

Clippings from Proverbs 4

Prepared for the 3C Sunday School Class

Calvary Baptist Church

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NOTE: This material is exactly what the name implies. These are clippings from various sources, gathered on the run as I teach through the book. This is not intended for distribution or publication in the current form, since permissions have not been secured. The notes are provided to members of our Sunday School class, our church and students of the institutes, colleges and seminaries where I am called upon to teach. They are for personal use.

Questions for discussion from *Adult Questions for Lesson Maker*

The advice of wisdom ([4:1-27](#))

1. The instruction of the father ([4:1-9](#))
2. The two ways contrasted ([4:10-19](#))
3. The instruction regarding the right way ([4:20-27](#)) *Hannah's Bible Outlines*.

OPEN

The Urgency of Wisdom It is only natural for youth to think that adults are out of it, don't know what's really important, and that for the first time in history, their generation sees things clearly. Every generation thinks that, and every generation is wrong. Mark Twain once said that when he was eighteen, his father was so ignorant that Twain could hardly stand to be in his presence. Yet Twain remarked that by the time he was twenty-one, he felt that his father had smartened up considerably in only three short years. The difference, of course, was in Twain, not his father. Young people are in desperate need of wisdom. Yet, typically, they are resistant to it. Nevertheless, parents must try to pass wisdom down to the next generation. They may not appreciate it at the moment, but in time they will respect the counsel and advice given by their parents. Solomon sounds almost desperate to get his sons to listen to reason. Perhaps that desperation is because Solomon saw so little wisdom in his own family. His brother raped his sister, and another brother killed the one who raped her. Then the murderous brother also tried to depose, and if necessary kill, his own father, the king. Solomon knew firsthand the need for wisdom, and he also knew the calamity that can occur without it. We need to catch Solomon's sense of urgency. Whether it is our own children or the spiritual children we are ministering to, we need to work hard at passing down wisdom to the next generation. Anders, Max (2005-07-01). *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Proverbs: 13* (p. 37). B&H Publishing. Kindle Edition.

PART I: THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE FATHER (4:1-9)

MAIN IDEA: A father can give no greater gift than to pass on a thirst for wisdom so that his children can stay on the right path in life. HOTC

SUPPORTING IDEA: Solomon learned from his father David how crucial it is to make wisdom the goal of life.

Proverbs 4:1-9 (KJV)

4:1-2. This chapter begins with a father exhorting his son to pay close attention to the instructions he is about to give. Though such calls to attentiveness occur often in the first eight chapters of Proverbs, this one gives the clearest portrait of a father's heart for his son. The mention of sons in the plural shows that Solomon intended his teaching for more than just the son who would take his throne, but he switches back to the singular in verse 10. This father bestows the gift of sound or good learning, so the son should be careful not to forsake his teaching. Teaching here is torah in Hebrew, usually translated "law," often referring to the law given by God to Moses (Prov. 28:9; 29:18). But in a phrase like "my torah," it may be rendered "teaching." The word "taught" in verse 4 is the root from which "torah" is derived. *HOTC*

1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

QUESTION: Why should the reader listen to Solomon? ([4:1-2](#))

QUESTION: What is one of the central messages of these verses? ([4:1-27](#))

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

1 Chronicles 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

QUESTION: What did Solomon's father say would happen if he kept his commandments? ([4:3-4](#))

4:3. Solomon paints a picture of the loving atmosphere he experienced as a child. He was David's son, living in the king's home, in constant contact with him. Though his mother Bathsheba eventually had more children (1 Chr. 3:5), he was an only child for some years. Obviously his parents devoted much energy to his training.

4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

QUOTE: 4:4. Beginning in verse 4, Solomon presents a quotation from his father David, which probably runs through verse 9. Solomon builds on his boyhood experience to show why he is so insistent on passing on this heritage to his own son. The next verses are peppered with commands. First, he must hold on to his father's words wholeheartedly. Next, choose life by keeping these commands (see Deut. 30:19). *HOTC*

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2 Timothy 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

2 Timothy 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

QUESTION: What will wisdom do for the person who does not forsake it? ([4:5-6](#))

Could 1 Kings 3:5-14 be the result of David's plea? If so, Solomon forgot the 2nd half of this verse.

