

Proverbs

From Ears to Feet

Lesson #2 for January 10, 2015

Scriptures: Proverbs 4-6:19; 1 Kings 3:9; Matthew 13:44; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

1. So, what is the meaning of the title of the lesson for this week? Read Proverbs 4:26-27. What we hear—or, more precisely what we pay attention to, comprehend, and incorporate into our thinking—determines how we walk the path of life. Our overall paradigm determines how we face life and how we behave. A paradigm is a pattern of thinking that guides our lives.
2. There is considerable evidence that our hearing and the balance mechanism in our ears impacts almost everything we do. Metaphorically speaking, instruction or education informs our paradigm. Read Proverbs 4:7.
3. The ancient Egyptians used to picture students as boys with ears on their backs. They noted: “The ear of the boy is on his back; he listens when he is beaten.”
4. Surely, we hope that it does not require beatings for us to listen to wise instruction. But, it is not enough just to know what is right and wrong; we must choose what is right.
5. Read Proverbs 4. What was and is being implied by these messages? It should be obvious to all of us that the best instruction in the world does us no good if we are not paying attention. In ancient Hebrew thinking, the seat of wisdom was not located in the brain, but in the ears. Read 1 Kings 3:9 where it says literally, give me “a hearing heart.”
6. From where does wisdom come? From the “University of Hard Knocks”? Can we generate wisdom ourselves? Or, do we need to learn it from some outside source? As young children we learned from our parents. Parents need to understand that for their small children, they stand in the place of God. Part of wisdom is learning from the mistakes of others!
7. But, unfortunately, as we grow older—and it seems especially as we pass through the teenage years—we discover that people hear what they want to hear! And unfortunately, it is often only from peers. What is implied by those words? Why is it so difficult to comprehend and seriously think about ideas that do not fit with what we want to hear?
8. Read Matthew 13:44 and Jeremiah 29:13. How do we form our world view or paradigm? Do we get our way of thinking from our parents? From our teachers? Or, do we finally put it together for ourselves from what we have learned from multiple sources?
9. Is it easier to accept a new idea as you get older? Or, harder? Surely, we would all agree that when listening to a new idea that might impact how we live and what we believe about God, it requires careful listening and sometimes a lot of thought. Do we approach new religious ideas as did the noble Bereans? (Acts 17:11) What happened to Paul after the Damascus road?
10. So, why is it harder for us to accept some new ideas than others? What is the role of our emotions in our relationship with God? Do you find that worshiping God at church or even in Sabbath school is an emotional experience? If so, what is it that stirs your emotions? Do they tend to be steered in a right or wrong direction? Do emotions guide us in some way? How are emotions related to the idea of “doing what is right because it is right”? Do you think emotions helped Jesus on crucifixion weekend?
11. When a Christian determines that he is going to walk in the path in which God wants him to walk, what obstacles is he likely to meet? Read 1 Peter 5:8. How does one know which path that is? So long as we are walking the broad path along with the rest of the world, the Devil does not concern himself much about us. But, when we turn to follow Jesus, the Devil becomes very concerned. If enough people take the gospel seriously, it is a death sentence for him.
12. Read Proverbs 5. A superficial reading of this proverb might suggest that it is a warning against association with prostitutes. A broader look at Scripture shows that an immoral woman

represents spiritual apostasy, particularly among God's chosen people. (See Isaiah 57:3; Jeremiah 3:2-9; 13:27; Ezekiel 16; 23; 43:7-9; Hosea 1-4; 5:3; 6:10; Nahum 3:4; Revelation 17:1,15-16; 19:2.)

13. So, what is the best way to avoid becoming a fool? Remember James 1:13-15? Very often, our own thoughts or emotions lead us astray. The best safety comes in Bible study and prayer, focusing particularly on following the example of Jesus. This will help us to recognize temptation when it first appears and not allow it to lead us astray. We also need to remember that "An idle brain is the devil's workshop." (H. G. Bohn, "Hand-Book of Proverbs," 1855) We need to keep our minds occupied with the important tasks that God has given us in preparation for the final days. Ellen White recommended that we should even keep a small Bible with us so that when we are waiting at a bus stop or in traffic or at a shop or in line somewhere, we can memorize Scripture. (*LDE* 66,67) Unfortunately, it seems that memorizing Scripture has become almost a lost art.

