

# 11. Get Wisdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, now we come to our reading from the scriptures, and I'd like you to turn with me, please, to the book of Proverbs, chapter 4 and verse 1. We've had quite a few sermons from me in recent months in the evening services on Proverbs, and I think this will be the last one for the time being.

But it is important for us to listen again and again to this great moral instruction given to us by the Lord, given to us within a framework of grace. Because the underlying motto of the book of Proverbs is that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So Proverbs, chapter 4, and I'll read verse 1 to verse 19 of Father's wise instructions. Hear, O sons, a Father's instruction, and be attentive that you may gain insight.

For I give you good precepts. Do 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.

Keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom. Get insight. Do not forget. And do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

[ 1 : 24 ] Do not forsake her. That is wisdom. And she will keep you. Love her. And she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this.

Get wisdom. And whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly. And 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. Hear, my son, and accept my words that the years of your life may be many.

I've taught you the way of wisdom. I've led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered. And if you run, you will not stumble.

Keep hold of instruction. Do not let go. Guard her. Guard her. For she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked. And do not walk in the way of the evil.

[ 2 : 23 ] Avoid it. Do not go on it. Turn away from it and pass on. For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong. They're robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness. They do not know over what they stumble. Well, let's turn again to Proverbs chapter 4, if we may please.

And you'll find that on page 529 in our Visitor's Bibles. Page 529. Christian people need to hear both the gospel and the lifestyle which accords with the gospel.

Both the good news of what God has done for us. But having heard that and understood it, we need to hear also a great deal about the kind of life that we live in response to God's kindness to us.

[ 3 : 41 ] And that's why the Bible contains moral instruction. Instruction for how to live in the fear of the Lord. And the book of Proverbs, I guess perhaps more than any other book, is a book of godly moral instruction.

Now that phrase moral instruction, I don't know what that does for you. But it may sound rather gloomy and forbidding. Moral instruction. The kind of phrase perhaps that Charles Dickens might have used about some fearsome 19th century headmaster.

The sort of headmaster who kept a flexible cane on the mantelpiece of his study. So as to ginger up the rear ends of naughty boys. Now the moral instruction of the book of Proverbs is anything but gloomy.

It is lively. It's stimulating. And it is very much needed today. Badly needed because this moral instruction is firm and fixed and God given.

Whereas the world we live in today is spectacularly losing its moral bearings. So we need this fixed instruction that comes to us from God.

[ 4 : 50 ] Let me give a typical example of this loss of moral bearings that we experience today. I can think of a number of occasions over the last 20 years or so. When a grandmother or a grandfather has been speaking to me about their granddaughter.

And the grandparent has said something like this. Do you know our granddaughter is a lovely girl. She's 21 now and we love her to pieces and we always have done. But she's just moved into a flat with her boyfriend.

And it's very upsetting to us. In our day when we were young we never set up home together until we were married. But it seems to be so different these days. Is she doing wrong?

Or are we wrong? Are we supposed now to adjust the moral goal posts and accept that the world lives by different standards? Now I just pick that example out as an obvious common example of the kind of moral confusion that pervades our contemporary world.

As a society moves away from the Bible gospel it is bound to lose its grip also on the Bible's moral instruction. Because the two things belong together like the wallpaper and the wall.

[ 6 : 01 ] But the Bible's moral teaching is fixed and stable. It doesn't vary with the passing of the generations and the centuries. And it doesn't alter between one culture and another.

So the Bible's teaching applies in just the same way for Christians in Nigeria as it does for Christians in China as it does for Christians in Britain. And there is something within chapter 4 of the book of Proverbs that helps us to see how the same moral instruction applies to each successive generation in exactly the same way.

It's what you might call the three generations element in chapter 4. Perhaps you'd look with me at the text and I think you'll soon see what I mean. In verse 1, a father, King Solomon, is speaking to his sons.

So he says, hear, O sons, a father's instruction. And he repeats that same idea more or less in verse 10. Hear, my son, and accept my words. So there we have two generations, Solomon and his son or his sons.

But look at verse 3. Because in verse 3, Solomon introduces a third generation, his own father, David. So he says to his sons in verse 3, When I was a son with my father, going back 20 or 30 or 40 years, when I was tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me, my father taught me and said to me, let your heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and live.