1 Kings 3:5-14 (KJV)

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

- The Hebrew reflects this thought with only four words.

7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Lit., The beginning of wisdom is to get wisdom.

QUESTION: Why did Solomon say to get wisdom? ([4:7](#))

Matthew 13:44-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

QUESTION: Whom does wisdom exalt? ([4:8](#))

Proverbs 3:35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Proverbs 22:4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life.

Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

1 Peter 3:4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Get It Adult Questions for LESSONMaker.

1. How does a person get wisdom?
2. How do wisdom and understanding bring life and health to a person?
3. In what way is wisdom supreme?
4. What can we learn from our parents?
5. If wisdom is so good, why do we need encouragement to seek it and to hang on to it?
6. Why is it difficult to listen to instruction?

PART II: THE TWO WAYS CONTRASTED (4:10-19)

When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It! The venerable philosopher Yogi Berra (former New York Yankees Hall of Fame catcher, given to unlikely and sometimes bizarre misstatements) once said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!"

Yes, but which direction? Solomon presents his son in this chapter with a fork in the road: the road to wisdom and a harmonious life or the road to foolishness and a life of self-destruction. He begs his son to take the right road. This option is before us through the entirety of life's journey, and we are continuously being forced to choose. Yet the reasonableness of the right choice is well explained by Solomon. When we choose wisdom, she will reward us with honor, blessing, and success.

To be free to sail the seven seas, you must make yourself a slave to the compass. The compass is the wisdom of God. If we make ourselves slaves to the wisdom of God, to his word, we will be free to sail the seven seas of life with the blessing of God. To ignore the law of wisdom is to run aground on the rocks of foolishness and bring unnecessary pain and hardship into our lives, as well as the lives of those whom we love and others whom our lives affect.

Another way of stating this principle is that you can be a slave to the toothbrush and free from cavities, or you can be free from the toothbrush and a slave to cavities. But you cannot be free from the toothbrush and free from cavities. That kind of absolute freedom doesn't exist. We cannot flaunt the laws of God and not pay a price. So seek wisdom. Choose wisdom. Make the conscious choice that you will walk the way of wisdom. The quality of your life and the lives of those whom you influence depend on it. *HOTC*

OPEN

1. What system do you have to remember things that you need to take with you each day?
2. What is the most important thing to check when leaving for a long trip?
3. Why does life become more precious with age?

OVERVIEW

The ways of wisdom (vv. 10–13) and of wickedness (vv. 14–17) are described and the son-learner is again urged to pursue the former and avoid the latter. The lesson is summarized in verses 18–19 by picturing the destinations of both paths. *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

A. The Ways of Wisdom (Prov. 4:10-13)

10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

- The plea is again in the singular, to one son.
- Again the father pleads for attention.
- At stake, says the father, is long life, a commodity unattractive to youth.

ILLUS: Dr. Rice told me, “Five years to me mean a lot more than five years to you.”

11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

- “Right paths” are literally straight paths.
- Straight paths are not restricted, obstacles have been removed.
- See verse 12.

ILLUS: Hwy 178, Hwy 88 improvements such as the bridge to our east.

12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

STRAIGHTENED – Heb., cramped, confined, narrow.

- Wisdom makes our path easier.
- Our path does not take us down claustrophobic alleys.

- We are not climbing across roots on the trail.
- The Bible says that the way of the transgressor is hard.

ILLUS: It hurts to see those, especially among the elderly, who have so few options. Never went to college, never developed a trade. Every day brings a new crisis. Others find themselves in narrow places, not because of failure to prepare, but because of a moral failure, a record, a conviction, etc. They must climb over the roots of their record to make any progress, and the way is hard. How much better is the way of wisdom, if only youth will listen!

Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

- Second reference to “life” in this passage.
- Get wisdom, says Solomon, get a grip on it and don’t let go, not ever!

ILLUS: I sometimes forget my phone. Usually, it is not the end all for my day. Sometimes, I get to go to Columbia to watch the Gamecocks play football. My time is precious, and it is a long way there. To leave my ticket at home would be very disappointing. But even that would not ruin my world. But wisdom, ah yes, talk to the fool who has lost it and you will find that it is indeed life!

B. The Ways of Wickedness (Prov. 4:14-17)

DISCUSSION: What would cause your life to seem useless, not worth going on?

1. Six Commands to Stay Away From Evil People (4:14-15)

14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

WICKED – A criminal, one hostile to God, one who has sinned against God or man.

EVIL – Heb., *rang*. Bad.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

SUMMARY

1. Do not enter.
2. Do not travel by their path.
3. Avoid it by whatever means necessary.
4. Don't walk along beside it.
5. Turn your back on it.
6. Get clean away from it.

ILLUS: Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

2. Reasons for the Urgency of the Appeal (Prov. 4:16-17)

16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

- Evil men cannot sleep until they hurt someone.
- Even if they go home and try to be good, they will toss and turn until finally going back out to commit a crime.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

- Evil men love crime as much as food and drink.

C. The Lesson Summarized (Prov. 4:18-19)

18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The path of the righteous, which is “the way of wisdom” (v. 11), **is like the first** rays of light in the morning, which gradually increase to **the full light of** noonday. With light on his path a believer can follow “straight paths” (v. 11) and “not be hampered” or “stumble” (v. 12). *BKC*

19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

By contrast the way or path of **the wicked** (cf. v. 14) is characterized by **deep darkness** (*'ăpēlâh*, intense blackness in the middle of the night; cf. 7:9; Ex. 10:22) which causes him to **stumble**. *BKC*

Proverbs 7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

Exodus 10:22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS TO 4:10-19

- In Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge is visited by the ghosts of Christmas, past, present and future.
- I heard one man say to me, "I wish the 60 year old version of me had gone back to have a little talk with the 20 year old version of me."
- While *A Christmas Carol* is pure fiction, there are lessons there.
- If we will receive them, our parents, our leaders in the church, our older brothers and sisters can be the voice of our 60 year old self.
- The question is, will Scrooge listen?

PART III: THE INSTRUCTION REGARDING THE RIGHT WAY (4:20-27)

Proverbs 4:20-27 (KJV)

- 20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.
21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.
22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.
23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.
25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.
27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

I. Wisdom's Exhortation (4:20-22)

A. Tune in! (4:20)

20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

ATTEND – To prick up the ears, pay attention.

INCLINE – To bend (can mean toward or away). To stretch. (Cf., 1 Tim. 3:1 "If any man desire (reaches for) the office of bishop.)

WORDS, SAYINGS – (*dabar, emer*) Probably not worth splitting the hair for the purposes of this study, but there is an application. Words have power, words have value. We should guard our words and we should heed wise words.

Sermons are just words, but there is a message that God expects to be heeded. After all, the Bible is just words!

APPLY! – Show by your mental attention and your posture that you are tuned in to words of wisdom. This could be parental advice, a teacher, a preacher or a friend.

HUMOR: What is the difference between a Baptist hearing a sermon and a cow chewing her cud?

ILLUS: New boy in mom's class staring at her intently all day.

Mark 4:9 And he said unto them, He that hath *ears* to *hear*, let him hear.

B. Hold on! (4:21)

21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

DEPART – Lit., turn aside. The literal reading is “Do not let wisdom turn away.” Of course, the implication is that we are not to turn away from wisdom. How many people and families in this world are in the “Used to believe that” category.

ILLUS: My cousin Carolyn and her husband Rob. Dutch Bible and picture of grandparents.

KEEP – *shamar*. To hedge about.

