

Proverbs Week #42 (4:13)

“Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.” Prov 4:13

In our last few weeks we have focused on embracing wisdom, listening, and accepting a father’s teaching. Today’s verse continues to reinforce these themes. “Take hold,” “do not let go,” and “guard her” are the three commands given by the father to his son in this verse. As I stopped and pondered this verse this week I wondered about the wisdom that it teaches.

In simple terms, if the instruction is “don’t play on the freeway” then one can clearly see how remembering and correctly applying that instruction could save your life. But what if the situations in life were more complicated? The same rules apply. If we will learn, take hold, and remember the wisdom of the Proverbs they will serve us by guarding us and could literally save our lives.

This wisdom can be seen in other areas of life. From my military experience you might relate the themes of today’s verse to the SOP – standard operating procedure -- or the core values of a branch of service. The military trains soldiers to think (some people might poke fun at this but it is true) and act based upon tried and tested methods. The process of boot camp or field exercises puts soldiers in challenging situations so that in a controlled environment they learn to live according to standards. The drill instructors or field commanders are training them with the goal of preparing them for the dangers of combat. If they succeed in their training they may save the lives of these soldiers.

In the business world these principles might be likened to a mission statement or founder’s philosophy. When a company grows beyond the single owner stage and begins to hire employees, the founder of the business has the task of inspiring and leading the employees based upon his beliefs and values. The larger the company the harder the task will be. If the founder’s goals and values are good and the growing number of employees embrace and live by them then the business is likely to succeed.

How would the wisdom from today’s verse be seen in a parent and child relationship? I would like to suggest that we are going to fulfill the words of today’s verse whether we realize it or not. Yeshua taught this basic principle, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:34)* Our children learn a lot from our example. If our life exemplifies indifference to the teachings of God then our children will likely grow up and exemplify our lives. Our failures might prove fatal. If, on the other hand, our lives consistently model the teachings and instructions of God we will confidently trust that He will be faithful to our children. This is why I believe that the Shema and the teaching of Yeshua in Matt 5:17-19 are so foundational for our little community. Yeshua taught, *“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Torah until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches to others, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

The sages take from their understanding of the Shema that God has commanded that every Jew should recite the Shema three times a day. While I don’t necessarily agree that the meaning of the text supports this idea, I can appreciate their attempts to apply it. Yeshua describes greatness in the kingdom in different ways (Matt 5:19; 11:11; 18:4; 20:26; 23:11/ Mark 9:35; 10:43 / Luke 7:28; 9:48; 22:26) and in the above passage I want to highlight the phrase *“but whoever does them and teaches to others.”* In faithfulness to Yeshua and His words, this is our life. May we find ways this week to help each other to take hold, not let go, and guard the words of scripture.