

Proverbs 6:20-25

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-6/proverbs-620-25/>

The commands of God and the teachings of those who follow Him illuminate our path. They lead to discernment, peace, and fellowship.

Solomon returns from his aside about God's perspective on wickedness and reenters the main point, exhorting his young audience to choose the path of wisdom. He starts with the customary greeting, *my son*, which accompanies most resets in The Book of Proverbs.

As is typical in Proverbs, these verses function on multiple levels. Solomon is talking about parental advice, but he is also using this as a metaphor (a parable) for our relationship with God (the ultimate, heavenly Father).

In language almost exactly like that of Proverbs 1:8, Solomon says *observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother* (v 20).

The word for *observe* is "natsar," which means "keep." Don't lose. Focus your eyes/attention on it so as not to lose sight of it and have it drift from you. The word for *forsake* ("natash") can also mean "lose." So Solomon is telling his reader to hold dear the *commandments* and *teaching* (or law, "torah"). Reflect upon them. Remember them. Think of them constantly. The emphasis is upon the importance of following wise counsel. It is literally life and death (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19).

The familial illustration of following the instruction of our parents serves two purposes. First, it alludes to the idea that wisdom is passed through the generations and is the foundation to which we truly belong. It tells us that straying from the teaching of our parents (or heavenly Father) requires a perversion of what we know and were created for.

Secondly, the *father/mother* dynamic helps the reader understand these are not arbitrary "rules." They are teachings from someone who knows you, cares for you, and wants what is best for you. It is personal. These teachings are boundaries to help guide you into your best life. (The presumption in this parable is that we are speaking of a caring and nurturing parent, rather than an abusive parent.)

Again using language he has already used before (Proverbs 3:3), Solomon says to *bind them* (the teachings/commandments) *continually on your heart; tie them around your neck* (vs 21). So the idea is to fasten them to your very sense of self, the *heart* being the center of a person in ancient Hebrew philosophy. And *to tie them around your neck* is to place them as a ready reminder in front of you. An external and internal imprint.

This language is similar to that of Deuteronomy 6, the passage from which the first and greatest commandment is taken, to love the Lord with all our being (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). In order to love

God with all our being, we need to continually conform our minds to His teachings, His ways (Romans 12:1-2).

Solomon then moves to the benefits of conforming our thoughts to God's ways. *When you walk about, they will guide you* (vs 22). Wisdom is a practical enterprise. If it does not affect what you are doing, your actions, it has not truly taken hold. How does it take hold? You internalize the *teachings*, fusing them to your self *continually*. This helps *guide* your behavior. It informs your steps. It allows you to walk in ways that lead to life, benefit, and flourishing. The alternative leads to various forms of self-destruction.

Furthermore, *when you sleep, they will watch over you*. Truth allows your rest to be restful. This is an allusion to peace. In Hebrew, “shalom.” “Shalom” is the idea of all things working together as they ought; harmony of the soul. Anxiety and restlessness are natural consequences of fighting against reality, straining against the truth. Aligning with God allows you to rest, to be at peace.

When you awake, they (the commands) *will talk to you*. The *commandments* of God (passed through *father* and *mother*) will speak to you. They will be the little voice inside that communicates to you in moments of duress and challenging decisions—all moments. Because your heart has been conformed to God's ways, your actions will follow the path that lead to your greatest good.

During these three times (*walk, sleep, and wake*), we see positive outcomes of upholding *commandments*. They cover the entirety of human existence—as you *walk about*, as you *sleep*, as you *awake*. Total protection. This is the path to our greatest possible life experience.

It is also interesting that the commandments are given the feminine pronoun. It is not usually translated this way, but the literal wording says “*she will guide you*”...“*she will watch over you*”...“*she will talk to you*.” This is important because it makes a clear connection between the teachings/commandments Solomon is talking about here and Lady Wisdom ([see notes on Proverbs 1: 20-23](#)).

Solomon explains *for the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light* (vs 23). The teachings illuminate the way. They prevent us from stumbling in darkness, allowing us to see the dangers, obstacles, and the best place for our next steps.

On top of this, *reproofs for discipline are the way of life*. The Hebrew word for *way* here is “derek,” which means “journey.” False step, correction, and progress forward are the ways of life; the building blocks of our story, and the reality of the human journey. *Discipline* gets us back on the path, the *way*, that leads to *life*. To flourishing. To becoming all God designed us to be.

To ignore correction disrupts the intended trajectory of our *journey*. It short-circuits the way we are supposed to live, the design by which we thrive. To avoid or reject *discipline* or *reproofs* from our heavenly Father is to choose a path that leads to the opposite of *life*.

The path that leads to life is the journey of wisdom, the reality into which we are created to align. The *teachings* and *commandments* Solomon is talking about help us do this effectively by making good choices on a daily basis. They *keep us from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress* (vs 24). Here Solomon returns to another of the consistent metaphors of Proverbs, the “strange or *evil woman*” who represents the antithesis of Lady Wisdom.

An *adulteress* is anyone who invites you to stray from the foundation from which you were created and the path that is best for you. The temptation is to indulge momentary pleasure over responsibility and commitment to others. Adultery destroys marriages, families, relationships. All for the “pot of stew” that is a momentary pleasure, that costs us the reward of inheritance that is the greatest flourishing of our lives (Hebrews 12:16).

Commands, reproofs, and teachings from God are not mere arbitrary rules, intended to keep a person from enjoying life. They are not stuffy demands of a wrath-laden God. They are just the opposite. They are to *keep* you from *evil*, from veering off the path of your best interest and onto something that seems easier, but leads to death and destruction (Matthew 7:13). The adulteress’s *tongue* (communication) seems *smooth*, her temptations sweet. But they are lies and cause much more pain than they avoid (Hebrews 12:17).

Solomon wraps up this passage with a plea to his young audience concerning this adulteress—*do not desire her beauty in your heart* (vs 25). In other words, do not want the shortcuts she promises. They are not true. They are not good. They are not real. In contrast to his command in verse 21 to *bind* (these teachings) *continually on your heart*, if you internalize the seductive mirage she promises you are committing your existence to her lies.

Solomon does not pretend the adulteress has no allure. He admits she has *beauty*. But Solomon asks his students to speak to their *heart* and recognize the reality of where succumbing to her *beauty* will lead: death and destruction. In this instance, the *adulteress* could represent anything that leads to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the boastful pride of life; all the things that are of the world (1 John 2:15-16). The things of the world lead to destruction, while the things of God lead to life and flourishing (Galatians 6:8). We make this choice daily, and continuously. Which is why it is so important to keep wisdom continuously on our minds.

Nor let her capture you with her eyelids. When two people lock gazes, they are focused on one another. We often use the phrase “captivated by love” when we see two lovers looking into one another’s eyes. In this instance, Solomon is warning that her gaze can hold your gaze—your focus, attention, and desire will be on her.

We go where we are looking. Vision determines motivation and drives behavior. Evil cannot take us except by forfeit. This is a plea to not *let her* have your focus. If you don’t heed this warning, you can become captive to her sweet-sounding, *smooth*, and empty promises. We need to keep our eyes, our attention, on what brings life and goodness. In order to do this, we must take our gaze away from the *eyelids* of the adulteress. This would represent any temptation the world puts forward as a bait to lead us into the way of wickedness (1 John 2:15-16).

Biblical Text

**²⁰ My son, observe the commandment of your father
And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;**

**²¹ Bind them continually on your heart;
Tie them around your neck.**

**²² When you walk about, they will guide you;
When you sleep, they will watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.**

**²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life**

**²⁴ To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.**

**²⁵ Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her capture you with her eyelids.**