

Timeless Wisdom for Today's Worries:

Proverbs for a Family

Proverbs 4:20-27

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Text Introduction: You have heard it said many times that the book of Proverbs is the most practical book in the Bible. Every line is flowing with God's wisdom. Indeed the book of Proverbs is categorized as a book of wisdom. We are spending some time this month in the Book of Proverbs, and we are calling our study "Timeless Wisdom for Today's Worries." On this Father's Day, I wanted us to look at one of the chapters that give us the wisdom of God in the form of advice from a father to a son. In fact it is believed by some that the teacher or author of Proverbs, Solomon, is indeed giving wisdom gleaned from his own father, David.

Text: 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.

Introduction: Maybe it is an extreme example, but I ran across a news article this week which told of a web based company whose mission is to help married people have affairs. Their motto is "Life is short; have an affair." In fact, last week in Mexico City, the company placed a billboard advertising their services using the picture of the front running candidate for the upcoming Presidential election in Mexico. Certainly, one of the worries of this world in which we all face is that our families are increasingly living in an anti-God world. Though godlessness appears to be increasing, the truth of the matter is that for all of history, those who desire to follow the one true God face great difficulty because of the godless society around them. That was true in the ancient context of Proverbs. That's what makes these instructions timeless in their wisdom to our families. Though the words of Proverbs 4 are given in the context of fatherly wisdom to a son, I think these principles apply to all of us, because we all find ourselves living in a world that is basically "anti-God" or "anti-Christian." We need a foundation for living to survive in this environment.

I spoke to a friend this week whose daughter is headed off to college in a few weeks. He is nervous. She has been raised in a Godly home, she seeks to follow after Christ, but the reality is we all know that there are serious challenges to our faith in the world.

But, we are not without hope. God's Word gives us a specific plan to survive in this "anti-God world" in which we live. We see it in our text today.

Watch what goes into your mind! (20-22)

This refers to your beliefs.

3 Keys:

- (1) Give attention to spiritually mature people. (20)
- (2) Don't abandon what you have learned. (21)
- (3) Acknowledge the benefits of your instruction. (22)

Watch what stays in your heart! (23)

This refers to your passions.

In Proverbs, we have been dealing with this idea of our "heart." Remember, the Biblical usage does not refer to our physical organ, but instead the "whole personality of the individual." We might say that the heart refers to what makes us really "tick." What is it that really gets you excited? What do you live for?

In that we are told to "guard our hearts" we probably ought to realize that we often let our hearts be unguarded. We leave our hearts unguarded by not paying attention to the instruction of God's Word.

—However strong a castle may be, if a treacherous party resides inside (ready to betray at the first opportunity possible), the castle cannot be kept safe from the enemy. Traitors occupy our own hearts, ready to side with every temptation and to surrender to them all. // —Theologian John Owen (1616–1683)

Watch what comes out of your mouth! (24)

This refers to your attitudes.

By what a person says or doesn't say, another can know that person's attitudes.

Watch where you let your eyes dwell! (25)

This refers to your temptations

Four Great Temptations:

- (1) money (23:4-5)
- (2) envy of sinners (23:17-18)
- (3) sexual immorality (23:27-28)
- (4) alcohol (23:29-35)

Watch where you let your feet take you! (26-27)

This refers to your decisions.

Every decision has consequences. Why not decide to trust Christ and follow Him?

I want to close with a rather sobering story about these principles. There was once a man who did exactly these five things. Many would call him the wisest man that ever lived. As a result, this man basked in the blessings of God. But, listen to how his biographer summarized the end of his life.

“His heart was not completely with the LORD his God as his father’s heart had been. He did what was evil in the LORD’s sight and did not completely follow the LORD. The LORD appeared to him twice to warn him about this, but he did not do what the LORD had commanded.” (My wording based on 1 Kings 11:1-13)

Who was that? Solomon! You see, you can give right advice, but not follow that advice. There might be a dad here today who has not followed his own advice. There might be many here today who once guarded the heart like a fortress, but today, you acknowledge that you have let much slip through the walls.