

-Save This Page as a PDF-

Guard Your Heart

4: 20-27

A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

The father's seventh teaching (to see link click [Aj](#) - Proverbs for the Youth) consists of two parts: the typical introduction that includes the addressees of **sons** and **grandsons**, warnings to listen and retain **his** teaching (**4:1-2**), and the lesson (**4:3-9**), which is **his** grandfather's instruction. This chapter breaks down like this: How to get going (**4:1-9**), how to keep going (**4:10-19**), and how not to get lost along the way (**4:20-27**).¹¹⁶

Here, **Solomon** calls us to pay attention to every step we take. **He** is calling us to concentrate. A lack of self-awareness will get us lost. But we can keep making progress toward **the high noon** of our most fervent hopes (**4:18**) by applying the Good News to our **hearts** continually. As we examine **Solomon's** counsel on the importance of guarding one's heart, now that he again directs **his** words to **my son**. Because **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** preserved this passage for us, we now benefit from **Solomon's wise fatherly** advice: **Pay attention to my words; turn your ear to my sayings (4:20 Hebrew). Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart (4:21 NLT).**¹¹⁷ **The father** is not interested in just a superficial response from **his son**, some kind of behavior modification; **he** desires that **his son** be **wise** at **his** very core. **Wise** actions and **wise** speech will flow from **wise** character. Then **he** provides the motivation for **his son** to pay attention. If **he** takes the message to **heart**, then that will lead **to life** and **wholeness. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body (4:22 NLT).**¹¹⁸



How can **the righteous** avoid **the path of the wicked** (see [Az - Don't Follow the Path of the Wicked](#)), **Solomon** says: **With all diligence, watch over your heart, for everything you do flows from it (4:23 Hebrew)**. Make no mistake about it! Your heart is under siege. Like marauding hordes surrounding a fortress, advertisers, and media moguls to find a point of entry. They lob projectiles and drop subtle baits, looking for weaknesses, and shout taunts, hoping to gain entrance. They want in so they can bring you under their control. You might think I am being overly dramatic. But substance abuse, porn, adultery, abandonment, embezzlement, fraud, and double lives can wreak havoc. But interesting enough, in every case seen here has one common factor: a **heart** that gradually became corrupted.

Notably, the Hebrew text of this verse begins: **Above all else**. Hebrew writers used word order to emphasize an idea, usually placing the most important point first in the sentence. Normal structure places the verb first, followed by the subject, then the object. But **Solomon** switched this up to stress the importance of **his** counsel – which, of course means that **ADONAI** considers the advice as crucial. The Hebrew phrase rendered **above all else** could also be translated **above all else** or **more than anything else**.

Solomon created an intricate wordplay with the Hebrew term **diligence**, a term that originally comes from a noun meaning a *place of confinement*, a place to be closely observed, protected, preserved, or guarded, such as a walled city. The term alludes to the duty of a gate-keeper or a guard on a watchtower, whose role was invaluable. The lives of everyone in the city depended upon his **diligence**. **Solomon** redoubled **his** emphasis by combining this idea with the command to **watch over**.

The main Hebrew verb translated **watch over** is *natsar*, meaning *to preserve or keep*. This same word occurs in **Isaiah 26:3: The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You**. The word is frequently used in wisdom literature to describe **ADONAI** as **the Shepherd of His people**. A shepherd watches over his flocks to keep them from harming themselves, to protect them from predators, and to supply their needs. In the literal sense, *natsar* describes the duty of a guard on a watchtower. He continually scans the horizon for approaching armies or nighttime raids. He discerns who may enter the city. And he's authorized to use deadly force to prevent illicit entry. Perhaps a good paraphrase would read, "More than anything else to be closely watched and protected, protect your inner self - your mind, your emotions, your character, and your discernment - like a sentry at the gate watches over a city from his watchtower."¹¹⁹