Perhaps the best protection of all against the temptation to love another woman or man is this: just love your own spouse, "the [wife or husband] of your youth" (*vs. 18 [Prov. 5:18], NKJV*). The author of Ecclesiastes resonated with this counsel: "Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun" (*Eccles. 9:9, NIV*). Be thankful for what you have, and you won't be looking elsewhere. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, January 5, 2015. [Text in brackets is added.]

14. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Do you find this promise to be real in your own experience? When we are tempted, do we really want a way out?
15. Read Proverbs 6:1-5. Do these words remind you of the old English proverb: "With friends like these, who needs enemies?" Or perhaps, the words of Voltaire: "Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies"? Should we follow this advice: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be"? In Hebrew the word *friend* also means "neighbor," that is, someone who is close to us. The closer we get to others, the more vulnerable we make ourselves to them. Human relationships are the most important in our lives, but sometimes, also the most dangerous and the most disturbing. How many of us have prayed for a good friend? How many friendships have been destroyed by financial dealings gone bad?
16. But, what about in the spiritual realm? If someone tries to explain to us a "new truth," are we like the noble Bereans, investigating to see if it is really true? Believing a lie is a deadly trap. How do you fit Exodus 22:25 and Exodus 23:2-3 with Proverbs 6:1-4? (Compare Proverbs 22:27.) If we find ourselves in a fix we cannot handle, we should hasten to humble ourselves, admit our mistake, and ask for grace and forgiveness to get out of it.
17. So, how do we learn to balance this advice with Galatians 6:2 where we are instructed to "bear one another's burdens"?
18. Read Proverbs 6:6-8. In what ways are ants good examples? They are certainly industrious and they work hard without any supervision. How many human beings do you know who voluntarily do the same? Would it be correct to call them creatures who "do what is right because it is right"? Are they programmed to do what they do? Or, is there some thinking capacity going on? The important thing to remember about ants is that they work hard to prepare for winter. How well do we do at looking forward and preparing for what is coming? Do we live our lives every day in light of the entire great controversy?

This is a question that demands consideration by every parent, every teacher, every student—by every human being, young or old. No scheme of business or plan of life can be sound or complete that embraces only the brief years of this present life and makes no provision for the unending future.—Ellen G. White,

Education, p. 145.2; *To Be Like Jesus* 191.5.

19. Do we guide our thinking and our Bible study every day based on a correct understanding of the issues in the great controversy? If we do not, we will not be able to fully appreciate what we are learning. The great controversy is the overarching reality for all existence.
20. Read Proverbs 6:9-11. What lesson can we learn from these verses about lazy people? Paul seemed to be blunt about lazy people when he said in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, (GNB): "Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat." Should that be our approach also?
21. While the Bible commends those who work diligently to prepare for the future, it does not suggest we should do that 24/7. The Sabbath is God's planned day of rest. We need to take advantage of it every week.
22. Read Proverbs 6:12-15 and 6:16-19. How would you summarize these two passages? Is it not clear that people's actions reflect their inner motives?

You should control your thoughts. This will not be an easy task; you cannot accomplish it without close and even severe effort. Yet God requires this of you; it is a duty resting upon every accountable being. You are responsible to God for your thoughts. If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity. Day and night dreaming and castle-building are bad and exceedingly dangerous habits. When once established, it is next to impossible to break up such habits, and direct the thoughts to pure, holy, elevated themes. You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work. You are weak in this direction.—Ellen G. White, *2 Testimonies* 561.1 (1870); *AH* 334.4; *CG* 464.3; *MYP* 75.4; *1MCP* 234.2; *2MCP* 661.1.

