

Proverbs 4:1-9: Wisdom's Academy: The Godly Home

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- [0 : 00] For the reading of God's Word, we're going to allow the children to go to their ministry as well as those who are ministering to them on this afternoon.
- The rest of us will turn in our Bibles to Proverbs chapter 4, verses 1 through 9.
- Proverbs chapter 4, I'm going to read verses 1 through 9. This is how it reads as you follow along with me.
- Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive that you may gain insight.
- For I give you good precepts to not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words.
- [1 : 12] Keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom. Get insight. Do not forget and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.
- Do not forsake her. She will keep you. Love her. She will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this. Get wisdom.
- And whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly. She will exalt you. She will honor you if you embrace her.
- She will place on your head a graceful garland. She will bestow on you a beautiful crown. This is the word of the Lord.
- You may be seated. Let me pray. Father, praise you for this opportunity, this afternoon with this, your people.
- [2 : 16] We are privileged indeed, Lord, to open the book, to study the book, to proclaim your word.
- So, may the words of my mouth, meditation, and my heart be pleasing unto you and refreshing to your people this day.
- It is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen. Proverbs chapter 4, verses 1 through 9. If you were here over the last couple of weeks, you may be wondering, what about the rest of chapter 1?
- And what about chapters 2 and 3? Good questions. Time doesn't allow a verse-by-verse treatment or even a chapter-by-chapter treatment of the Proverbs on the summer.
- What we want to do over the next weeks is to give you God's truth from the varied sections of the book of Proverbs.
- [3 : 22] And we're into what you might even call the first section that goes from chapter 1, verse 8, all the way through chapter 9 and verse 18.
- These chapters make up what is known as the prologue of the book of Proverbs. It's interesting as we get into this particular section, because what you really have here are sharp discourses.

If you read chapters 1 through 9, you'll see that these really don't fit the sharp, pithy kind of sayings that perhaps we've come to know as the Proverbs.

Yet they are Proverbs, nonetheless. They fit the pattern of Hebrew poetry with repetition and parallelism. That's here. You'll see that even as we go through the text on today.

But what you have in chapters 10 through 31, you have the more sharp, more random kind of Proverbs, and we'll be treating or dealing with some of those later in this particular series.

[4 : 29] When you send a child off to school or a part-time job, order some of the things that you really want that child to know.

You want to make sure they brush their teeth. And you know, moms, you know, and they probably say today, make sure you have on some clean underwear. I mean, that's something that mothers tell their children.

If you are a dad or a parent, as you launch a young man or young woman into the world, what are the things that you want that child to know?

What are the things that you want that child to do? Well, if you look at Proverbs chapters 1 through 9, it tells you some of those very things that you want.

You don't want your children to leave home without the lessons that you see in these particular chapters.

[5 : 41] A beautiful picture of what we have here. As a matter of fact, if you were to look in these chapters, chapters 1 through 9, there are just about a dozen such lessons that the Father gives to the sons.

We can see some of those things. As a matter of fact, if you look at chapter 1, I just want to give you a taste of the direction that he's going and help you to see how our text on this afternoon fits within these things.

They need to know that there will be invitations to live contrary to the way that you have taught them in your home. Everybody doesn't live the way that you live in their home.

There are, though they may not be best, alternative ways of doing life than the way that we've done it in our home. Chapter 1, verses 8 through 19 show that.

They need to see and understand that the moral and material benefits of wisdom. Chapter 2, verses 1 through 12.

[6 : 48] Chapter 3, verses 1 through 12. But chapter 2, really all of it. And chapter 3, 1 through 12 help you to see the moral and the material benefits of wisdom.

Children, people on the threshold of the rest of their lives, being thrust into adulthood, need to know and understand these things.

They need teaching about wisdom's value. Chapter 3, verses 21 through 35. And in chapter 4 that we're going to cover today, they need to know that wisdom is worth pursuing at all costs.

That's one of the chief things that we see in the text that we're looking at this afternoon. All of these, and there are moral lessons that we could go on and on, and again, at least about 10 to 12 of these father to son kind of lessons that parents want their children to know as they're going out into the world and how they need to intersect or interact with it.

So we come to our text on this afternoon, the nine verses before us, and I want you to see several wisdom-related conclusions that you and I can come to as we look at these verses.

[8 : 15] I'm going to give you, I'm going to bullet point them before, right up front, and then we will cover them one by one. First thing I want you to see is that wisdom's academy is the home.

Wisdom's academy is the home. Wisdom's voice is parental. Wisdom's voice is parental. Wisdom's words, we'll see those, that they are life-directing, and wisdom's rewards are life-enriching.

All of that, yes, in these verses that are before us on this afternoon. What about wisdom's academy is the home? Did you know that your home is, in fact, wisdom's academy?