[ 7 : 30 ] And you'll see that the whole of that speech, from verse 4 to the end of verse 9, is the words of David, which Solomon has remembered from his youth and is now passing on a generation later to his own children.

So we have three generations here. We have the grandfather, the father, and the sons. And the same moral instruction is to be handed on from one generation to another without being changed.

Now this means, therefore, that there are two elements that we need to notice as we read this passage. The first element is simply that all this moral teaching applies to us today.

And most of the sermon tonight I want to use to spend on looking at the moral teaching of chapter 4 and applying it to ourselves. But there is a second element, and that concerns the responsibility of parents to teach their children how to live a godly life.

So this chapter is not only here to give us moral instruction. It's also here to teach parents to teach their children. Now I know that quite a few of us here are or have been the parents of young children or the parents of teenagers.

[ 8 : 45 ] There are others here. We have a lot of young adults, which is terrific, who are not yet parents, but who may well be one day. In fact, I think St. George's Tron has had a bit of a baby boom in recent months, which is lovely.

I don't know why it is. Maybe it's this water. It's not drawn from the River Clyde, I can tell you. It's delicious. It's great to have a baby boom. But when you become the mother or the father of a new baby, you quickly realize with a sense of shock that you now have a major responsibility on your hands.

And that's especially true if it's your first baby. I think of my eldest child, who is now 29 years old and married himself. But I can still remember the day that we brought him home from the maternity hospital.

One of those days that is riveted in your mind forever. I can still picture it. I was alone with my baby son for a few minutes in the bedroom. And he was lying on the floor on a baby changing mat in his nappy.

A totally helpless little scrap of humanity. And the thought landed upon me like a ton of bricks that I and my wife were now responsible for this yelling infant.

[ 9 : 58 ] And that it was up to us not only to feed him and clothe him, but to teach him how to live. To teach him in due course the gospel and the lifestyle of the Bible.

Including, of course, the moral instruction of the book of Proverbs. Now, a young parent feels enormously inadequate in the face of such a big task.

The young parent feels, I know so little. Who am I to instruct a child? If only I had the wisdom of Solomon. But the fact is that we do have the wisdom of Solomon, don't we?

It's here in front of us in the book of Proverbs. It's available to every parent. So if you're a parent now, or perhaps you will be in the near future, don't despair.

We have 31 chapters of the book of Proverbs. It's a kind of training manual. So that we can bring up our little Caleb or Fiona or Lachlan or Phoebe.

[ 10 : 57 ] In the fear and instruction of the Lord. Alright, now I want to leave behind, I want to leave aside that second element. The element of parents instructing their children. Let's turn now to our main task, which is to see how Proverbs chapter 4 applies to us.

And I want to take this in two sections. First, what the Lord requires of us. And secondly, what the Lord promises to give us. So first of all, what the Lord requires of us.

And I've got two points under this heading. First, the Lord requires an open ear. An open ear. Look at verse 1. Hear, O sons, a father's instruction.

Now, why should King Solomon have to say to his sons, hear my instruction? I mean, wouldn't they be falling over themselves to listen to the wise words of the most famous man in the world for wisdom?

Didn't you, when you were a young child, go to your father regularly? Let's say on a Saturday afternoon when he was perhaps asleep in his armchair. Didn't you wake him up and say to him, Father, Dad, instruct me, please.

[ 12 : 07 ] I'm sitting at your feet here. I've got my notebook in front of me and a big pencil. I just can't wait to hear the words of wisdom pouring out of your mouth so that I can make copious notes. Did you behave like that?

Of course you didn't. Neither did I. Your ear, when you were that sort of age, your ear was tuned in to the pop charts, the football results, and the voice of your mother calling from the kitchen that the chocolate cake was now out of the oven.

But your ear was not tuned to your father's wisdom. It never occurred to you, as it never occurred to me, to ask your father to teach you how to live a godly life.

So do you see, in verse 1, the father is calling out to ears that are not predisposed to listen. That's why he has to say, hear, my sons.

Open your ears. Unplug your iPods. Switch off the television and listen to your father. Now, it's easy to skim over verse 1. But verse 1 shows us that our ears do need to be tuned.