The counsel of **verse 23** is **wise**, and opposite to the wisdom of **the world (First John 2:14-15)**. We are told today that if we are going to be happy, what we need to do is assemble around us our selfish little designer life just the way we want it, with our dream house and our trophy wife (husband) and our ideal job with all the rest. But the truth is, if we got it all, it would only make us more depressed and angrier, because all those outward advantages would only mock sadness within. **Life does not flow from the outside in; it flows from the inside out!** We need our **hearts** continually filled with **the Spirit of God** (see the commentary on **Ephesians Bt - Be Filled with the Ruach**). I think **Yeshua** had **verse 23** in mind when **He** said: **If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water (John 7:37-38)**. We will not lose our way on the journey of life if we will keep coming to **Yeshua** and **drinking** of **His** acceptance, **His** forgiveness, **His** promises, and **His** love.¹²⁰

Assuming we will possess reasonable discernment, **Solomon** tells us how we can guard the fortress of our inner self. **He** offers **three practical instructions** using the word picture of a traveler making his or her way through the world. **First, ignore false directions: Put away all deceitful speech, and put devious speech far from you (4:24 Hebrew)**. The phrase **put away** is the translation of a Hebrew verb that means *to turn aside*. The adjective **devious** also translates a Hebrew term that means *crooked*. **Speech** literally means *lips*. The command is to remove from our environment any influence that does not align with Scripture, and we must avoid anyone who *distorts* **the Word of God**.

Second, focus on your destination: Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you (4:25 NLT). Using the illustration of a road trip, **Solomon** assumed we will have an accurate map or a perfectly reliable GPS. **He** said, in effect, “If someone contradicts your road map or suggests that you ignore your GPS, get that person out of your car and leave him at the next truck stop. Moreover, ignore unofficial, hand-made signs along the road.” According to this **wise fatherly** advice, we must refer to our road map often. That’s how we will be able to discern the difference between divine truth and crooked directions.¹²¹

Third, stay on the right path: Level the path for your feet, and all your ways will be sure (4:26 BSB). Do not get sidetracked, keep your feet from following evil (4:27 NLT). There are certain situations that make you more vulnerable to temptation than others. Some circumstances will cause you to stumble almost immediately, while others don’t bother you as much. These situations are unique to your weaknesses, and you need to identify them because **Satan** certainly knows them! **He** knows *exactly* what trips you up, and **he** is constantly working to get you into those circumstances. **Peter** warns us: **Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (First Peter 5:8 NLT).**

Ask yourself, “*When* am I most tempted? What time of the week, what time of day? *Where* am I most tempted? At work? At home? At a neighbor’s house? At a sports bar? In an airport or motel out of town?” Ask, “*Who is with me* when I’m most tempted? Friends? Coworkers? A crowd of strangers? When I’m alone?” Also ask, “*How do I feel* when I’m most tempted?” It may be when you are tired, lonely, bored, depressed, or under stress. It may be when you’ve been hurt, angry, worried, or after a big success or a spiritual high.

Once you have identified your typical pattern of temptation, then prepare to avoid those situations as much as possible. The Bible tells us repeatedly to anticipate and be ready to face temptation (see the commentary on [Ephesians Ca - The Spiritual Battle](#)). **Paul** says: **Don’t give the devil a chance (Ephesians 4:27 GNT). The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their ways preserve their lives (16:17 NIV).**¹²²

You have a destination. **ADONAI** created you for a specific purpose (**Psalms 139:13-16**). So **He** calls you not only to walk uprightly and obediently, but to fulfill your destiny. Therefore, it is key to **guard your heart** by knowing **YHVH**, experiencing **Him** personally by discerning **His** will, by shutting out all that distracts

you from that calling, and by steadfastly traveling on the path that **He** has ordained. Protect your mind and don't settle for anything less than **God's** best. Then you will not lose your way. What is **ADONAI's** purpose for your life? If your calling is your destination, where are you going? What threatens to push you off the road or head in the wrong direction? What will be your next step in the right direction?¹²³

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being the most wonderful **Father** that ever could be! How great that **You** also live in me to guide and to protect me!*

Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23). When **wisdom** is needed because there are many choices in life to make, what a comfort it is to be able to run to **You** asking for the guidance of **Your Spirit!** **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him (James 1:5).** **And if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have the requests we have asked from Him (First John 5:15).** Many paths may look inviting, but only by following your way will there be peace and joy. **Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).** In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen