



## Union Avenue Baptist Church

INTEGRITY MATTERS • INDIVIDUAL OF INTEGRITY • PROVERBS 4:20-27, 6:16-19 •

11/15/2020

### LEARN GOD'S WORD

Wisdom/Integrity is the greatest gift we can pass down to the next generation

### READ GOD'S WORD

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is a favorite heirloom that has been passed down in your family? Why is the item important or valuable to you?**

**What are some other things that are commonly passed from one generation to the next through inheritance?**

The Book of Proverbs is all about preserving and passing along the best of godly wisdom from one generation to the next, as well as integrity. In Scripture, integrity is sought after. It's more than wealth; integrity is how to best handle possessions (money, property, and so forth) so that you and others benefit from them, not be controlled by them. Integrity isn't about being able to outfox people or use them to your advantage; it's about relating with others honestly, humbly, and generously—whether with spouses, parents and children, friends, coworkers, or neighbors. Like all the other attributes of God revealed in Scripture, wisdom and integrity finds its true and ultimate expression in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:24).

### UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| READ PROVERBS 6:16-19.

**Why do you think Solomon used this "six things...no, seven" when introducing the list?**

**Do you think this is an exhaustive list or a representative one, and why?**

**What do you notice about the first five elements on the list? Why do you think the Lord specifies just one element with each body part?**

**Why do you think Solomon concludes with “the one who stirs up trouble” as the final element in his list?**

Solomon fleshed out a vivid description of the troublemaker. He spoke of both their intentions and behaviors. The first five on the list moved from the head to the feet and concerned general moral characteristics such as pride, deceitfulness, and a violent tendency. The last two describe those who break the bonds of confidence and loyalty by offering false testimony and stirring up trouble among brothers. When we are committed to being people of integrity, to demonstrate good character, these are some of the intentions and behaviors we are to avoid. Notice that being involved with any of these destroys a person’s integrity. You cannot honor God if these traits define your life.

| READ PROVERBS 4:20-27

**How would you explain to someone what it means that Scripture’s teachings are “life to those who find them, and health to one’s whole body” (4:22)?**

**Why is it of utmost importance for the believer to “guard [the] heart” (4:23)? What are some practical ways believers can do this?**

**How can believers show wisdom with their “mouth” (4:24)? With their “eyes” (4:25)? With their “feet” (4:26)?**

In Proverbs 4, a father urges his sons not to miss out on the best heirloom he has to give them. It isn’t money, herds, land, or precious jewels. It’s wisdom—the same godly wisdom that his father and mother passed down to him. It’s the key to a truly successful, meaningful life. Yet wisdom can’t be inherited automatically. It must be embraced, cherished, held on to, practiced, and guarded throughout one’s life

The father in Proverbs 4—similar to what the apostle Paul did in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and Ephesians 6:14-17—used parts of the human body as metaphors to describe wise living. In biblical terms, the “heart” was the seat of the will, the center of moral decision-making and action. Thus, the heart was viewed as “the source of life” that was to be guarded with all diligence (Prov. 4:23). From the mouth could come either blessings or curses (Jas. 3:10); the wise believer, therefore, seeks to always speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Jesus taught that “the eye is the lamp of the body” (Matt. 6:22), meaning that it can fill the mind with the light of truth or, when unlit, with the darkness of evil. People’s “feet” can take

them on “the path of the righteous” (Prov. 4:18) or “the way of the wicked” (4:19). Wise believers are careful to keep on the righteous path.

## APPLYING GOD’S WORD

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are one or two takeaways you have gained from this study regarding the importance of passing down an inheritance of integrity?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for salvation through Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to help us to be people of integrity that others can trust and depend on. Pray that the Lord will help us be peaceful people and not quarrelsome. Ask the Lord to help us keep our word, and to give us the courage to ask for forgiveness when we do not keep it. Thank the Father for being merciful to us, and for teaching us to have integrity through the example of Christ.

## COMMENTARY

Proverbs 6:16-19

By using an idiomatic Hebrew expression, six things...seven, Solomon presented a representative, rather than exhaustive, list of what the LORD hates, what He finds to be detestable or an abomination. What follows is a brief look at this list of seven.

1. Arrogant eyes (literally, “rising pair of eyes”) head Solomon’s list, eyes turned upward in arrogance rather than downward in humility. Similar to the modern expression, “having one’s nose in the air,” haughty eyes betray the heart. David warned that God would humble those with arrogant eyes who imagined themselves as above others (see Ps. 18:27).

