses, the father tells his son to "tail" wisdom; don't let it out of your sight, because wise living holds the key to life and health. Living wisely is a matter of life and death, so to speak—but not solely in the sense of survival. One writer explains: "Among the many promises of life and warnings of death in Proverbs some are to be taken in the narrowest sense, as teaching that sound conduct and the blessing that goes with it tend to prolong a man's days, and that evil tends to shorten them. 'Receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many' (4:10; cf. 3:2;

9:11). But often the terms that accompany them show that 'life' and 'death' are to be understood qualitatively, and at various levels" (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC, 53). The same author then goes on to discuss different facets of life and death (53-56). The term "health," parallel to the term "life," suggests both wisdom's *restorative* and *preventative* power. Wisdom is capable of restoring the fullness of life, on the one hand, and preventing its loss in the first place, on the other.

That said, once wisdom is stored in the heart, the center of one's being, the heart must be guarded. In other words, stored wisdom must be used to keep the heart from going astray. After all, the heart is the "wellspring of life;" it is the "source from which life erupts" (Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 22, *Proverbs*, 28). On the use of "heart" in scripture, one commentator explains: "'Heart,' here as always, refers not to the physical organ but to the mind and even the whole personality of the individual. It is 'the wellspring of life' in that the capacity to live with joy and vigor ultimately comes from within and not from circumstances. The corrupt heart draws one down to the grave, but Wisdom protects the heart from that corruption" (Garrett, 88). The metaphor implies not only that life has its fountains in the heart, "but also that the direction which it takes is determined by the heart" (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 6, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, 115).

In the following verses, the father tells his son how to use wisdom to guard his heart. The metaphoric use of body parts permeates his words. According to one writer, "It is not enough just to restrain the heart. One must also keep track of the body's members through which the inner life manifests itself" (Waltke, 299). The mouth is given pride of place. First, the son must "put away" crooked speech and devious talk, e.g., "cynical chatter, fashionable grumbles, flippancy, and half-truths" (Kidner, 68). He must "fix his gaze" on the straight path of wisdom before him. "As the mouth must not deviate, so the eyes must not swerve, looking neither to the right nor to the left" (Waltke, 300). He must stay on level, firm road of wisdom rather than take the hazardous back roads of foolishness—being careful always not to swerve to the right or the left.

The Message of the Passage

*Use wisdom to guard your heart because your heart
dictates the course of your life.*

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 three "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?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 21 **them, they** I.e., "my words" (v. 20), the father's words of wisdom mentioned in verse 20.
vv. 20, 21 **turn, keep** "Do not allow them to depart [cf., NIV, "Do not let them out of your sight"] as elsewhere, escalates the admonition from accepting [cf., "turn your ear to my words"] to retaining the words (see 1:8; 3:13, 18, 21; 4:4, 6, 10, 13)" (Waltke, 297).

v. 21a . . . **out of your sight** "The sayings/words are personified as taking feet and walking away from the son" (297). The son is commanded to "tail" wisdom as it were.

vv. 21, 23 **heart** "'Heart' (v. 23) usually means 'mind' (3:3; 6:32a; 7:7b; et al.), but it has a much broader meaning that includes the emotions (15:15, 30), the will (11:20; 14:14), and even the whole inner person (3:5). Here the affections are particularly in view. Verse 23, in conjunction with verses 20-22, helps us see that the life in view is not some prize that one gains all at once. It is rather a growing spiritual vitality that empowers the wise person and enables him or her to reach out and help others effectively (cf. Mark 7:15-23; Luke 6:45; John 4:14 and especially 7:38). One's words (v. 24) reflect his or her heart's affections. We must be single-minded in our pursuit of wisdom (v. 25; cf. Ps. 101:3; 119:37). We must also give attention to practical planning so we end up taking the steps we need to take to arrive at our intended destination (vv. 26-27; cf. Heb. 12:13)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Proverbs, 2016 ed., 30, www.soniclight.com). "It is often paraphrased as 'mind,' since it does have an intellectual component. But it is also the basic orientation of a person, embracing desires, emotions, and attitude . . . The heart is imaged as a water source from which life erupts" (Murphy, 28).