- Just as we put fences (electronic, wooden or link) to keep in children and pets that we value, we are to create hedges to keep in wisdom.
- The Pharisees knew of this principle and practiced it. They were condemned by Christ for their practice of imposing their “fences” on others.
- A fence is a wonderful personal tool, and we are ordered to have them!
- But the Pharisees equated their fences with God's law and thus taught that violating the fence was all the same as violating an inspired command of God's Word.
- We at Calvary do not do that!
- But we can't stop putting tires on our cars because someone once used tires to do “donuts” in a parking lot.
- We are told to hedge in wisdom.
- If we value our children, we will have a fence!
- Same with wisdom.

MIDST – It is not enough to have wisdom on the perimeter of our heart. We are to keep it central to it!

C. Value it! (4:22)

22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

1. Wisdom Can Save Your Life

“Life unto those that find them.”

THEM – The words, the sayings.

FIND – acquire, obtain. Wisdom is worth the effort to find and obtain.

ILLUS: The Darwin awards. 1964 modified Chevy. Fingernails.

2. **Wisdom Can Turn Life into Living**

“health to all their flesh”

HEALTH – *Marpe*. A cure, that which is curative.

- In city after city, in hospital after hospital, nursing home after nursing home, lie thousands in a comatose state due to one tragedy or another.
- They are alive, but they are not living.
- Yet there are millions walking around, eating, breathing, working, yet with comatose emotions.
- God’s wisdom promotes physical and emotional health.
- Yet this is what secular counselors cannot say.
- Medicine may be part of the answer, but it is not the answer.
- We have to heed God’s wisdom about bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, lust, bad thoughts, etc., if we are to ever have real life!
- Wisdom will go a long way to protecting us from the effects of stress and anxiety. (Blood pressure, ulcers, indigestion, headaches)

QUOTE: Solomon promised life in verses 4, 10, and 13, and he returns to the theme here. If you want life, pay attention to wisdom. And he promises that you will not only enjoy life, but you will flourish in your physical health. Like many other promises in Proverbs, this does not guarantee total immunity from illness, but it does reflect the fact that many maladies stem from foolish choices. *HOTC*

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

II. **Wisdom’s Epicenter (4:23)**

23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

KEEP – *natsar*. The Hebrew here, when used in the bad sense means to conceal or hide. When used in the good sense, it means to guard, protect, maintain. It is used of a thing besieged. The imagery is good. What we protect we hide. What we value we place

within protective walls. The enemy surrounds and is persistent in the attempt to reach and destroy (or steal) that which we value.

ILLUS: Book safes, shaving cream can safes.

ILLUS: Shawshank Redemption – Andy Dufresne hid the rock hammer in his Bible. We must hid the Bible in our heart.

DILLIGENCE – *mishmar*. Lit., a guard. Post a guard to keep what you have hidden.

- As we will see in the next point (below), we must guard the “gates” of our soul.

ISSUES OF LIFE – Lit., the outgoings related to life. “The source of life.” *HCSB*

QUOTE: The values that are programmed into the heart determine how it will control the individual, and thus, it is essential to guard the heart to ensure that God's truth is inscribed there. *Apologetics Study Bible*

Matthew 12: 33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart ⁸ brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."
NKJV

III. **Wisdom’s Environment (4:24-27)**

QUOTE: In addition, every faculty (eyes, feet, mouth) must be focused on the goal of wisdom and God's truth. There is no place for compromise; all one's energy must be focused on attaining the goal.

We must keep a watch on our interactions in three key areas ...

A. **Guard Your Speech (4:24)**

24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

FROWARD – This word, in its root, is related to an Arabic word meaning twisted. It is used to describe the braiding of a woman’s hair. *TWOT*

Here is an illustrative use in Micah.

Mic. 3:9 (ESV) Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make **crooked** all that is straight.

PERVERSE LIPS – Lit., deviation of the lips. I.e., perverted speech.

