

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**September 11, 2011**

**From Generation to Generation**

Proverbs 4:10-15, 20-27

**Key verse: “Keep hold of instructions; do not let go; guard her for she is your life” (Proverbs 4:13).**

Raisin in the Sun, the famous Broadway play, tells about an African-American mother struggling to keep two young-adult children on the right track. In one scene, the mother must deal with her daughter’s angry skepticism.

The daughter announces defiantly, “Mama, you don’t understand. It’s all a matter of ideas, and God is one idea I just don’t accept. There is simply no blasted God!”

With dignity and strength, the mother says, “I want you to repeat this after me: In my mother’s house, there is still God.”

After a long pause, the daughter honors her mother’s affirmation of faith. Slowly, quietly, she says, “In my mother’s house, there is still God.

That conversation demonstrates the vitally important task that each generation has of passing the torch of moral and spiritual truth to the next generation.

Old Testament scholar George Kufeldt, in his commentary on Proverbs, writes: “It is a sobering fact that true values and morality are always only one generation removed from possible extinction. It is not enough that the present generation was taught the way of righteousness and justice by its fathers; the torch of righteousness and justice must just as surely be passed on to our children, who in turn must pass it on undimmed to their children. For one generation to allow the light to go out would mean that succeeding generations must be doomed to stumble in darkness.”

In Proverbs 4, a parent instructs his child (or perhaps a teacher his student) in living a godly life, based on godly wisdom. “Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many” (v. 10). “I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble” (vv. 11-12).

This godly parent/teacher wants to lead his child in the ways of God, so that the child *walks right, talks right, and sees right....*

**1. Godly wisdom will cause us to “walk” right.** “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers” (v. 14). “Keep straight the path of

your feet, and all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil” (vv. 26-27). In Proverbs, *wisdom* is less about what we know theoretically than it is about how we live our lives—how we “walk.”

**2. Godly wisdom will cause us to talk right.** “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you” (v. 24). In Ephesians 4:29, we are reminded that to “talk right” means not saying the wrong things (e.g., lying, gossiping, profanity), but to “talk right” also means speaking words that encourage and build up others: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

**3. Godly wisdom will cause us to see right.** This involves a conscious decision to focus on things that bring us closer to God and his purposes for us, not things that draw us away from the Lord. “Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you” (v. 25). Philippians 4:8 puts it this way: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

The godly father of Proverbs 4 wants to guide his child to live a godly life, according to godly wisdom. But he realizes that the power to walk right, talk right, and see right comes only from a *heart* that is right with God! “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (v. 23).

The Bible teaches that, if we store up good things in our hearts, then our thoughts, words, and actions will be good. “I have hidden your word in my heart,” wrote the Psalmist, “that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). And Jesus said, “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

The Russian author, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, spent years as a prisoner in the Soviet forced labor camps. It was there that he became a committed Christian, and from his prison experiences and subsequent conversion to Christ came insights such as the following: “Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line dividing good and evil passes not through states, not between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart.”

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