

Discipling Young Men - Part 3 - the blueprint for Godly conversation, Proverbs 4

3 Final Dangers Young men face:

1. contempt of Christianity
2. the fear of man
3. sexual depravity and lust

This evening - we will consider “contempt of Christianity” and how to avoid it in young men.

1. contempt of Christianity

Ryle: “This also is one of your special dangers. I always observe that none pay so little outward respect to Christianity as young men. None take so little part in our services, when they are present at them - use Bibles so little - sing so little - listen to preaching so little. None are so generally absent at prayer meetings, Bible Studies, and all other weekday helps to the soul. Young men seem to think they do not need these things - they may be good for women and old men, but not for them. They appear ashamed of seeming to care about their souls: one would almost fancy they consider it a disgrace to go to heaven at all. And this is contempt of Christianity - it is the same spirit which made the young people of Bethel mock Elisha - and of this spirit I say to all young men, Beware! If it is worthwhile to be a Christian, it is worthwhile to be in earnest about it.”

Point: What is true for all young people is this: Their passions burn the brightest in the vigor of their youth. And therefore, whatever wins their affections *now* is critical to their future.

Application: 23 times in the book of Proverbs alone, the writer prefaces pleas to value wisdom and the things of God with: “My son!” And these young men are pleaded with to hear the instruction of their father and their mother.

One of the great passages of Scripture - is all of Proverbs 31: And in the beginning of it: Proverbs 31:1-2 “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance **which his mother taught him**: [2] **What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows?**”

The Biblical solution to guarding against contempt of Christianity is Proverbs 4 - let us walk through this great chapter. It is a marvelous example of “godly conversation.” To reach the hearts of young men and young women with a love of the truth - ***we must put the truth before them, talk about it, have conversations about it, have give and take - and watch closely where the affections of young people are drawn.***

Young people need mentors - a godly father, a godly mother, and / or a godly adult in their lives.

Always remember Timothy: Although the Word of God lays the burden primarily upon the father, this world is fallen and very often there is no father to do this. And yet, Timothy was properly disciplined and well-taught. He was taught the Word of God by his mother, Eunice and his grandmother, Lois. **2 Timothy 1:4-5** Paul said he was “greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, [5] when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in **your grandmother Lois** and your **mother Eunice**, and I am persuaded is in you also.”

Remember that in the heart of every human being God creates, there is a hunger to worship something - and there is a sinful nature that will be ever drawing that human being to worship anything and everything except their Creator. Proverbs 4 presents disciplers with a good blueprint for godly conversations - because it is filled with exhortations from the discipler to the one being disciplined, but it also contains memories of how the discipler was once himself disciplined.

Proverbs 4:1-27

1. The instruction of a father - v1-2

[1] Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding;

[2] For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.

In his introductory remarks to the opening verses of chapter 4 of Proverbs, Charles Bridges wrote: "But—young people!—remember—that which humbles the soul before God ; that which exhibits the free grace of the Gospel ; which melts down the will, consecrates the heart, imbues with the spirit of the cross—however unpalatable to the flesh—is alone good doctrine for the soul. Therefore forsake it not. Do not be carried away with the senseless cry,—' Everybody thinks contrary.' What is the judgment of the mass of mankind worth on the great subject of religion ? "This their way is their folly." This is God's stamp upon man's "saying" however applauded and "approved" by successive generations. (Ps.xlix. 13.) Shall this world's judgment be preferred to the word of God? "The morning" of the resurrection will reflect the glory of eternity upon the choice of the narrow path."

2. What my father taught me - v3-9

[3] When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, [4] He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live.

Point: Solomon is the author of most of the book of Proverbs - and definitely of this particular section. We see here a window into the way in which David, "the man after God's own heart," charged and instructed his son, Solomon.

Illustration: 1 Kings 2:1-3 Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: [2] "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. [3] And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;

Application: Notice the concern David had for his son's *heart* - "Let your heart retain my words..." When it comes to reaching young men, it is one thing to fill their minds with correct information, it is quite another for them to embrace with loving affection the truths of what they are being taught. And so, we must exhort them to take what we teach them *into their hearts*.

Application 2: It is on this point that we are absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God - *because none of us can make any young man, or young woman, or adult or child love Christ and His Word from their heart*.

Illustration: Knowledge of the truth without a love *from the heart* for the truth is like a perfectly made human body with no blood in it - all is dead.

[5] Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Point: So many teach their young men: get honor, get wealth, get fame... but the godly discipler knows what is truly important. What do young men need? "Wisdom" - the proper application of knowledge to real life - and true, Biblical theology from Scripture - what we are to believe and our duty - all according to God's Word.

Illustration: Why this incredibly earnest exhortation to "get wisdom" to the young son here?

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

The Biblical concept of putting off the old, putting on the new: We want to put off foolishness and put on wisdom.

Ephes. 4:22-24 ... put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, [23] and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, [24] and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Bridges points out the reason for the earnestness of this plea: "This is not the style of a cold pleader, enforcing with decent seriousness some unimportant truth. It is the father, feeling that his

child's soul is perishing, unless it be taught and led in wisdom's ways. Parents! do we know this stirring concern, anxiously looking out for the first dawn of light upon our child's soul? Do we eagerly point out to him wisdom as the principal thing, to be gotten first?"

