

## Day 368 – WEDNESDAY: February 14<sup>th</sup>

### Proverbs 4

#### Proverbs 4:1-27 NKJV

Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding; For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law. When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you." Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. My son, give attention to my

words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For 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. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading program states: “The fourth exhortation (Proverbs 4:1-27) is initially addressed to “my children” or “my sons” (NIV), but later returns to the singular address. This plurality may denote Solomon addressing multiple children. Yet it also may be a nod to the fact that the words here are intended as a collective address for a broader audience and are to be part of the instruction of all homes.

We earlier read verses 4-9 in conjunction with the life of David, as these words—if this chapter was written by Solomon, as it appears to be—constitute David’s instructions to him. Wisdom is exalted here as the principal thing to pursue, keep faith with, love, exalt and embrace. “The metaphor of Proverbs 4:1-9 is that of obtaining a wife, and verse 9 is a reference to the wedding when the bride placed a garland on the head of the bridegroom” (Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, 1988, p. 169, note on 4:1–5:6). That is, David seemed to be telling Solomon to, in a figurative sense, marry wisdom. And David’s instruction was heeded initially. When presented with a choice of blessings from God, Solomon asked for wisdom and God was extremely pleased. Sadly, Solomon’s later marriages to

foreign women, who led him away from God, was a betrayal of his figurative marriage to wisdom.

We may notice that there is no mention of God here, but He is of course integral to the true wisdom that sons are exhorted to seek. The *NIV Application Commentary* has this to say: “It is noteworthy that in contrast with chapter 3, there are no references to the presence or teaching of Yahweh, but this does not indicate that an earlier, nonreligious form of wisdom instruction has been preserved here. If anything, the verbal link between the father’s ‘instruction’ (Proverbs 4:1, *musar*) and Yahweh’s ‘discipline’ (Proverbs 3:11, also *musar*) indicates a tradition of teaching that begins with God and is passed from generation to generation. A series of additional verbal links suggests that the first half of this chapter is to be read in relation to the last half of the preceding chapter. Here is a chart that compares the discipline of Yahweh (Proverbs 3:12) with the instruction of the two fathers (Proverbs 4:1, Proverbs 4:4, Proverbs 4:10):

**Proverbs 3;**

3:12 Yahweh’s *musar* like a father’s;  
3:13 Wisdom and understanding;  
3:22 Life and grace;  
3:23 Safe way, not stumble;  
3:24 Sweet sleep;  
3:25 Ruin of wicked;  
3:26 Yahweh your confidence;  
3:31 Do not envy violent man;  
3:31 Do not choose his ways;

**& Proverbs 4;**

4:1-3 The father’s *musar*;  
4:5-7 Wisdom and understanding;  
4:9-10 Grace and life;  
4:11-12 Straight way, not stumble;  
4:16 No sleep for the wicked;  
4:19 Paths of wicked darkness;  
4:18 Path of righteous bright;  
4:17 They drink wine of violence;  
4:14-15 Do not walk in the way of evil men;

“The significance of the comparison becomes clear when we observe that there is no mention of Yahweh in chapter 4 whereas he takes center stage in chapter 3. In chapter 3 we have the view from above; Yahweh is the one who teaches and disciplines,

looks out and protects, and blesses the righteous. Chapter 4 gives us the view from below, in which fathers teach sons to observe the ways of both the righteous and wicked. It is a signal that this teaching comes from God. By placing chapters 3 and 4 next to one another, the sages who gave us these instructions [most likely Solomon here] meant to show that it would be a mistake to separate the wisdom instruction of the home from the wisdom teaching of the Lord. The picture of Yahweh teaching and correcting as a loving father (Proverbs 3:12) makes a theological statement that is key to all of the instructions in Proverbs 1–9, revealing the larger picture of what the parents are doing as they teach their son(s). They pass on what they have received from Yahweh, the source, the beginning of wisdom teaching.

Therefore, the stress in this chapter is on the transmission of wisdom” (note on Proverbs 4:1-27).

Note also the emphasis on the “path” or “way” one chooses to go. To get to the right destination, one must stay exactly on the only path that leads there. Verse 18 is especially significant and inspiring. The end of the chapter (verses 20-27) tells us to keep all these principles firmly in mind and to watch where we’re going so as to stay on the right path.” [END]