

Wise Parents Instruct
Proverbs 4

Parents, instruct your children to live in faithfulness to the Lord (1-13).

Solomon provided a glimpse into his childhood in Proverbs 4. He referenced the way that his father David raised him when he was young and was the precious prize of his mother Bathseba's heart. David was faithful to instruct Solomon to live in faithfulness to the Lord. He did this when Solomon was young, and he did this when Solomon was older and becoming King as a young man (1 Kings 2:1-4). Instruction doesn't guarantee that the instructions will be followed – Solomon's son certainly didn't follow his father's instruction – but no instruction guarantees that the instructions won't be followed. So wise parents instruct. These verses are a repetition of what's already been said in earlier chapters, reinforcing the value of God's wisdom and the result of godly living that's blessed by the Lord. God's Word guards and honors and protects those who hold to it and follow after it. It leads to life, and by God's grace through faith, it leads to eternal life through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Godly parents know this not only because God's Word says it but also because they have experienced it! Therefore, instruct your children to live in faithfulness to the Lord.

1. From David to Solomon, these fathers instructed their children to live in faithfulness to the Lord. Did you have a grandparent and/or parent who instructed you in faithfulness to the Lord? If so, who, and how? Why is this important in God's design for passing on faith?
2. What are some of the things that Solomon reinforced in these verses that he's already said in earlier chapters? Why do you think God's Word repeats these truths?
3. Are you a parent or grandparent? How can you instruct your child(ren) to live in faithfulness to the Lord? Discuss, and pray for each other and your children.

Parents, warn your children against the way of evil (14-19).

- *Evil takes joy in hurting others (16).*
- *Evil gets satisfaction from evil (17).*
- *Evil leads to self-destruction (19).*

Sin is so deceptive and so persistent that the truth must be persistently proclaimed. The warning against sin must be a consistent reminder. It's not burdensome to be reminded of the truth about evil. It's protective to be warned against the way of the wicked. Solomon did just that for his sons. He wanted them to see what sin so easily blinds the sinful heart to. He wanted his sons to understand the danger of evil in their lives. So Solomon pointed to some key characteristics of evil that are true in every age in every circumstance when wickedness reigns. First, evil takes joy in hurting others. It doesn't take long to see this truth emerge in the sinful heart. From elementary school playgrounds to the floors of factories, there are those whose sin is fed by hurting others. Evil finds pleasure in the pain of others, and connected to that, evil gets satisfaction from evil. Evil is the very food and drink for those consumed with sin. The thief finds satisfaction in stealing. The adulterer finds satisfaction in immorality. The drug addict finds satisfaction in his next high. The bully finds satisfaction in the next person he can humiliate and take advantage of. Evil is only satisfied with evil and not good. As a result, evil leads to self-destruction. It's a dark path. It's a blind guide. The way of evil will lead to unseen dangers and obstacles that will cause the person who follows this way to stumble. From the thief who escalates to murder to the adulterer who destroys his family to

the drug addict who dies from an overdose, evil leads to self-destruction. Therefore, parents, warn your children against the way of evil.

1. Considering these three characteristics of evil, how have you seen the reality of these characteristics in what you've experienced in life?
2. Even if sin blinds someone from hearing your warning, why is it important to tell the truth about the result of the way of evil?
3. Do you know someone who needs to hear this warning? How can you share the truth with them in love this coming week?

Children, listen to the words of your Father (20-27).

- *Keep your heart (23).*
- *Guard your mouth (24).*
- *Stay focused on God (25).*
- *Think about what you do (26).*
- *Turn away from evil (27).*

God's wisdom leads to life! Children who hear and understand this truth should respond in faith. Faith is action. It's not passive, but true faith leads to the work of faith in a believer's life. For the child of God who desires to live in faithfulness to the Lord, the Lord provides five directives to follow. First, keep your heart. This is the most foundational and important directive of all. Faith isn't lived by the flesh. It's lived by the Spirit! Faith is a matter of the heart, and believers must guard their hearts, protecting what they watch and listen to, filling their hearts – and minds – with what is true and honorable and righteous. Don't let your guard down. Evil is always close at hand, waiting for any opportunity to slip into your heart. Second, guard your mouth. What comes out of the mouth flows from the heart. A careful assessment of your words will reveal the condition of your heart, so guard it carefully. Third, stay focused on God. This is one of the simplest things to do that is – perhaps – most neglected in the lives of so many. Living wisely demands that you keep your gaze straight ahead of you. For the followers of Jesus, this is a focus on Jesus at all times. It's a life that's constantly looking to the Lord for direction every day in every way. Fourth, think about what you do. Followers of Christ aren't fumblers in life. God's desire isn't that we fumble around, constantly misstepping in life. Rather, we should be prayerful and thoughtful. Considering what we do and how it reflects on who we serve: The Lord! Fifth, turn away from evil. If all of the above are true, this one is the natural outflow and consistent pattern in the life of a child of God. It's a life that persistently seeks to walk in the way of wisdom and – through the grace and wisdom of God – is warned when a step is about to enter the path of evil. What good advice for living wisely today. Children, listen to the words of your Father!

1. Of these five directives, which one stands out to you most right now? Why?
2. If you take each of these five directives and use them as a standard to measure your life, what do you see? Is there one or more that you need to submit to the Lord, asking him to grow and strengthen you in wisdom in that area of faithfulness in your life?
3. Why is it essential that we always see ourselves as children of God, even when we grow older in age and in spiritual maturity? How should our position as a child of God translate into our faithfulness to listen to the words of our Father? Are you listening?