

**I. The Path to Take (Prov. 4:11-13)**

1. The “Way” of wisdom (**verse 11**)
    - the pathway
    - straight paths
    - Rea -we say “keep me straight”
  2. Living well means getting on the right path
    - leading to a fulfilling life
    - Rea -our culture is all about “fulfillment” - that is not bad/ wrong. But, the way of holiness is in view, not the path to self actualization.
  3. The steps on the pathway (**verse 12**)
    - A. You will not be hampered
    - B. You will not stumble
    - C. “Hampered” references obstacles  - Rea -lay aside every weight and sin that easily besets you - this may refer to “weight” - not necessarily wrong, but would “hamper” us
  4. Contrast “walk” and “run” -
    - in a run the risk of falling goes up
    - Rea -the idea is not the pace, but the stumbling
    - don’t be tripped up
  5. Hold onto instruction (**verse 13**)
    - wisdom will make the difference
    - Rea -our writer sees “instruction” as the Bible - for the receiver of this word, it was advice from a concerned father. The idea therein is that we ought to “listen” and “take it in.”
  6. Guard wisdom - keep it close
    - Rea -things that are “guarded” are watched over
- Rea **Ideas and Questions:**
1. The key ingredient to a wholesome life is God’s wisdom/ instruction
  2. Shoot for wisdom, not information (as from Google)
    - not an education - there is a big difference between college education and wisdom
  3. Focus on wisdom for daily “paths” - do you think the Bible is practical? - why is it and why do some not see it as a practical guide for “real life”

**II. The Path to Avoid (Prov. 4:14-19)**

1. Don’t walk in the path of the wicked (**verse 14**)
  - don’t walk in the way of evildoers
  - Rea -“walk” may mean live this way
  - Rea -life is compared to a pathway - journey
2. Avoid this path (**verse 15**)
  - don’t come near it
  - turn from it - detour
  - steer clear of this way
  - Rea -we might ask ourselves where will this “path” end

3. Cannot rest until they do evil (**verse 16**)  
 Rea -evil becomes “obsessive” - infatuation
4. Robbed of sleep - this pathway follows them into their hours of rest  
 Rea -the second half of this verse involves making “others” stumble
5. There’s a lot to be said for looking at the “direction” of your life... where will this pathway take me?  
 Rea -what is it’s end?
6. Eating bread (**verse 17**)  
 Rea -eating wine  
 Rea -“bread” and “wine” have a different symbolism for us, compare the Lord’s Supper with this verse
7. Infatuated with “violence” and “wickedness”  
 Rea -hunger for this life/ lifestyle  
 Rea -a need for violence  
 Rea -we often develop a “taste” for that which we’re involved in
8. “Path” and “way” are contrasted (**verse 18**)  
 A. The analogy is the “morning sun” - shining brighter  
 -the future of the one who “walks well” is “bright” - by this analogy  
 B. The “way” of the wicked (**verse 19**)  
 -by contrast their way is dark  
 -“deep” darkness  
 Rea -there is a “way” that seems right  
 Rea -the “way” of destruction is wide (so said Jesus) - the way of goodness is narrow  
 C. They will not even know how they fell
- Rea **Ideas and Questions:**
1. So, is there a simple choice of these ways - or is that to oversimplify?
  2. One step along the right path helps us to make the next good step  
 -the converse is equally true
  3. These are “ways” to live
  4. Wicked and righteous are black and white - are your choices white and black?

### III. The Choice to Make (Prov. 4:20-27)

1. Pay attention to what I say (**verse 20**)  
 Rea -turn your ear  
 Rea -lean in and listen well - even though we teach our children, they are often not listening
2. Keep them in your heart (**verse 21**)  
 Rea -don’t let them out of your sight  
 Rea -together he says, treat them as precious and important
3. They are life and health (**verse 22**)  
 Rea -so, he is pointing to their end - we ought judge the beginning by its end
4. Guard them above all else (**verse 23**)  
 Rea -guard your heart by being careful what is put there  
 Rea -out of them flow the “issues of life” (KJV)  
 Rea -life flows “out” from the heart - what type “issues” are determined by our hearts?

5. "Keep" your mouth from... (**verse 24**)
  - perversity
  - corrupt talk
  - compare "lips" and "mouth"
  - at this juncture "lips" reveal what is in "heart"
6. This verse is about the "focus" of your life (**verse 25**)
  - Rea -discuss what we focus on. Is there anything wrong in focusing on sports so much?
  - the idea of the verse is looking "straight" instead of looking to the side
  - Rea -a person with focus:
    - A. Gets a lot done
    - B. Is not easily diverted into the wrong "paths"
  - fix your gaze
  - Rea -compare Hebrews 12:1-2 - "looking unto Jesus" - a focus passage
7. Give thought to the footpaths (**verse 26**)
  - be steadfast
  - Rea -"steadfast" would be "stable" and "sure-footed" - not apt to stumble
8. Don't turn to right or left (**verse 27**)
  - to the right or left
  - Rea -the "straight" paths of the first verse of this passage for today
  - Rea **Ideas and Questions:**
    1. Focus - but focus on Jesus
      - "true your eyes upon Jesus"
    2. Divided, then diverted away from Jesus
    3. "Keep it in the center of the road"
    4. All these verses are "wisdom" - but, we don't value "wisdom" in our culture, why do you think that is?

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