It is the school through which or in which principles of wisdom are both taught and received. The primary learning center for wisdom is the home.

[9 : 26] Wisdom in knowing how to live skillfully, a life where reverent submission to the Lord is the centerpiece. The learning center for that, friends, is the home.

It's not the school, public or private, that you send your child to. It is the home.

Now, while it's likely that a royal court setting at least was the place of composition for the Proverbs that we have here, they were composed, but it is likely that the home eventually and ultimately was the place for dissemination.

It's sort of like these words of wisdom were Solomon's gift or God's gift through Solomon to the nations.

Just as the law was in Moses' mouth, but it found its way likewise to a home setting, so Solomon's Proverbs made its way to the homes and into the mouths as a resource for godly parents within the nations.

[10 : 44] Solomon and other wisdom teachers in Israel may have had their children as their immediate audience, but their ultimate audience was the youth and the nations in the home.

That's the way that we look at Proverbs. And obviously, as it was entered into the canon of Scripture, for the people of faith down through the ages, including you and me today.

So here, look at chapter 4 and verse 1. Hear, O sons of fathers' instructions. Four other texts in the book of Proverbs that address sons.

Notice that it is addressed to all sons, not simply the offspring of the speaker. The home setting is what's in view. Verse 3 includes the father and the mother and the father of the father that is going to be speaking.

And though the mother is cast in verse 3 in love of a nurturing, caring role, Proverbs chapter 1, verse 8 helps us to see that mothers could also function as teachers in the home.

[11 : 55] Hear, O sons of fathers' sons. Chapter 1, verse 8. Your father's instruction. And forsake not your mother's teaching. The academy for wisdom was the home.

One of the fond memories that we have of our child-rearing years was the summertime. We tried to help our children retain what they had learned in school, so we initiated what I fondly called Jackson Academy.

The instructions, we tried to get them sharpened in reading, writing, and arithmetic. But also we included Bible instruction and Bible memorization.

It was our efforts at trying to help our children to stay on point. The institutions that educate our children and not the primary learning centers.

It's the role of the home. And though you may not be officially homeschool your children, in a sense you actually do. It's the role of the parents in the home.

[13 : 05] To help them to understand the fear of God. Huh? That's the role of the home. Oh, children, come in. Here are my children, come unto me, and I will teach you.

I'll teach you the fear of the Lord. David, Psalm 34, verse 11, huh? Wisdom's Academy. As you see the different players here. The father. You see the father's father.

And again, you see this nurturing setting. Wisdom's Academy is the home. Wisdom's voice is parental. In verse 1, the parental voice is that of the father calling out to sons.

Again, sons in general. In verses 4 through 9, the parental voice is that of the grandfather. So here we have a father taking the leadership responsibility in the home.

In doing so, fathers make the most important investment that they can ever make in their lives. It's more important than career or professional development.

[14 : 13] Boy, I wish that as I was coming up as a person of faith, that I had heard these things more specifically.

Because I think that many of us have good hearts and want to do what's right. But sometimes we have bad examples. And we don't exactly know how to put the pieces in place.

But again, what we see here. Again, we see that wisdom's voice. The value of parents and the role that they're supposed to play in the lives of their children.

Oh, how society has taught you and me to make decisions based on economic advantage. To choose careers that provide money and things that money can buy along with prestige.

And sometimes these pathways take us away from the very roles as parents and spouses that really need to be at the centerpiece of our lives and of our homes.

[15 : 16] Wisdom's voice is the parental voice. And God uses parents as disseminators of wisdom that will help get their children in line, help to educate and to inform them.

And this is the spiritual trust. And part of the parental responsibility is instruction. Being used of the Lord as a channel, as a mouthpiece for godly wisdom.

Notice in the passage, the voice of the Father in this passage is the voice of experience and maturity. I give you good precepts.

They were good, they were tried, they were proven. Huh? Do not forsake my teaching. And look at his own experience. When I was a son with my father, verse 3, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me.

Huh? So he wasn't passing on something that he had not learned himself. It was older to the younger. The voice of fathers to sons. And one of my favorite terms these days, for those who are at least 15 or 20 years my junior, is son.

[16 : 32] Huh? Hear, oh sons, or hear my son. A term of tenderness and endearment. It's the father's voice.

Huh? The father's voice. That's the pattern. It's the plea of my son that rises 23 times in the book of Proverbs.

In chapters 1 through 9, 15 times. Four times in the book you hear this more general, broader plea. Oh sons! Huh? Of whatever type of son that you are.

Son, grandson. Huh? It's the voice of experience and maturity. That's the parental voice. It's the voice of confidence that you may gain good insight.

Huh? It's the voice of life experience. That's the parental voice. And it's the voice that those under us need.