[ 13 : 11 ] God is requiring us to learn to be listeners to his wisdom. Because by nature, our ears will tune in to lots of other things, but not to the godly wisdom of the book of Proverbs.

Do you know the picture logo of the old HMV records and CDs? Which I think you still find around, don't you, if you buy an HMV CD. It's a great illustration of a great biblical truth.

There's that little dog, a Jack Russell with a patch over one eye, I think he is. And he's listening with his ears cocked into the great big bell of the old-fashioned gramophone. And the reason he's listening so carefully is because he's listening to his master's voice.

So there's the first requirement, an ear that is open to the master's voice. Jesus said, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The implication is that some ears are waxed up. So if an open ear is the first requirement, the second requirement is a real hunger for God's wisdom, a real desire to live a godly life in the fear of the Lord.

[ 14 : 23 ] As King Solomon quotes the words of King David to his own sons, he's wanting to form their values. So having said in verse 4 that the important thing is to hold fast to his words and keep his commandments, he then launches into two commandments with a very blunt three-letter verb, get.

He says, get wisdom, get insight. You'll see that in verse 5. Get wisdom, get insight. The command get, it's a very blunt little Anglo-Saxon word, very forthright.

It doesn't beat about any bush, does it? It's not like saying, you might care, my son, if it's not too much trouble for you, and if nothing else is more pressing, to give a little thought to these words.

No. This is an insistent voice. Get wisdom, my boy, if you value your life at all. It comes out even more strongly in verse 7. Verse 7 moves in such an unexpected direction.

Let's look at that verse together. You'd expect David to say to Solomon, and this is still David here speaking to Solomon. You'd expect David to say in verse 7, the beginning of wisdom is this.

[ 15 : 34 ] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now we'd expect him to say that because that's what we read back in chapter 1, verse 7. But David says this strange thing.

The beginning of wisdom is this. Get wisdom. And whatever you get, whatever you get or don't get, get insight. So what verse 7 is really saying is that the beginning of wisdom is the desire to get wisdom.

Yes, wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. But if there's no hunger for wisdom in this boy's heart, the boy will never be wise. He will simply follow the way of the world.

And God, in the end, will be a stranger to him. Now isn't all this by way of such contrast to the values of the world? Just think of the typical worldly family, the typical non-Christian family.

What values does the father want to see being formed in the hearts of his children? Surely his own values. That's what a father in the world wants.

[ 16 : 40 ] So if the father is, let's say, a wealthy, hard-nosed businessman, he will want his children to acquire that same drive to earn money.

Or if the father is a fanatical supporter of one of the top football clubs, Manchester United, for example, or Celtic, or Rangers, or Stenhouse Muir, if he's a fan, he will want his children to become the same as he is himself.

He will even be dressing up his children when they're very young in the club's football strip, when they're scarcely out of nappies. You know those little tiny football shirts you can buy for very little children, which sport the team's colors.

They even put the name of the best player on the back with a number 7 or a number 10. So fathers who value what the world idolizes will want their children to develop the same values.

But fathers and mothers who love and fear the Lord will say to their children, in the words of verse 7, get wisdom. And whatever else you get or don't get, like, for example, a good education, a fine wife or husband, a good job, a nice house with two Dalmatians in the garden, a racehorse, a yacht, and a season ticket to Old Trafford, whatever else you get or don't get, get insight into what it means to live a godly life.

[ 18 : 00 ] Do you see what the father is saying to the son here? My son, one thing is important. One thing. Nothing else is important. Get godly wisdom. Learn to live in the fear of the Lord.

Develop a hunger and a disposition to prize the Lord and the teaching of the Bible above all earthly things. Friends, if everybody in this country believed and followed verse 7, we would be living in heaven on earth.

So the question is raised, are our hearts set on getting wisdom? Wisdom so that we can live our lives seven days a week, fearing the Lord and loving him, and obeying his commandments with joy at home, at school or college, at work or play, with our family, our friends, and in the company of Christian people.

Is it our delight to grow in the knowledge of the Lord? Or is it other things that actually fill our dreams and our daydreams? Verse 7 again.

The beginning of wisdom is this. Get wisdom. And whatever you get, get insight. And then look at verse 8.

[ 19 : 19 ] Prize her highly. Prize wisdom, God's wisdom, highly. Now just imagine that you're an adult and you've been asked to speak at a school assembly in a secondary school.

And there you are. You've gone along feeling a bit nervous about the whole thing. But you're sitting up on the platform at the front of the big school hall with the teachers. And in front of you, there is the school, the secondary school.

S1, S2, S3, right the way back to S6. Rows and rows of teenagers. And here you are. You've been given the microphone and you can address the children.

And you've decided to ask them various questions, which they have to answer honestly. And just imagine that they do really answer those questions now honestly. So here are your questions.

First question. Who greatly prizes a favourite football team? Well, you get forests of hands that go up in answer to that question. Who wants to play cricket for Scotland?

[ 20 : 22 ] Three hands go up. Cricket is a great game. Scotland's not the best place to play it in, I know. Anyway, a few hands go up. Your next question. Who wants to look amazingly cool and be admired for their good looks?

Well, just about every hand in the hall goes up, doesn't it? Who wants to earn lots of money and live in a fabulous house? Lots of hands go up there. Who wants to be driving a BMW before the age of 23?

Quite a few hands go up there, don't they? Who wants to learn the wisdom of God from the Bible so as to live a life that pleases God? One or two very courageous hands might go up at that point.

Now, what do these teenagers value? Look at verse 8. Prize her highly. That's wisdom. That's David's advice to Solomon.

And it's Solomon's advice to his sons and to us. Solomon is saying, I want to form your values, my son. I want you to learn while you're young what is to be valued most in life.

[ 21 : 31 ] Now, what about the older ones here, those of us who have left teenage a long time behind? Have we learned to prize and value God's wisdom? Let me ask this question.

When you sit down to read your Bible on your own, how do you open it? What sort of what's going on in your head as you open your Bible? Do you open it with a sigh and a glance at the clock as though it's just another chore that you have to get through, a bit like brushing your teeth?

Or do you open it with a sense of pleasure and begin to devour it as a hungry man devours a plate of fish and chips? Jeremiah the prophet once said to the Lord, your words were found and I ate them.

And they became to me the joy and the delight of all my heart, for I'm called by your name, O Lord God of hosts. Get wisdom, says King Solomon.

Prize her highly. So there are two things that the Lord requires and what a blessing it is to us that he requires them. First of all, he asks us to open our ears. And secondly, he asks us to prize his words of wisdom.

[ 22 : 42 ] Well, now, secondly, let's notice what the Lord promises to give us as we meet his requirements. And these are great and lovely promises that he gives us. First, he promises to those who hear and value his wisdom that wisdom will keep us and guard us.

Look at verse six with me. Do not forsake her. Do not forsake wisdom. And she will keep you. Love her. And she will guard you. Now, what do David and Solomon mean by that?

In what sense can God's wisdom keep and guard a believer? The idea is one of protection. That wisdom protects those who value her and listen to her.

Let me just give you a couple of examples. And I think we'll quickly see what these verses are really about. Imagine that you're a young Christian man and you're studying at college or university.

And let's imagine that you play in one of the college teams, rugby or football. It's Saturday afternoon and you're playing a match against another team.

[ 23 : 53 ] And at the end of the game, you go off with your teammates. You enjoy your team tea together. And then somebody says, let's go to such and such a pub or a club and we'll have a great evening together.

So you all go off together as a body to this particular pub or club and you have a glass of something to drink. But you quickly see that your teammates are bent on getting drunk.

In fact, you're hardly through the door before some of them are drinking heavily. And the pressure is on you to do the same. But you've been reading those parts of Proverbs which show you how pathetic and silly it is to get drunk.

You might even have read the verse in chapter 25 that says, a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls. So you say to yourself, I'm not going to make myself like a city which has lost all its defenses.

So you quickly say goodbye to your friends and you go home. And the next day when you meet your friends, you can see they look pretty terrible.

[ 24 : 59 ] They've got aching heads and bruised faces where perhaps they walked into a lamppost the night before. You have been kept and guarded by wisdom. You've been getting God's wisdom into your system and you're learning to live by it.

And it has protected you, guarded you. Let me give another example. Again, you're a Christian young man. You're at a party with many other young people and you get talking to a pretty girl.

And after you've been talking with her for a few minutes and you've been getting on quite well, she suddenly looks you in the eye and she says to you, come to bed with me. Now, if you've been getting the wisdom of Proverbs into your system, you will be very aware of the dangers of seduction.

