

IN ALL YOUR WAYS

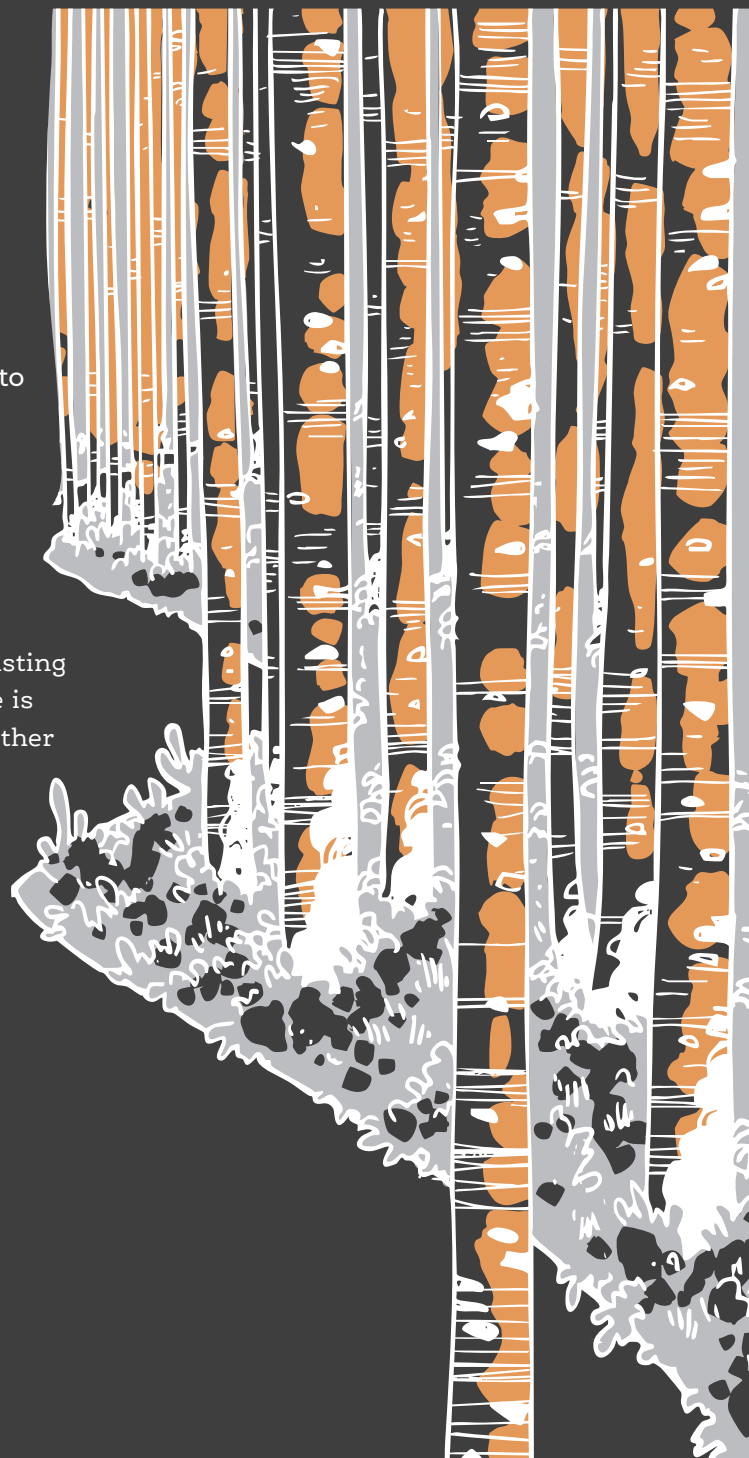
MAIN POINT.

The only way to faithfully walk with Christ is to hold on to His Word.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God's path is a path toward knowing and trusting in Jesus. He is the only path to follow for He is the only way to the Father (**John 14:6**). No other path leads to God or to eternal peace.



STRAIGHT PATHS

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Proverbs 1—Proverbs 4

AVOID THE WICKED PATH

PROVERBS 4:10-19

10 Listen, my son. Accept my words, and you will live many years. 11 I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered; when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Hold on to instruction; don't let go. Guard it, for it is your life. 14 Keep off the path of the wicked; don't proceed on the way of evil ones. 15 Avoid it; don't travel on it. Turn away from it, and pass it by. 16 For they can't sleep unless they have done what is evil; they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. 17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. 18 The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday. 19 But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don't know what makes them stumble.