[17 : 31] Huh? Wisdom's plea here. It's through the father in the home. And also through the grandfather, through the father's voice.

Huh? Oh, the tragedy of the absence of parental voices. Huh? Having the voices of parents and grandparents as voices of wisdom is critical to the well-being of our families and of society at large.

And listen to me this afternoon. If you have a parent or a grandparent and they are a channel for God's wisdom in your life, you should be grateful for that.

Huh? Remove these voices and there is a huge void within the family and within society. Oh, the tragic silence or even the absence of the voices of wisdom that are needed today.

Huh? Growing up in my home, the main voice of parental wisdom was that of my grandmother. My father, my father, for the most part, though a decent provider, was absent from the home.

[18 : 51] My mother, who was present, she did the best that she could with the tools that she had been given. But the primary voice of parental wisdom was that of my beloved grandmother, Madeline Harriet or Jackson Williams.

She was married twice. My grandfather was a Presbyterian minister. And then she married another minister after my grandfather passed away. But she had been schooled at the Presbyterian Scotia School for Girls in one of the Carolinas.

And I remember my grandmother's piano playing. She wasn't a Ben Liner, but she was doing a little something on the piano. I remember her hymn singing.

I remember her catechism reciting. And I remember her wise words about me watching the company that I kept and other kinds of things.

She was the voice of parental wisdom. I remember her encouragement to me. And now my brothers and I have these fond memories of the woman that we knew as Mama.

[20 : 10] Mama was 60 years old when I was born. She lived to be 101 years old. She didn't have it all together when she left us. But Mama remains dear.

And she was the poor voice. A parental wisdom. Who might that be in your life? Who was it that provided the kind of encouragement and godly wisdom that you still have flashbacks of that today?

Wisdom's academy is the home. Wisdom's words are parental. But wisdom's, whatever it was, is parental. I don't have. Wisdom's words are life-directing.

Wisdom's voice is parental. Wisdom's words are life-directing. Listen to the life-directing words that we hear in this passage. Words, friends, that are heeded.

They enable us to, we will embrace them with our lives. That enable us to live wisely. They come in the text both from the father and the grandfather.

[21 : 19] Through the father. Positive and negative instructions both come to us in the text. You see it even in verse 1. Be attentive. Do not forsake my teaching.

Listen in viewable being what you hear. Do not forsake. That's the other side of the coin. The positive things or the negative things. But all of them, oh get with, these are life-directing kind of words.

Things you need to embrace. Things that you need to avoid. Huh? But most of what we see here in the text, these are, you might even say, they're second-hand, hand-me-down kind of wisdom that the father is giving.

Because he's giving the lessons, these life, these foundational lessons that really have no shelf life to them. They just go on and on and on and on and that's the nature of wisdom, isn't it?

It doesn't expire with your generation or my generation or previous generations. It has a way of going on and on and on. The words of the grandfather had become the words of the father.

[22 : 28] And of course the desire was that eventually these would become the words of the son. The father couldn't improve upon what he had learned from his father. And thus he passed them on.

They needed no modification. Inherent in these guidelines was a relevance that really transcended time. Look at verse 4. Let your heart hold fast.

The storage place of the grandfather's instruction was not primarily the head, but it was the life center of the heart from which all of the issues of life flow.

And that's why the writer of Proverbs says, I believe in chapter 4, verse 23, keep your heart with all diligence because out of it proceed the very issues of life. Let your heart hold fast.

What does one do with parental instruction? You store it up. Seems like the son, this father, had done just that. Notice the life-directing words of verse 5.

[23 : 30] Get wisdom. Get wisdom and its attendant virtue insight. Don't forget. Don't forsake her. And you see these words sort of repeated in verse 7.

The emphasis is on the supremacy of wisdom, the focus of verse 7. That's what the grandfather's words emphasize. An alternative translation of verse 7 says, Wisdom is the principal thing.

Therefore, get wisdom in all you're getting. Get an understanding. Did you memorize that one? That was one that I memorized earlier. Wisdom is the main thing. And here's the idea. Go after her.

Purchase her. Dedicate yourself to a pursuit of wisdom. Make wisdom your chief business is the idea. She's so critical to your success in life.

Go after her. And here's the idea. As she were a bride for which you are willing to pay the most expensive dowry, this bridal price.

[24 : 35] Go after her in that kind of way. Get wisdom. Get insight. Don't forget. Do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her.

She'll keep you. And on and on. What's the lesson? Wisdom is supreme. Get her. Purchase her. But here's something you need to understand.

She's not cheap. She is not cheap. Wisdom Academy is the home. The voice is parental. The words are life-directing.

And finally, wisdom's rewards are life-enriching. Huh? Look at verse 8. Well, as a matter of fact, you can just really go on down.