Jesus offered the reverse attitude of arrogance for His followers when He called them to be “poor in spirit” (see Matt. 5:3). Practicing humility will keep Jesus’ followers from thinking too highly of themselves.

2. A lying tongue signifies a person who has no regard for truth and displays aggressive deceitintended to harm others. A believer will highlight the value of honesty and will hold the truth in high regard.

3. The Lord hates hands that shed innocent blood, a phrase that portrays the violent tendency of the troublemaker and implies a profound lack of control over anger. Such a person might brutalize or even kill another, driven by his covetous greed or over a presumed insult, whereas authentic believers will even sacrifice themselves to defend the helpless.
4. The heart resides at the center of the human anatomy and gives rise to all of a person's physical, mental, and spiritual life. As the center point of Solomon's catalogue of character traits which God abhors, a heart that plots wicked schemes would drive the evil action of the person. Solomon laced together three words, plots wicked schemes, to heighten the nature of the heart's propensity toward evil. These words synergistically combine to communicate the use of an agitator's ingenuity and strength in order to devise sinister plans for personal gain at another's expense.

Such a person will bend the rules when necessary to accomplish his goals regardless of the casualties. However, a person fully committed to Christ will have a heart that seeks to bring glory to the Lord through loving actions and ministry.

5. A troublemaker has feet eager to run to evil, emphasizing his zeal and enthusiasm to follow his inner compulsion as soon as possible. The evildoer concocts schemes with a sense of urgency with no step spared, no second wasted, and no base left uncovered in executing the evil plot. Because a believer's heart seeks to glorify Christ, his good works follow him.

Abandoning his analysis of evil through metaphorical comparisons to body parts, Solomon returned to the theme of lying.

6. Specifically, a lying witness refers to one who consciously communicates falsehoods. At the foundation of all truth lies God's complete holiness. Solomon drilled down to the fuller meaning of the lying witness by adding that the liar gives false testimony.

Solomon made clear that the lying witness aimed to threaten another's life and/or property. However, a believer will not remain silent but will speak up to defend the cause of Christ and those who face false accusations.

7. The one who stirs up trouble among brothers, like the scoundrel who works to under mine social and personal relationships for his own benefit (see 6:12-15), deliberately attempts to destroy the fabric that holds society together. The word, brothers, stands in contrast to a foreigner and denotes the full range of relationships from blood brothers to extended family members to fellow countrymen. Therefore, the one who stirs up trouble among brothers trashes the relationships that will spin a community and/or church into chaos and conflict. However, mature believers work to right relationships within a congregation that may be damaged because of the actions and words of others. God has called us to demonstrate integrity as we live for Him. Though many people we know and with whom we work live according to the seven negative traits, we can choose to live otherwise.

When we avoid these seven actions and traits, people will take note that we live as people of integrity.

#### Proverbs 4:20-27

4:20–27 In the closing appeal the father scarcely concerns himself with specific moral issues. He simply urges the son to stay true to Wisdom.

Metaphoric use of body parts permeates this text. The eyes are to stay fixed on right teaching (vv. 21, 25) as the feet are to stay in the right path (vv. 26–27). The mouth and lips must shun using twisted words (v. 24). Above all, the heart must be guarded by sound doctrine (vv. 21, 23). If the son listens to his father, the whole body will be healthy (v. 22).

The heart, v. 23 says, is “the wellspring of life.” “Heart,” here as always, refers not to the physical organ but to the mind and even the whole personality of the individual. It is “the wellspring of life” in that the capacity to live with joy and vigor ultimately comes from within and not from circumstances. The corrupt heart draws one down to the grave, but Wisdom protects the heart from that corruption. This verse, perhaps in conjunction with Ezekiel’s vision of the River of Life (Ezek 47:1–12), apparently was the source of Jesus’ perplexing citation in John 7:38.

The fourth exhortation closes with a return to the image of the path (vv. 25–27). Of particular interest is v. 27, the warning to swerve neither to the right nor to the left. Deuteronomy 5:32; 17:11; 28:14; and Josh 23:6 are similar. The idea is that one should not be distracted from the way of wisdom (v. 25). Temptation to allegorize “right” and “left” in light of modern usage should be resisted. At the same time, the text can be taken to urge the reader to maintain the simplicity of biblical teaching. Modern theological schools of any and of all persuasions are not always careful to do this.