

## Proverbs – Wisdom That Works - Part 7

### Listen to Live – Proverbs 4:1-27

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Intro

- There is a big difference between “live and learn” and “learn and live.” The first way is to learn the hard way, by making a mistake and learning from it, as long as you do learn from it, which many do not. Sometimes in learning “the hard way,” you do not get another chance, like skydiving or . . . The second way is to learn first and then live. This is learning from the lives and wisdom of others. This is the way that God invites us to live, and this is the “easy way” or the way of wisdom. This is the way we want our children to follow. This is the way our good heavenly Father wants us to follow.
- This morning we are going to take on all of Proverbs chapter four. Please grab your Bible and open it up to this chapter. I will be using the recent NIV version with a few modifications for clarity that are true to the original text. Our chapter is broken up into three different sections, with each section calling us to listen with the hope that we would indeed pay attention and then truly live. The title of this message is “Listen to Live,” and each one of our three points starts with “listen.” Listen to wisdom and win (1-9), listen to wisdom and shine (10-19), and listen to wisdom and live (20-27). If you want to do these things, give ear to what the Word would speak to you today.
- Let’s turn together to the first section, listen to wisdom and win.

#### Listen to wisdom and win

##### Proverbs 4:1-4 NIV

**Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. 2 I give you sound learning, so do not abandon my teaching.**

**3 For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. 4 Then he taught me, and he said to me, “Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live.**

- God’s wisdom here presents itself as a father instructing his sons, passing along wisdom that he had received from his father. God instructs and almost pleads with us to listen to His wisdom. He does so because He loves us. He knows the way we think and that what we choose matters in how life goes for us and what becomes of us. It is like a father looking deep into our eyes and telling us to listen, for what he has to say will help and make all the difference in our lives.
- His wisdom should be keenly followed, treasured in our hearts, and followed. It should not be abandoned or discarded as the ramblings of an old man. If we take hold of His words with all our heart, if we keep them, we will truly live.

##### Proverbs 4:5-6 NIV

**Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. 6 Do not abandon wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.**

- If we love wisdom and walk in it, wisdom will protect us and watch over us. As parents of children, we cannot go with them everywhere, and we cannot protect them from everything. Wisdom can indeed go with them everywhere, and she can protect and watch over them. We as parents and grandparents can make a difference in the lives of our loved ones by praying for them, that they would seek and listen to wisdom, and she, in turn, will watch over them in ways that we cannot. **(III. Of our children seeking our wisdom – and children can honor their parents by seeking and listening to them)**. If you don't have the wisest of parents, seek out those who you see as wise. Build a relationship with them and gain from their wisdom, understanding and perspective.

### Proverbs 4:7-9 NIV

**Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. 8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. 9 She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown."**

- Gaining wisdom and understanding will cost you. It may cost you time and money. It may cost you your privacy and your pride. It may require energy and effort, but it is supreme. Even if it costs all you have, get understanding because what it gives you is of far greater worth than what you own.
- Why is wisdom supreme? Because those who possess wisdom and cherish her will be exalted by her. Those who embrace her, she will honor. "She will give you a garland to grace your heart and present you with a glorious crown" (v. 9). What is described here is a victor's garland and a ruler's crown. Wisdom is the way to win a victor's garland. Athletes get this at the end of a competition (**Olympic example**), and because they have this, it changes their lives. It affects their identity, how they are seen, and how people interact with them.
- Embrace her, cherish her, call out to her. Listen to wisdom, heed her ways, pay attention, call out for her, follow her ways. This is the way that you can "win" at life. God grants it to all who pursue it, and you will reap the benefits by following her.
- If you listen to wisdom, not only will you win at life, but your life will also shine brighter and brighter, even into eternity.

### Listen to wisdom and shine

### Proverbs 4:10-19 NIV

**Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. 11 I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.**

**14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. 16 For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone fall. 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 till the full light of day. 19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.**

- There are two paths in life you can choose to follow. One goes up, up, up, and gets brighter and brighter as you go along, and the other goes down, down, down, and gets darker and darker as you go along. **(example of going uphill and downhill)** The further along you go, the more you can see, and in reverse, the deeper you go, the less you see and the more you stumble. Life is a journey where you have to take one step after another. Do the next right thing, and one step leads to another.
- The righteous path, the path of wisdom, which may seem more difficult at first, will be seen for what it is as you go along **(example of a good work ethic, good relationships, good investments)**.
- So the advice is to follow the way of wisdom, to stay off the wrong way. The way of wisdom is clear. Above board, it is strait without crookedness. The way of the fool, the wicked path, is bent on harming others, exalting self at all cost. It is full of violence of all types at every turn.
- The righteous are like the light of the morning that keeps on getting brighter with the passing of time, not like the light of the afternoon that gets darker with time.
- Daniel, describing the end of time, talks about it like this:

**Dan 12:2-4 ESV**

**And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.**

- Jesus stated the same thing in similar terms.

**Matt 13:41-43 ESV**

**The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

- In following in God's wisdom, your life will shine even into eternity. Your life will be a bright light in God's kingdom. However, if you spurn the wisdom of God, and choose to walk away from Him and His ways, you will go down into utter darkness and everlasting contempt.
- The last section of this chapter in Proverbs calls out to us to listen to wisdom and live.

**Listen to wisdom and live**

**Proverbs 4:20-22 NIV**

**My son, pay attention to what I say; Listen closely 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.**

- Again, we receive the same instruction. Listen! Listen, listen, listen! Of all the things that you are tuning into, listen to the voice of the Father. Listen closely, listen intently, listen intentionally. Keep His word in your sight. Keep His word in your heart because His word is life and will bring health to your whole body.
- He then goes on to describe and prescribe different parts of the body and offers his wisdom for each one.

#### **Proverbs 4:23 NIV**

**Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.**

- The truth is that *Life does not flow from the outside in; it flows from the inside out.* Nothing from the outside can give you true life, not better, or more. All of these “things” that we chase will fail us, and life is not found in them.
- The truth is that only in Christ will you have life. Jesus came to give us life, and life abundantly, life eternally. (John 10:10) Christ gives us a new heart. He is the only one that can make a heart of stone flow with living water.

#### **John 7:38 ESV**

**Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’**

- The gospel is not about what we give to God, but what He gives to us! True life in all its richness and fullness. Come to Christ, and you will stop dying and start living. All that comes out of our hearts without Christ is corruption. He died so that we may live. He gave that we may receive. He exchanges our hard hearts and gives us new ones.

#### **John 1:4-5 ESV**

**In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

- He can make you new. He can change your life. He can give you life, and life everlasting. No dark thing, no demonic presence, no evil act can overcome this light. And this light can live in you, if you confess your sins, trust in Christ, receive His grace and follow after Him. It is about loving God and following after Him. If your heart is right, and if you guard it as sacred, then how you live your life will follow.

#### **Proverbs 4:24-27 NIV**

**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 take only ways that are firm. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.**

- Our mouths will be free from perversity and corruption. Our eyes will be focused on the way we should go and not stray. Our feet will walk in what is good and firm, and we will not participate

in what is evil. When we claim God as Lord of our lives and give our hearts to Him, He claims us from head to toe and calls us to follow in His paths and walk in His footprints.

### **Conclusion**

- Listen to what the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, would be saying to you today. Listen. If you need a new heart, today is the day of salvation. Listen, if you need to return to the Lord and refocus your mind. Listen and seek wisdom, and win, shine and truly live.
- Family Prayer Time