GUARD YOUR HEART

PROVERBS 4:20-27

20 My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings. 21 Don't lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. 22 For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body. 23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. 24 Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don't let your lips talk deviously. 25 Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead. 26 Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established. 27 Don't turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

The only way to faithfully walk with Christ is to hold on to His Word.

Leaders: Even as leaders, we must never stop guarding our hearts (Prov. 4:23); this command doesn't expire. May you be reminded of that truth as you prepare to teach this week.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

AVOID THE WICKED PATH

PROVERBS 4:11

"Wisdom is a path or course of life. Wisdom is a progressive thing; it is not something you arrive at. This is very similar to the New Testament idea of sanctification, where we 'walk' in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25). You are being conformed into the image of Christ, and this will take your whole life. You start down the path through Jesus; after all, he is 'the way' (John 14:6). You must know the person of Wisdom to walk in the way of wisdom (Prov. 4:13–14)."¹⁶

GUARD YOUR HEART

PROVERBS 4:20-23

"All one thinks, decides, plans, does and says flows like streams from one common source—the heart. That is why one must keep his heart true to God's Word, pure and unpolluted by the world's poisonous springs. Jesus often referred to the heart as the basic source of one's life. In one notable passage He spoke of the heart as a storehouse from which everything comes; in another, it is pictured as the source of everything that defiles. Because of its central place, what your heart is like is what you are like. Therefore, Solomon insists that the believer must guard it from every evil influence; guard it so that nothing good that the Spirit has done in the heart may be warped or lost."¹⁷

PROVERBS 4:20-27

"Metaphoric use of body parts permeates this text. The eyes are to stay fixed on right teaching (vv. 21, 25) as the feet are to stay in the right path (vv. 26–27). The mouth and lips must shun using twisted words (v. 24). Above all, the heart must be guarded by sound doctrine (vv. 21, 23). If the son listens to his father, the whole body will be healthy (v. 22). The heart, verse 23 says, is 'the wellspring of life.' '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."¹⁸



CONTEXT

Background: Proverbs was partially written by Solomon, but other authors contributed to it as well. In it, Solomon shared wisdom with his son (and with all believers). Proverbs falls into the category of wisdom literature and includes practical truths about subjects like money, friendship, wisdom, marriage, sex, and pride, to name a few. One of the larger themes centers on wisdom, teaching that all wisdom begins with the fear and knowledge of God (Prov. 1:7). Many believers gravitate to Proverbs because of its practical, direct content.