But, and I'll backtrack a little bit. But notice what it says in verse 8. Prize her highly. And she will, what? Exalt you.

[25 : 32] She will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a graceful girl. And she will bestow on you a beautiful crown. Wisdom is to be prized highly.

Why? Because of her exquisite value. That's why. And we see this. This comes through in chapter 3 and verse 13.

Look at that with me. Perhaps across the page or back of page. Listen to what it says. Listen how the price tag of wisdom and how valuable and precious she is.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom and the one who gets understanding. For the gain of her is, listen to this comparative, is better than gain for silver. And her profit better than gold.

She is more precious than jewels. And nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

[26 : 32] She is a tree of life to those who lay hold on her. Those who hold her fast are called blessed. What you're talking about, Pastor Jay? Well, first of all, wisdom will enrich one's life with security.

You see that in verse 6? The protective nature of wisdom comes through. She will protect. She will guard, just as in Psalm 121. How the Lord will watch over and guard and keep soul wisdom for those who possess her.

Those who embrace wisdom come under her protective banner. And then you see in verse 8, not only will we enrich one with security, wisdom will enrich one's life with honor.

Honor as opposed to shame. She will give you a crown of honor rather than a dunce cap or a shameful garment of fools.

And wisdom here is described as a wealthy patron who takes care of someone. That's the role of wisdom in the life of those who embrace her and value her and see her as supreme.

[27 : 51] And there is this sort of, you can't outdo her. If you pursue her, she'll bless you back and will give more than you give to her.

You can't outdo wisdom. You pursue her, she'll pursue you. And not only that, there will be rewards that more than match your pursuit.

Oh, friends, what a pursuit. And so this father speaking to youths on the threshold, telling them what they need as they make their way into the world.

And so those of us today who remain parents and grandparents, oh, what a charge it is implicitly here for us, huh?

The timeless lessons of the text before us. Is your home an academy for teaching in word and wisdom and actions about wisdom? If it's not, it should be.

[28 : 59] The passage before us reminds us of that. And if you are unmarried and desire to be one day, this is a great model for dads particularly, but parents in general.

Parents and grandparents are your voices the voices of wisdom. Are your words life-directing in the highest sense? Are you a channel for the very wisdom of God?

Huh? Parents, do you treasure your children when you live in reverent submission to the Lord and teach your children also to fear the Lord? Huh?

Children, if this passage gives you a glimpse of your parents and grandparents, you should be grateful, again, to have these kind of people who are your primary life instructors, huh?

People in pursuit. People in pursuit. That was our motto at JBC as we took the time to craft our mission statement.

[30 : 05] And in a sense, that's what all of us are. Here it describes what could be people in pursuit, huh? The idea of relentless pursuit of that which is supremely valuable comes into clear focus here, doesn't it, huh?

And, brothers and sisters, you and I as believers in Christ, we have a pattern for the pursuit of that which is extremely precious.

Our passion for Christ in pursuit of Christ should be nothing less than our pursuit of wisdom. Again, as we spoke about Solomon, epitomized wisdom.

Christ personalized wisdom and personified wisdom, huh? Again, the kingdom of God. And think about this. Jesus, you remember his parables?

In Matthew chapter 13, he gave this parable, huh? The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it, huh?

[31 : 23] That is an echo of this passage, huh? It's the relentless pursuit. And if you have Christ, you have that which far exceeds any other entity in the universe as far as that which you and I need to be pursuing.

He's worthy of our pursuit, huh? What we see in these chapters provide a pattern for how we should seek Christ and embrace him. Oh, we've even adopted us, have a song from chapter 3, Proverbs chapter 3.

We've converted it and we've talked to the Lord. We tell him, Lord, you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold.

Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. And nothing I desire compares with you, huh? What kind of young adults need to be launched into this world?

Those who humbly sit at their parents' feet and hear God's wisdom for life through them. Godly homes are learning centers for promoting godly wisdom and the knowledge of God's Son.

[32 : 35] Huh? That's the New Testament corollary and New Testament end promoting godly wisdom, but also the one in whom God's wisdom has been embodied.

Christ, and our prayer this afternoon is that parents and grandparents would embrace the responsibility and to teach, and that children would accept the responsibility to pursue God's wisdom and to pursue God's Son based on the pattern that we see here.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we honor you on this afternoon.

And Lord, as we see this such inviting kind of picture that in a sense calls both learners and teachers of wisdom, home-based, godly, wisdom-oriented, understanding wisdom's value.

But also pointing even to one who is even greater than wisdom. That the pattern of our pursuit of wisdom needs to be put in gear even in our pursuit of Christ.

[34 : 09] May you be honored and may you be glorified in and through all under the sound of my voice this day. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Won't you stand?