Proverbs has a lot to say on that subject. So when the girl gives you that invitation, what do you do? You do this. You turn on your heel and you walk away without another word.

You don't entertain that suggestion for one second. God's wisdom in the book of Proverbs is guarding you. It's protecting you from getting your life into a great mess of disobedience and unhappiness and guilt.

[ 26 : 12 ] Because if you accepted that invitation, that's what it would lead to. So there's the first promise in verse six. God's wisdom, as we get it into us, will keep us, guard us, protect us.

Now, secondly, from verses eight and nine, God's wisdom will exalt us and honor us. Let me read verses eight and nine again. Prize her highly and 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. Now, the idea here is not that Christian people should go around coveting people's applause and praise.

The point is that those who prize God's wisdom and live by it will be honored in the community. Because the community will recognize how attractive and wholesome their way of life is.

Look at those lovely pictures painted in verse nine. Wisdom will place on your head a graceful garland. Now, we don't tend to go in for garlands very much in our society these days.

[ 27 : 22 ] But the idea of the garland in the ancient world was that you could be given a circlet of leaves and twigs, perhaps from an olive tree or a laurel tree.

And this circlet or little crown of twigs was placed on the head of the athlete who had just won his race or his class for throwing the discus or running the 200 yards or whatever. It was the equivalent of winning a medal at the Olympics.

So at the prize giving, after the competition, the people who were wearing these garlands were being honored as the ones who had done particularly well. Then later, in verse nine, you have this beautiful crown.

Again, it's a symbol of honor. It's worn by a prince or a princess, somebody who is worthy of great respect. Now, let me give you just a homely example of this.

A few weeks ago, I happened to be eavesdropping on a conversation between medical people. And these medics, these doctors, were talking about a particular consultant psychiatrist, a Christian man in Glasgow.

[ 28 : 25 ] And in their conversation, they were honoring him. Very interesting to listen to it. They were saying not only what a very good psychiatrist he was, but how well he handled the other aspects of his work, how prompt he was at dealing with his administration, how quickly he would answer emails and so on, how thoroughly and carefully he attended every detail of his work outside the consulting room as well as inside the consulting room.

So that was a conversation which exactly illustrated verse nine in our chapter. This Christian doctor was using the wisdom of God and applying it to his life and work, and the value of his life was being recognized and honored in the conversation of others.

So God's wisdom exalts and honors those who practice it. And of course, that honor doesn't simply stop with the Christian. It brings honor to the Lord as well.

Well, then third, God's wisdom will enable the believer to live strongly and authentically. Strongly and authentically. This is really what verses 10 to 13 are about.

So let me read them again. Hear, my son, and accept my words that the years of your life may be many. I've taught you the way of wisdom. I've led you in the paths of uprightness.

[ 29 : 47 ] When you walk, your step will not be hampered. And if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction. Do not let go.

Guard her, for she is your life. Now, isn't that final phrase of verse 13 a terrific incentive to learn God's wisdom and to love it and to keep it?

Guard her, for she is your life. What's the implication? If you don't guard her, you'll be walking on the road that leads to death. I think it's good for us to notice the double guarding which is taught in this passage.

So first of all, verse 6, love wisdom and she will guard you. But then verse 13, you must guard her, for she is your life.

So it's a mutual two-way guarding here. She will guard us as we learn to love her. But we too are to guard her, for she is our life.

[ 30 : 49 ] If we let her go, we may end up walking the broad road that leads to destruction. So let me pick out just one or two aspects of verses 10 to 13.

The second half of verse 10, that the years of your life may be many, it's not a cast-iron promise that every person who lives by God's wisdom is going to live to be 100.

That second half of verse 10 is speaking of a tendency or a trend, a general rule, even though it will have many exceptions. The fact is that on the whole, life is longer and richer and fuller for the Lord's people than for those who are not believers.

Of course there are exceptions. There are rogues who live to be 100, just as some of the most delightful Christian people sometimes die young. But life is often extended for those who love and fear the Lord, because the Lord's people learn how to live in the best way, with moderation and self-control.

Then verse 11 states a fact about Solomon. He has taught his son the way of wisdom. He's led him in the paths of uprightness. And the consequence of this, verse 12, is that the son will be able to walk through life with a long, bold stride.