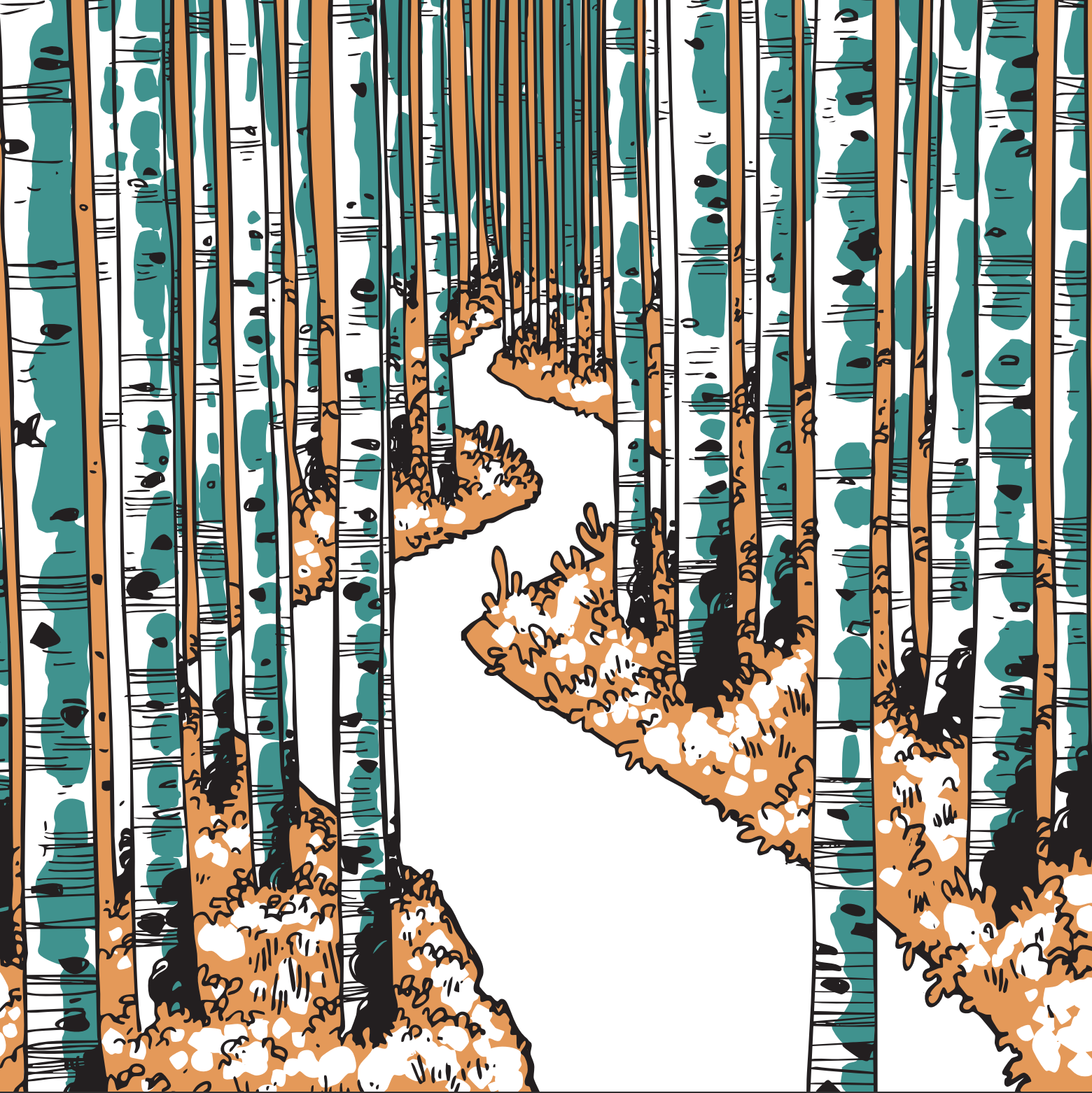
THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Discipleship

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to affect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US NEVER TO STOP GUARDING OUR HEARTS. KEEP US FROM THE PATHS WHICH DON'T HONOR YOU. WE COMMIT TO WALKING IN YOUR TRUTH AND TO LIVING ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.



KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Last week, we talked about how our lives are evidence of whether or not we follow Christ. Where did you struggle last week to walk in this truth? Were there moments when others may not have seen the evidence?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

TRUSTED ADVICE

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHO DO YOU GO TO FOR ADVICE? WHY?**
- **HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU CAN TRUST SOMEONE'S ADVICE?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN GIVEN BAD ADVICE AND FOLLOWED IT?**

The people we go to for advice are important. They can either influence us to make good, godly decisions, or they may influence us to make sinful mistakes. We must be careful in considering the voices we listen to and the paths we choose to walk.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

If you've walked with God for any length of time, then you probably know how it feels to get off track. Even when we try our best to follow Christ, we still fall short and fall into sin. If we're not careful, we let this become a permanent state instead of a slip up. There's a difference. We all sin because our lives here are a constant battle between our flesh and the Spirit living within us (Gal. 5:17). At times, though, we stop battling. Instead of confessing, repenting, and moving forward, we sit down and give up. We decide that because we've stumbled, trying again is pointless. This isn't how God wants us to think. His Word gives us instructions about sin and stumbling because He remembers we are dust (Ps. 103:14). When we sin, we don't have to let it become a pattern. God has equipped us with what we need to fight against sin and Satan (Eph. 6:10-18); we simply must use it.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

The only way to faithfully walk with Christ is to hold on to His Word.

AVOID THE WICKED PATH

READ PROVERBS 4:10-19



HOW CAN LISTENING TO THE ADVICE OF OTHERS BOTH HELP AND HURT US?

Many people describe the book of Proverbs as a book of wise sayings. In much of the book, Solomon shared wisdom with his son. Solomon spoke from life experiences when he walked with God and also from times when he walked in the ways of the world. **As believers, we must be careful whose advice we apply. God will place people in our lives to guide us in godly wisdom; we can imitate them in following Jesus, and this is part of our discipleship.** But listening to the wrong voices can quickly lead us down a harmful path—a path that leads us away from the Lord.



