

LEARN GOD'S WISDOM

CORE PASSAGE: PROVERBS 4:10-19

CONTEXT

Like Ecclesiastes, Proverbs is a Bible book in the genre of wisdom literature. Many of the proverbs were written by Solomon. A proverb is simply a short saying stating general truth or advice. The biblical proverbs teach the fear of the Lord and give advice for covenant living in everyday situations and relationships. Proverbs covers many topics and can feel random or disjointed, but it has a few major themes: God's will is practical, and following His will leads to happiness and usefulness, but living this way takes work, study, and discipline. There's no middle way or compromise when it comes to living faithfully in covenant with God.

KEY CONCEPT

Staying focused on God's path keeps us from stumbling.

As you read Proverbs 4:10-19:

- Recognize that God's words are wisdom for the right path, leading to long life.
- Note that neglecting God's words leads us down a difficult and foolish path.



TIMELINE

Solomon Becomes King upon David's Death (1 Kings 1–2)

Solomon Asks the Lord for Wisdom (1 Kings 3)

SESSION STUDY: Solomon Shares the Importance of Wisdom (Proverbs 4)

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon to Observe His Wisdom (1 Kings 10)

Solomon's Foolish Idolatry Divides the Kingdom (1 Kings 11–12)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Proverbs 1–9

☐ **Day 2:** Proverbs 10–17

☐ **Day 3:** Proverbs 18–24

☐ **Day 4:** Proverbs 25–29

☐ **Day 5:** Proverbs 30–31

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 1



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

PROVERBS 4:10-13

ACCEPTING AND HOLDING ON TO GOD'S WORDS LEADS TO LIFE.

Circle the father's commands for his son in this passage. In the space below, draw a simple path with these commands to remind you of the way of wisdom.

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.

GOSPEL 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. In Christ alone can we find salvation.



In this passage from the book of Proverbs, a father, Solomon, opens with a plea for his son to take the good and right path that is the way of wisdom. If the reader will obey, then the father says he will “live many years” (v. 10). Does this mean literal, earthly longevity, or is it referring to eternal life? Perhaps both.

From Scripture and experience, we all know there is “a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Death is a physical certainty for all humanity due to the consequences of sin we inherited from Adam and Eve (1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Hebrews 9:27). But the way of the fool, who rejects wisdom in favor of wickedness and violence, may result in what some could consider an early, “untimely” death. Such a death could befall one who chooses the path of wisdom, of course, on account of sin in the world or the sinful actions of others. But generally, those who follow God’s path of wisdom will keep themselves from harmful situations and consequences, and they will also find the reward of eternal life, since the path of wisdom corresponds to a life of faith in the One who is God’s wisdom—Jesus Christ.

How have you been taught and encouraged to follow the way of God’s wisdom?

Wisdom, living according to God’s instruction, is portrayed as a straight, smooth path that leads to long life. Yet biblically we know this doesn’t mean life will always be easy, especially for believers. Just look to passages like Genesis 3:16-19; Psalm 6; John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; and Revelation 21:4. Death is a result of the original sin, but so too is suffering. While we all experience these consequences, suffering does not have the final say for believers because Christ, the perfect and literal embodiment of God’s wisdom, suffered and died on our behalf to save us from sin and death.

The father’s commands to “hold on to” and “guard” instruction indicate that the way of wisdom takes discipline and work on our part. We don’t passively live out God’s wisdom. We must actively choose His paths. Being in Christian community is vital for these decisions. We all need fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the faith to encourage us to choose God’s wisdom.

What are some ways you can actively “hold on to” and “guard” the instruction of God’s Word in your life?

PERSONAL PREPARATION

PROVERBS 4:14-19

THE WAY OF THE WICKED LEADS TO GLOOM AND DEATH.

Underline the father's commands in these verses. In the space below, sketch what the path of the wicked might look like.

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.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

DISCIPLESHIP: Discipleship is both a formal and informal process to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ require 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).

Key Concept: Staying focused on God's path keeps us from stumbling.



In these verses, Solomon contrasted righteousness and wickedness as he warned his son against taking the path of the wicked (vv. 14-17). The comparison between light and dark that Solomon used here is a common metaphor throughout the Old and New Testaments to convey the stark differences between righteousness and rebellion, or wisdom and folly.

We all do what is evil at times because we're still humans living in a broken world and are not yet perfected in the presence of God, where sin cannot exist. This passage isn't saying that all who sin are on the path of wickedness, but those who remain on that path are considered the "evil ones."

Take note of the father's commands to his son. In verse 14, he says not only "keep off" but then "don't proceed." Choosing to proceed reflects knowingly taking the path of rebellion. "Avoid it" and "don't travel on it" in verse 15 are parallel commands saying the same thing in a different way for emphasis. In the second part of verse 15, "turn away from it, and pass it by" means actively moving away from the path of wickedness.

Why is it wise to avoid the path of wickedness?

The path of the wicked is dark, which causes its travelers to stumble (v. 19). See God's heart for us in this father's words of warning. He doesn't want us to stumble around in the mysterious and violent darkness of sin. He wants us to walk in the light of His wisdom, seeing life as clearly as we can while on earth.

How do we avoid traveling "the path of the wicked" without falling into legalism, or a mind-set of works-based righteousness? According to Deuteronomy 6, infusing every aspect of our lives with God's Word helps us to remember Him and pushes us to obey His commands in love, even passing on His wisdom to our children as Solomon was doing in Proverbs.

Why should we resist the urge to look down on the wicked?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

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"The wise path is lit so you can see where you are walking, and the foolish path is dark so you stumble. Wisdom is a lamp—Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12)—so you can see the right path to take."¹

—Jonathan Akin



THE ROAD MAP

Read the passages below, and write out or illustrate the steps toward wisdom in the road map from each passage.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

MATTHEW 7:13-14

JOHN 14:6

EPHESIANS 6:1-3

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1

What are the obvious, less obvious, and hidden rewards of taking the narrow way of wisdom? How can the promise of a long life be something more than just an earthly reward?



Key Concept: Staying focused on God's path keeps us from stumbling.



HEAD

What are some ways you would distinguish between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

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Pray through Psalm 1. Ask God to soften you toward the rebellion in your own life rather than allowing your mind to compare yourself to those you consider wicked.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How can you ensure your words, attitudes, and social media posts reflect Christ's wisdom with grace and truth?



HANDS

How will you take the next step in your discipleship, particularly in church?



REFERENCES

UNIT 10

Session 4

1. Tim Chester, *1 Samuel for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, *God's Word for You* (Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2014), 113.

UNIT 11

Session 4

1. Martin Luther, Scholia on Psalm 32:2, in *1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles*, eds. Derek Cooper et al., *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament*, vol. V (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 198.

UNIT 12

Session 3

1. *Africa Study Bible* (Chicago, IL: Oasis International LTD, 2016), 956.

Session 5

1. Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Proverbs*, eds. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 62.



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FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

After the period of the judges, the Israelites wanted a king to lead them, and God gave them what they wanted. Israel's kings were to lead the people in God's ways and not the ways of the pagans around them. But being human, these kings had their strengths and weaknesses, times of faithfulness and times of faithlessness. When they followed God's wisdom over man's, they excelled, but when they didn't, they revealed their foolishness. Through the example of their lives and their Spirit-inspired teachings, God continues to guide us in wisdom. Now, with Jesus, the true King intended for us from the beginning, the promised King from David's line, we can learn better what true wisdom is—trusting Christ, fearing God, and walking in His ways.

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