[ 32 : 11 ] He'll be able to run without falling over a log every 10 yards. A life lived without God's wisdom will often stumble and falter.

Just picture the visual images which are painted there in verse 12. First of all, you have a person walking. And this person is walking with unhampered step. Now, if you've got a decent pair of legs, I mean legs that work well, I'm not talking about the shape of them, but you know what I mean.

A decent, strong pair of legs. And if your hips are in good condition, and your knees and ankles are all in good working order, that means you can stride out for miles, perhaps at four miles an hour.



You could be, you're the sort of person, I guess, you could be up and down Ben Lomond in an afternoon, couldn't you? But if you've got a problem with your legs or your hips or your knees or your ankles, if you've got toes that aren't quite right or varicose veins or something else like that, you can't do that.

And life becomes frustrating and difficult. And it's the same with running in the second half of verse 12. Do you know there are some people in this building who used to be really good runners 50 years or so ago, when they were in their teens and twenties.

[ 33 : 28 ] But now, even if a man-eating lion were pursuing them, they couldn't run three steps without falling over, because it's a long time since they were in their teens or their twenties.

The power to run somehow leeches out of your system after a certain age. I'm beginning to learn all about that. But verse 12 here is, of course, not about our physical abilities.

It's simply using the idea of walking and running as a picture of how we cope with the challenges of life in a difficult world. And the point of verses 10 to 12 is that we shall be able to encounter the challenges of life well and strongly if we have allowed God's wisdom to permeate our hearts and our thinking.

Let me give a simple down-to-earth example. One of the big emphases in the book of Proverbs is on the importance of truthfulness and honesty in our speech.

All of us tend by nature to be economical with the truth, usually because we want to make ourselves appear rather better people than we really are.

[ 34 : 36 ] Now, when we were children, we were often blatantly untruthful, weren't we? Did you smash that window? No, I didn't. But the truth is that I did.

It's just that I want to appear to be a better little boy than I actually am. Now, as we get older, that same tendency is still there to represent ourselves as finer human beings than we really are.

It's just that we're more subtle and our dishonesties become harder to detect. But in the phrases of verse 12, untruthfulness will hamper our step and it will make us stumble.

If we are less than fully honest in our talk and our relationships with other people, we will damage those relationships. We will undermine our trustworthiness. We'll compromise our integrity.

But when we take on board the teaching of Proverbs about truthful speech and transparent honesty, our steps will no longer be hampered. We shan't stumble or fall.

[ 35 : 37 ] Well, friends, I must draw to a close. But let me just ask this question. What is the heart of this passage in chapter four? It is the strong encouragement to get wisdom, to guard God's wisdom, to prize God's wisdom and to listen to God's wisdom.

There's no shortcut to it. It is a lifetime's process. I hope nobody here is under the illusion that the moment you come to Christ, you know everything there is to be known about the Christian life.

It isn't like that at all. The baby Christian is a baby. We grow in the Christian life from day one until we reach the end of our life.

We have an enormous capacity to grow and we have an enormous need to grow. But we shan't grow steadily and strongly unless we're determined to get wisdom.

There are some Christians who make comparatively little growth because they've never seen the need to listen to wisdom, God's wisdom, to love his wisdom, to get wisdom and prize wisdom and guard wisdom.

[ 36 : 50 ] But that is the message of Proverbs chapter four. So let me end with verse 13. Keep hold of instruction. Do not let go. Guard her.

For she is your life. If we value our lives and our usefulness in Christian service, we shall take seriously the lifelong joyful task of getting God's wisdom deep into our systems.

It will be the making of us. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Dear God, our Father, how we thank you that you have given us the wisdom of Solomon in these chapters of this great Bible book.

And because by nature our minds and our hearts are in a mess and our natural element is chaos and darkness, we do pray that you will give to all of us a growing love for the wisdom that you've given us here in the scriptures and that you'll help us not to be like people who are blown here and there by every trend in society, but rather people who are able to learn the fixed and wonderful nature of your wisdom, which is passed on from generation to generation.

We pray, therefore, that you'll make us strong, not simply for our own sake, but so that we can pass on this good news about Christ to many others. And we ask these things in Jesus' name.

[ 38 : 32 ] Amen.