APPLY! – If wisdom is in your heart, it will control what comes out of the heart.

Mark 7:20–23 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

B. Guard Your Sight (4:25)

25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

- The intent here is our focus.
- Horses wear blinders to keep them from being distracted by their environment.
- Jesus always kept His eyes on “the joy that was set before Him.” (Heb. 12)
- In our age of information overload, we can spend more time doing nothing than ever before!

QUOTE: Returning to the imagery of walking down a path, the father implores his son to keep his eyes straight ahead. Do not allow your gaze to wander off to the side where temptations might lead you astray. *HOTC*

ILLUS: Pastor who lost his pulpit for spending 30 hours plus per week on Facebook.

APPLY: I have tried to make even my hobbies those things that can be used in ministry.

NOTE: When we get to Proverbs 6 we will see this foundational skill used to keep us from the immoral woman. (Prov. 6:20 ff.)

C. Guard Your Steering Wheel (4:26-27)

26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

PONDER – Lit., weigh out.

ESTABLISHED – Set up, prepared, fixed, set in order.

APPLY! – The idea is to plan ahead, to look before you leap, to plan before you go. As you interact with your world, use the wisdom of God to help you choose the right path, the right time to take it, the right way to do it!

27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

TURN – bend away.

ILLUS: Abby on her way to ABC drifted onto US Hwy 21 off of 77. Easy to do. It was simply a matter of the choice of lanes. How many have been on path with us here at Calvary, only to slip off the path!

REMOVE: Lit., turn, bend away.

APPLY! – When you first discover that you have stepped off the path, turn back.

CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER

It Won't Be Different with You!

Someone has said, “Learn from the mistakes of others. You don't have time to make them all yourself.” That is the point Solomon is making in this chapter. “Listen to me, son. Take my advice. I've been around the block, and I can save you from a good deal of hardship if you will let me.” The problem is, of course, that young people don't believe it. They think they know better themselves. A young girl found a baby raccoon and was raising it as a pet. She was warned by a veterinarian that when the raccoon became an adult, it would become unpredictable and potentially violent. Her response was that her raccoon wouldn't do anything violent. Other raccoons might, but it would be different with her. Shortly afterward, the raccoon suddenly and viciously attacked her for no reason, leaving scars on her face that required plastic surgery. We are foolish to ignore the warnings of those who have gone before us, who have more experience, more knowledge, and more wisdom than we. When we ignore history, we are condemned to repeat it. So, if we are on the teaching end, we must warn others and implore them to live a life of wisdom. If we are on the receiving end, we must heed the warning. It will not be different with us! Foolishness always extracts a severe price from those who court her. *HOTC*

PRINCIPLES

- Life comes with cause-and-effect consequences.
- Certain actions will bring about certain consequences.
- Wisdom can be learned by observing others.
- We don't have to experience everything ourselves.
- Wisdom is not automatic.
- It comes to those who commit to it and seek it.

APPLICATIONS

- Don't be a fool. Learn from the experience of others.

- Make the decision now to pursue wisdom.
- Guard what you allow into your mind.
- From this vigilance comes your ability to live a wise life.

END OF CHAPTER 4

EXTRA INSIGHTS: Life and Death [OPTIONAL USE IN CLASS]

Many passages in Proverbs call the reader to look past immediate pleasure or pain and to see the ultimate consequences of his actions: life or death. At times the verses refer primarily to the length of physical life (4:10; 3:2; 9:11). But the language often goes beyond that concept, referring to a superior quality of life. It might be the social status and privilege that come with the favor of the king (16:15) or the financial stability that comes from avoiding greed (15:27). It might be the physical vitality and health that come from living according to the principles of wisdom (14:30). Or it might be the relationship with God that comes to the righteous (10:16). Proverbs does not speak unmistakably about the eternal life that God promises to believers, but it leaves room for that truth. It emphasizes the benefits of wisdom for the present life, while other portions of Scripture explain God's plans for us in the life to come. *HOTC*