v. 22 **health** "The parallel to 'life,' remedy (*marpe'*; see 3:8) entails restoration to full life that has been lost (see 3:18). Sound teaching preserves a person better than medicine, though the two should not be pitted against each other" (297). Wisdom is like preventative medicine.

v. 22 **for** "For (*ki*) typically introduces the argumentation (1:9; 3:2; 4:2)" (Waltke, 297).

v. 23 **guard** This verse looks both ways—backward and forward. One commentator calls it "a janus," after the Roman god depicted with two opposite faces (Waltke, 295). "*Mismar* refers to a place under guard, a prison (Gen. 42:19), or standing guard, the sense here. In that sense it may mean either to keep a sharp look out to keep someone or something in custody and so restrain it as a prisoner (Gen. 41:10; Lev. 24:12) or as a dragon (Job 7:12), or to protect it from an enemy without, as Nehemiah's guards protected Jerusalem (Neh. 4:22[16]; 7:3). The command guard (or protect; *nasar*; see 2:8) has the same ambiguity. To judge from 13:6, with a person as subject and a body members as object it means to protect or restrain from doing wrong. 'Whoever guards (*noser*) his mouth' means to keep the tongue from speaking evil. Ahiqar (98) uses 'watch over' in the same way: 'More than all watchfulness watch thy mouth, and [over] what thou h[earst] harden they heart.' This is probably the sense with your heart (see pp. 90-92)—that is, restrain your heart from potting evil (see 6:14, 18). The command is a metonymy of effect. By keeping the command within the heart (see 4:21b), it remains guarded against evil intentions" (Waltke, 298).

v. 24 **mouth, talk** "After the thoughts come the words (cf. Lk. 6:45c; Rom. 10:10); yet it is not enough to take care of the first and let the second take care of themselves. 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" (Kidner, 68).

v. 25 **eyes, feet** "Verses 25-27 resume the metaphor of road. The eyes must give undivided attention to the right path, and the foot must not deviate from it. The two notions are inseparable . . . The adverbial phrase straight ahead, assumes that the path in front of the son is straight and thus aims to concentrate his gaze on the straight way of wisdom concretized in the father's teaching . . . Verse 26 positively admonishes a commitment to the right way, and v. 27 warns against deviating from it for evil, matching the mouth and eyes in not deviating from what is straight" (Waltke, 300).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

This week's proverb reminds us that all of our words and actions come from what is stored up in our hearts. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus told the Pharisees that the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. How can we help our kids learn to use words that build others up and act in ways that are pleasing to the Father and us? It all begins in their heart. This means more than us leading kids to "ask Jesus into their heart." This is about helping them understand their fallen nature and hopelessness without Christ and then leading them to dependence on Him as a Christ-follower. (1) God is Creator and in control of everything. (Col 1:16-17); (2) We are separated from Him because of our sin. (Ro 3:23; 6:23); (3) God sent Jesus to rescue us from the punishment we deserved. (Jn 3:16; Eph 2:8-9); (4) Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again conquering sin and death. (Ro 5:8; 2Co 5:21); (5) Respond to God with a "Yes! I will follow you!" (Jn 14:6; Ro 10:9, 10, 13). Use these texts along with your personal story to have the most important conversation you will ever have with your child. For additional resources, stop by the KidPix store or go to the Children's Ministry page on the Pantego website. I'm praying for you as you lead your child to Christ!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Pr 18:21; 4:23

1. This is our 3rd week in Proverbs 18:21. Can you recite it from memory?
2. What are you to guard in Proverbs 4:23?
3. Why are you to guard your heart?

What Do You Think

1. Read Matthew 12:34-37.
2. Where does Jesus say all of our words come from?
3. How can you make sure your heart is full of good things?

What R U Going To Do

Write a short story about your friendship with Jesus. When and how did it start? What does the friendship mean to you? What do you to make your friendship better? Add pictures too! Bring your mini book to church for 5 extra tokens!

Core Comp

Self Control - I can take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 18:21 - *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

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

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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.



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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.