Commentary on Proverbs 4:10-15, 20-27
By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** *(Uniform Sunday School Series)* for **Sunday, September 11, 2011**, is from **Proverbs 4:10-15, 20-27**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the **Bible Lesson Commentary** below.

**Proverbs 4:10-15**

*(Proverbs 4:10)*  Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.  

Sometimes the way we live in this life will have an effect on how long we live; sometimes not, but destructive behaviors and lifestyles need to be avoided, which seems to be the obvious truth in this verse. God shared words of wisdom with us in the Bible so we might have both the quantity and quality of years of life that He intends for people to have upon Earth. God wants us to lived blessed and joyfully.

*(Proverbs 4:11)*  I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.  

When Jesus Christ talked and walked on Earth, as the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, He taught wisdom and consistently showed how a wise person made decisions. Jesus never failed to choose and live wisely. The manner or way He spoke as He spoke, when He spoke, and when He remained silent at His trial and other times, all showed the wisdom of God that we can learn from ourselves. The upright life is the wise life, and wise people will choose to live uprightly.

*(Proverbs 4:12)*  When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble.  

If you follow the Way, and the way of living that God revealed in Jesus Christ and the Bible, sin will not have mastery over you or cause you to stumble. Walking or running while sinning puts a burden upon you that will hinder your spiritual progress and success. When carrying the burden of sin, you will not be able to run as you need to when the time comes for running at Jesus’ call.

*(Proverbs 4:13)*  Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.  

We face many challenges, trials, temptations, hardships, and adversaries (physical and spiritual). To face these with confidence and faith we must keep studying the Bible with the purpose to learn how best to please God because we love God. Do not let go of or turn from following God’s instructions in the Bible. False prophets and teachers will try to rob us of the assurance and truth God has given us in the Bible. We must guard and protect the truth which God has given.
**Proverbs 4:14** Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers.

We can choose to walk in the narrow way following Jesus, Who is the Way, or we can choose to follow evildoers, evil thinkers, evil theology, and evil teachers in the broad way that leads to destruction. Jesus preached, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it” (Matthew 7:13). When we study the Bible with the intention to love and obey God, we will recognize which way we should take and which “way” is the true Way, Who is Jesus Christ.

**Proverbs 4:15** Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

In every way that God wisely can, God warns us to avoid and even turn away from evil doers and evil ways. We need to develop the courage to call “evil” what it is, “evil.” The Bible throughout shows and tells us what is evil so we will recognize evil and avoid evil; so we can correct evil wherever and whenever possible. By turning from evildoers and evil ways, we can choose to do what is good, right, and true: all of our attention and energy can be used to follow God where He leads—which may not always be easy and may include persecution for Jesus’ sake.

**Proverbs 4:20-27**

**Proverbs 4:20** My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

We need to remain attentive to the words of wisdom in the Bible, the word of God. We need to learn all we can from the Bible, and from inclining our hearts to following the leading of the Holy Spirit, Who will never contradict what the Bible commands or teaches. We need to incline our hearts to obeying all the truth that God reveals. Our temptations and spiritual battles will be great; so, knowing the Bible's teachings with hearts inclined to obey will help us prevail with Jesus' help.

**Proverbs 4:21** Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

A closed Bible on a table or shelf may be within sight, but the Proverbs teach us to keep the very words of God within sight (before our eyes in daily study). The words of God must be brought into our minds through our eyes and ears, but just as important, our “heart” or “will” must commit to living according to the will of God expressed by His words in the Bible (especially as the Holy Spirit teaches us how to apply God’s words in our daily decisions and life).
(Proverbs 4:22) For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

The words of God give life to those who discover that the Bible is the word of God written and contains the words of God that God intended for us to follow in order to be the happiest according to the way God created us as human beings. The Bible points us to the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, and Jesus can heal us in answer to our prayers. He can help us change behaviors that will lead to our mental and physical healing and protection.

(Proverbs 4:23) Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

The “heart” is sometimes defined as “the seat of the will.” We must be careful to will the right goals and the right means to achieve those goals. We must never use an evil or unbiblical means to try to achieve what we think might be a good goal. Our goals must be consistent with the revealed will of God in the Bible, and the means we choose need to be consistent with the Spirit of Jesus Christ as He lived and taught. In this way, we can do new things consistent with the will of God.

(Proverbs 4:24) Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

Crooked speech is speech that is used to deceive someone or some group either by directly lying or by intentional misdirection to achieve a selfish or self-centered purpose. Devious talk is designed to trick someone or some group into believing what is false and into acting in ways that are not in their best interests but take unfair or unjust advantage of them.

(Proverbs 4:25) Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

Some look for ways to avoid doing what is required of them, to avoid obeying the commands of God, to avoid loving and following Jesus Christ when sacrifice is needed; such behavior is the opposite of looking “directly forward.” We need to keep our gaze focused straight ahead on Jesus Christ and where He is going before us so we can live and work where He wants us and do what He wants.

(Proverbs 4:26) Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure.

Keep following Jesus the Lord. Study and obey the Bible as He interprets and reveals Bible truths to you through the Holy Spirit. Be prepared to obey all the truths Jesus teaches you, and He will reveal more truths to you through your Bible study. Keep walking in the way of Jesus by praying, by studying His words in the Bible, by following His example of loving devotion for our heavenly Father and service to others. In this way you can walk with confidence in this life.
(Proverbs 4:27) Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

Do not go to the extreme of being too strict or too lenient with yourself. Do not follow God’s laws only for the personal benefit or only as long as they benefit you. Love and serve God with all your heart, and the benefits will follow in this life and in the next life. Your motivation for living according to the Bible’s teachings should be godly and not self-centered. Never do anything contrary to the word of God written, the Law which teaches us to love God and others in God’s way.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Generally speaking, rather than disregarding the words of the Bible, how can accepting the words of the Bible help a person live longer?

2. How can accepting the words of the Bible help a person find eternal life? Today, how important is the gift of eternal life to most people? Give a reason for your answer.

3. Why do some who claim to be wise, or who seem to be wise, refuse to walk in uprightness?

4. According to what you have learned from the Bible, how would you define evil and wickedness? Why does evil and wickedness appeal strongly to some people?

5. What are some of the benefits of a personal study of the Proverbs? What are some of the benefits of a group study of the Proverbs?

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