

Proverbs Week #41 (4:10-12)

“Hear, my son, and accept my sayings and the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble.” Proverbs 4:10-12

Our section today begins with a father who is directing his son to hear (obey) and accept (to take hold or grasp) his sayings. The benefits of receiving this father’s instructions are long life, walking in paths that are right, and being able to walk and run without impediment or stumbling. Let me ask you this, why would a son not listen and accept his father’s teachings? What possible reasons could there be for not listening? Here are some ideas I came up with to address these questions.

Not interested – I don’t like carrots: Do you understand the picture of a horse being led by having a carrot dangled in front of them? If the horse doesn’t like carrots then the carrot will have no effect on him. The first reason I want to highlight is one of indifference. We should be interested in God’s solutions – they are amazing and should humble us! The good news or gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). In it we learn about forgiveness, transformation of sinners into new people, and how to live lives that grow in faithfulness to God. From a child’s perspective (and possibly even for most of us as adults) these themes are not easy to understand. Sometimes it is hard to listen because, from our point of view, the message doesn’t seem to interest us. Why else might people, including children, not listen?

Don’t need to listen: The next reason someone might not listen is because they think they do not need to listen. To be in right relationship to God everyone needs to hear the gospel. Yeshua taught, *“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what it means ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice...’”* (Matt 9:12,13) Yeshua knew the hearts of men and addressed their deepest need. He directed them to go back to the scriptures and learn. In Hosea chapter 6 the prophet is speaking a hard message. He says, *“Therefore, I will certainly cut you into pieces at the hands of the prophets; I will certainly kill you in fulfillment of my oracles of judgment; for my judgment will come forth like the light of dawn.”* (Hos 6:5) Then Hosea goes on to say, *“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”* (Hosea 6:6) Yeshua saw their need and they did not. Just knowing this is not enough. What if people hear this message and still aren’t listening? What else might be wrong?

It’s not about us – It’s about Him: What does this have to do with people listening? I want to change perspective with this last point. So far we have been focused on why we as people might not listen. What about when it appears that God is not listening? Here is a song about this very idea. *“Come and hear, all who fear God, and I will tell of what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; but certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer nor His lovingkindness from me.”* (Psa 66:16-20)

Imagine a child who for hours has had a jar stuck on his hand. In desperation and panic they finally call out, “Mom! I need help! My hand is stuck in the cookie jar and I can’t get it out!” Are we sometimes too proud to let go and cry out to God? If so, God might not be hearing you. The above passage from Psalms is just one passage that explains a condition that would cause God to not listen. Here are a few more to think about --- Isaiah 59:1-2, Isaiah 1:15, Matt 5:23-24, 1 Peter 3:7, Matt 6:12, Matt 6:14-15. Take some time to talk about these later today during lunch or through the week. I want to encourage you to further consider these verses and help your children to understand and apply them.