WHY DO WE STUMBLE IN OUR WALK WITH GOD? WHAT DO THESE VERSES SHOW YOU ABOUT NOT FALLING?

Many of us have experienced what it's like to stumble in our walk with the Lord. We're walking with our eyes fixed on Christ, and then we look away for a moment and trip. **We stumble because we take our eyes off God and His Word. Instead of seeking and walking in wisdom even when it's difficult, we walk in the ways of this world.** We follow our own sinful desires rather than surrendering them to God. **If we want to walk steadily and faithfully, we can't take our eyes off Christ. He has to be our aim—the focal point of our lives.**

INSTEAD OF COMPLETELY *AVOIDING* THE EVIL PATH (V. 15), WHAT DO WE TYPICALLY DO? WHY DO WE THINK IT'S SAFE TO STEP ONTO THIS PATH?

Solomon's instructions here are clear: walk in the opposite direction of the evil path. Avoid it. Don't go near it. We often take a different approach when dealing with sin though; we walk right up to it and put our toes against the line we know we shouldn't cross. **We get as close as possible to sin's path without stepping across the line. Why? Well, many of us do this because we're afraid of missing out on what everyone else is experiencing. At the heart of this behavior is a fear that God is withholding something from us, and we aren't satisfied in Him.** So, we toy with the idea of sin until, eventually, we step onto the path. That path is never safe. It only leads to destruction and devastation. It always leads us away from our loving Father. Why would we want to get close enough to anything which could lead us this way? Instead, we can trust God's instructions to us. He isn't withholding anything from us. He's directing us toward life and light and away from "the darkest gloom" (v. 19).

GUARD YOUR HEART

READ PROVERBS 4:20-27



READ MARK 7:21-23. WHAT CONNECTION DID JESUS MAKE TO OUR HEARTS?

Jesus often built upon the idea that our actions reveal what's in our hearts. **He explained that sin originates in our hearts from our own evil desires. If we're going to grow to be more like Jesus, then we have to guard our hearts.** We have to protect our hearts because they have the ability to lead our minds, actions, words, and so on.



WHAT DO YOU THINK IT LOOKS LIKE TO GUARD YOUR HEART?

Think of something you love dearly. You probably protect it from harm. To guard our hearts means that we protect it from the things that could harm it. **We guard our heart when we are selective about what has access to it. We don't give anything access to our heart that could lead us away from the Lord.** Practically, this could look like being careful with what you watch and listen to, with the people you surround yourself with, with the places you go. Guarding your heart may mean that you don't take part in listening to gossip. It could mean that you don't entertain feelings of jealousy. **Guarding our heart requires intentional action on our part. Our hearts aren't protected if we're passive. We must set some godly boundaries to protect our heart because it's the source of life (v. 23).** When we leave it unguarded, we make ourselves vulnerable to sin.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE REALIZE WE'VE VEERED OFF THE STRAIGHT PATH?

We know when we've veered away from the Lord. The path becomes winding and confusing; it's darker and oppressive. We struggle to find peace. The Holy Spirit is faithful to convict us when we walk on the wrong paths, but we must listen to His voice. **The first step is confession; we confess our sin to the Lord and ask for His forgiveness. Then, we repent. Repentance requires us to walk in a different direction.** And isn't that what Solomon is saying? He instructs us to fix our eyes on one thing—the Lord—and walk in His direction. So, if you veered away from Him, look up. Look at the Lord again through His Word, through prayer, and through godly community. **Getting off the straight path doesn't have to be permanent. Look up, fix your eyes, and walk toward the Lord.**

WRAP-UP



HOW COULD THE PATH YOU CHOOSE TO WALK AFFECT THOSE WALKING WITH YOU?

Even when we think we're walking alone in our rebellion, we aren't. **Whether we choose to walk the straight path or the wicked path, we take others with us.** Sometimes, they follow in our footsteps because seeing us walk gives them the courage to walk too. So, this can be a good thing or a bad thing, right? Maybe others are standing with their toes on the line of the wicked path and watching you walk along the path invites them to as well. On the other hand, maybe others desperately want to choose the better way; seeing you walk in wisdom gives them the courage to as well. The truth is that where we choose to walk matters because others are watching us. They're looking for direction and for people to walk alongside them. **This week, choose to lead others down the straight path by making godly decisions, by loving others, and by imitating Christ.** You may be surprised how it affects those around you!

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