23. Read Proverbs 6:12-19. Both of these verbal images in Proverbs 6 point out that the people who are focused only on their own interests will never walk in the way of the righteous. Evil behavior affects everyone that it touches. Liars come to believe their own lies. What does that do to us? Look at the example of Lucifer. What has sin and rebellion done to him? What has he said and done to the entire universe? Are we being very careful to be sure that our mistakes and even our sins do not damage us or those around us?
24. Are we searching the Bible on a daily basis to better understand and know the truth?

The student of the Bible should be taught to approach it in the spirit of a learner. **We are to search its pages, not for proof to sustain our opinions, but in order to know what God says....** (*Education* 189.1)

One of the chief causes of mental inefficiency and moral weakness is the lack of concentration.... With the immense tide of printed matter constantly pouring from the press, old and young form the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought.—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 189.5; *AH* 415.1.

The habitations that the ants build for themselves show skill and perseverance. Only one little grain at a time can they handle, but by diligence and perseverance they accomplish wonders.

Solomon points to the industry of the ant as a reproach to those who waste their hours in idleness or in practices that corrupt soul and body. The ant prepares for future seasons; but many gifted with reasoning powers fail to prepare for the future immortal life.—Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and*

Students, p. 190.1-2. [Bold type is added.]

25. In light of the wisdom suggested by our study this week, how often do we put ourselves out to help others? Isn't that what Jesus did? "Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13, *NKJV*) What is so wrong with the seven abominations mentioned in Proverbs 6:16-19? Why are they so evil in God's sight?
26. Some of Solomon's proverbs are quite similar to those of other ancient sages from other lands. Is that a case of plagiarism by Solomon?
27. Why did the Israelites so often go astray despite having all this wisdom spelled out for them by their most prominent leaders? How often do we know what is right to do but fail to do it? It has been 2000 years since Jesus lived on this earth. Why do you think the Christian church wandered at times so far away from His example?
28. Early Seventh-day Adventists and our spiritual forerunners like William Miller preached an end-time message. Why are we still here more than 170 years later?
29. How often do we know something is wrong but we do it anyway? Why do we do such things? Are we daily inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives through prayer and Bible study to help us make the necessary changes so we can recognize and avoid temptation?
30. Even after recognizing that we have made a mistake, how often do we refuse to admit it and apologize when necessary? Would you consider it correct to say that Jesus is the only Person who has ever lived on this earth who actually lived out the wisdom of Proverbs?
31. How early in His life did Jesus recognize that He was going to be killed violently? Why did He allow Himself to be crucified? Couldn't He have done a lot of good by avoiding such a fate for several more years?
32. Since every Christian has been called to live a Christ-like life, how many are actually doing it? What would happen if a large number of Seventh-day Adventists actually started living that kind of life?
33. David and Solomon were two of the greatest characters in the Bible. But, at important times in their lives, each of them failed to live by the wisdom which he had tried to teach his children. Disaster was the result. David tried to hide his sin but admitted it when faced with the truth. (2 Samuel 12) Solomon did not finally return to God until his life was almost over; but, God asked him to write the book of Ecclesiastes anyway!
34. David probably instructed his son, Solomon, using the wisdom found in this lesson. Why did he also say in Psalm 53:3 (*GNB*): "But they have all turned away; they are all equally bad. Not one of them does what is right, not a single one." (Compare Romans 3:12.)
35. Does the instruction given in this lesson warn us against telling our children to, "Do as I say and not as I do"? Why is it that so many people are offended by the truth? Are we ever offended by hearing the truth?
36. Think about some of the most popular television programs. Don't the characters in those programs exhibit the seven things that God hates as described in Proverbs 6:16-19? Should we be filling our minds with that kind of material? Are these seven things ways that people use to get ahead in life? How many people at work act as if the only way to get ahead is to trample on someone else?
37. Are our churches places of healing for people who have been bruised in their everyday battles at work and at home? How can we make them more like spiritual hospitals to help anyone who comes? If they were really places of healing, would more people be attracted?

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