

# PROVERBS



I grew up in a home that had a rich tradition of Christianity. I didn't realize how rich this tradition was until my family began to talk about and explore some of the ways that Christianity has been passed down through the ages. On my dad's side of the family, both of his parents came from Christian homes where many served the Lord. Several of my dad's siblings have served as missionaries – in aviation, in Ecuador, across Central America, and on dozens of missions trips. My dad's father helped to plant a church and was passionate about starting a church plant in my home town. He taught at a small Bible school for years and taught Sunday school week after week.

On my mom's side, there is another lineage of Christians. From the island of Newfoundland, many of my grandfather's family were active in the Salvation Army for generations. My grandmother says that she can trace her family roots back to the Mayflower – the ship that brought pilgrims from across the ocean to the United States looking for religious freedom. My mom's father served as an elder with my dad in my home local church.

Similarly, with Melanie's family, there is a rich tradition of Christians – loving the Lord, serving his church, doing much good for the sake of Christ.

So when it comes to the tradition that I've received, I recognize that I stand in a rich legacy that has been passed on to me. I am not a Christian because my mom and dad are Christians, however. I am a Christian because my parents taught me the ways of the Lord and prayed that God would save me just as he saved them and those who came before them. It was not an inherited faith – it is a faith that I came into after wrestling and questioning, but one in which the Lord brought me to himself by showing me my sin and my need for him.

And Proverbs 4:1-9 commends to us the legacy of faith – we need to pass it on, and we need to warn about passing on the faith. You can pass on the faith in one of two ways – you can share it with the next generation, and you can forsake it by rejecting what has been given to you. Proverbs 4 speaks to both of these issues.

## **Pass on the Good Life**

In verses 1-2, what we have here is the father now speaking not to an individual son, but for the first time speaking to "sons" (plural). He is asking them to pay attention to what he is giving them. And what seems to be happening here is that the father is wanting to ensure that what he has believed and taught is passed on for generations.

What the father is passing on, we are told in vv. 3-4, is what he learned from a young age. His father taught him the good life and instructed him to keep his commands for the purpose of life. But what is interesting in chapter 4 is that there is no reference to the Lord. After all the references to the Lord in chapter 3, he is conspicuously absent in chapter 4. So it sounds like the father is just passing on tradition here. Is that what he is doing? He's inherited a tradition, and now he's passing on the tradition?

## **The Good Life: Passing on the Good Life – Prov. 4:1-9**



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When you are young, you can't see all that lies ahead. You don't know what kind of health challenges will arise, how the other person's childhood and family will impact your marriage. You don't realize all the pain that they've been through and how their pain will become your pain and their joy will become your joy. This is why the choice to love, embrace, and not forsake are suggesting more than just a choice; it is a commitment like marriage is. But while we cannot see what challenges will arise in marriage, wisdom says that she will be the best partner for you in life. So give up everything you have, like the man who found the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:34-35), and you will find that you have received the best possible future.

But there is also a warning here:

## **Don't Pass on the Good Life**

In vv. 5-6, there is a warning that you should not choose to pass up the opportunity on the good life. Don't forget, don't turn away, don't forsake. Here is the language of someone who gives up on marriage. They've quit trying. They've forgotten their vows. They look for an easier path, for a better way, for a happier path.

Let me speak directly here to those who are struggling to know if they want to follow the Christian faith. You can grow up in a Christian home, you can receive great Bible teaching, and you can get all sorts of benefits from Christian influences. But you can choose to take a pass on the good life. You can say, "No thanks." Taking a pass and saying "no thanks" to the good life doesn't mean that this life will be awful. You might actually live this life off of the benefits of the Christian faith that make it comfortable and good. Christianity has brought prosperity around the world, but as it has been rejected, people have fallen into hard times. We are currently experiencing this decline in the West. We are seeing the loss of the good life all around us as the West begins its slow collapse like other great civilizations did. Choosing to say "no thanks" means that you are making choices today that will impact you, your family, and your grandchildren for eternity. Because the good life that is offered is not just for here and now, but forever.

Before you say that Christianity isn't your thing, that you don't want it, consider the words here. Don't forget. Don't turn away. Don't forsake. If you've received Christian influences in your life, I guarantee you that the benefits to you have been great. You've received a rich tradition that has set you on a path that is better than you realize. You've received something really great, because what you have received is something that helps you to...

## **See the Wisdom of Christ**

As the father is teaching his son, he wants his son to value what he values and develop the kind of character that he has sought to build in his own life. He wants his son to become like him.

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But what if you didn't have a good example? What if your dad was a poor example? What if he failed miserably? What does that mean for you?

Two things. First, Jesus modelled for us what the relationship with the Father is like. Instead of failing like our first father, Adam, did, he became the second Adam who came to show us what it means to be a true son. So if you had a poor example of a Father, and knowing that every father fails in many ways, we have the perfect picture in Jesus. Jesus came to be our wisdom so that we could see what it looks like to be a son to the Father who loves us and disciplines us perfectly for our good.

Second, Jesus came to be more than our example. He came to be our Saviour. He came to rescue us from folly and bring us to the good life – the life that is eternal, full of joy forever, and set us on a path where we can have a fresh start. So if you didn't come from a legacy of Christians, there's good news: you get to begin that legacy! You have the opportunity to pass on something beautiful and precious that will give grace and favour so that you will be crowned as more than a son or daughter, but as the one who rules and reigns with Christ in the age to come. For there is a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) and a crown of glory (1 Pe. 5:4) and a crown of life (Jas. 1:12) to be received by every believer on that last day.

What Jesus intends is to crown you with righteousness, glory, and life. His grace is to show you the favour of God that sets you on a straight path. So to those of you who are growing up in a Christian home, can I make an appeal to you this morning? Your parents aren't perfect. They're struggling to follow Jesus. They love you and want the best for you. They want you to know Jesus and to follow him. Please, don't pass on the good life and say it's not for you. Ask your parents why they follow Christ. Ask them to share their story of coming to faith. Listen to them. Hear their heart for you. And in their heart, hear the heart of God that calls to you to follow him.