[6] Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. [7] Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. [8] Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. [9] She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you."

Point: What young men typically do not see - is just how valuable the instruction they are receiving really is. I cannot tell you how many adult men that I've given Ryle's book: *Thoughts for Young Men*, have come back to me and said guess what? "I wish someone had read that book to me when I was a kid!"

Illustration: We have to, in a sense, sell wisdom's value and importance to young men. If young men are used to being taught wisdom from Scripture along with sound doctrine and theology, they can easily devalue those things *because they don't know anything else - they don't know a world without them*. And so, we must *praise* wisdom and the benefits of it!

Application: Tell the young men in your life: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." Send notes to young men and encourage them to read passages of Scripture. Pray that young men will see the glorious truths of Scripture.

Application 2: And intercede for young men - pray, pray, pray for them!

Kevin Swanson, in his book *The Second Mayflower*, wrote this:

Probably the greatest preacher of that generation (1650-1720), Increase Mather's prayers and preaching were often directed towards his own nine children. He would frequently record his prayers for them in his diary: "After I had prayed, as I was in my garden, and had this soliloquy, 'God has heard my prayer for this child, God will answer me, and the child shall live to do service for the Lord his God and God of his father... My heart was melted before the Lord, and therefore I am not altogether without hope that this child shall be blessed and made a blessing in his generation. Amen O God in Christ Jesus, Amen... Tears gushed from me before the Lord. I trust prayer and Faith shall not be in vain. Oh! I have prevailed and obtained mercy for my poor children.' Amen! Lord Jesus!"

3. The benefits of receiving and acting upon this "good doctrine" - v10-13

[10] Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. [11] I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. [12] When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. [13] Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.

Point: Why will young men need such encouragement to keep in this path of righteousness and wisdom? Because it is the "narrow and difficult" path.

Matthew 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Application: It is easy to be worldly and to become enamored and charmed by the things of the world - the glitz, glamor, and popularity - but the pursuit of self-control, righteousness, truth, and wisdom is an investment and will often leave young men feeling lonely or "out of touch" with their peers. And THEREFORE - we must extol wisdom in *their hearing* - and speak of its great benefits and joys.

1 Tim. 4:7b ... exercise yourself toward godliness.

Illustration: The legendary "Pistol" Pete Maravich, from the time he was about 7 or 8 years old would have a basketball in his hands for around 8 hours a day. He invented every kind of ball-handling drill you can imagine. By the time he was college-aged, he was unstoppable. His sophomore, junior, and senior year he *averaged* over 44 points per game - *without a 3 point line*.

Someone once went back and watched all the old LSU basketball films of his game and figured out that he would have averaged 13 three-point field goals a game which would have brought his average up to 57 points per game.

Application: Pete Maravich made himself one of the greatest basketball players in history because of the discipline he had in pursuing excellence at it *when he was a child and a young man.*

1 Tim. 4:8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

Application: This is what we must sell to young men - *it is worth it for you to memorize Scripture now - it is worth it for you to read good books now - it is worth it for you to listen carefully to what you are taught by your father, mother, pastors, elders, and Sunday school teachers now.*

4. Do not walk with the wicked - v14-22

[14] Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. [15] Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. [16] For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. [17] For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. [18] But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. [19] The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. [20] My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. [21] Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; [22] For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

Point: So much of who young men turn out to be depends on who they “walk with.” The last thing in the world any of us needs is for our young men and women to be disciplined by their peers.

Illustration: Who is always doing the instructing in Scripture? “my son... my son... my son...” The Biblical model of discipleship is almost always “older-younger,” never “peer-to-peer.”

Titus 2:3-6 [3] the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- [4] that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, [5] to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. [6] Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded...

Application: One way to apply this passage here to young men is simply to point out to them that they are always on a “path.” Our feet never stand still in life. You may be at a point in your life or at an age in which you feel rather “settled” as you are. But you are not. We walk a path. And we make decisions every day - which path to walk. Notice again the sobriety of this passage: ***Do not enter the path of the wicked...***

Illustration: So many bright and gifted young men I grew up with “got in with the wrong crowd.”

Proverbs 12:26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Emphasize to young men this truth: [18] But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. [19] The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.

Application: The paths before young men, because of their sin, *appear to be just the opposite of the truth - the path of the just looks like darkness and the way of the wicked looks like the shining sun!* This is the way the lies of the world work - just like Satan told Eve, **and she believed him:**

Genesis 3:4 “You will not surely die.”

5. Guard your heart - v20-23

[23] Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

Point: “Keep” - Hebrew: *natsar* means: “keep watch, guard, protect.”

Point 2: “your heart” - Hebrew: *lev* means: “inner man.”

Application: Guard the “inner man” with all “diligence” - Hebrew: *mishmar* “utmost vigilance.”

A huge point of conversation: The “heart” - the “inner man” of young people. Address behavior, but it is “out of the heart” that our mouths speak, and “out of the heart” proceeds our behavior.

6. Guard also your eyes, mouth, and feet - v24-27

[24] Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.

Tell the truth, all the time. Help young men and women to tell the truth - and to defeat habits of lying early on.

A great text to encourage young men to memorize: Proverbs 15:1-2 “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. [2] The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”

Application: This is one reason I am very excited about our monthly men’s breakfasts that we’re going to start doing on the last Saturday morning of each month beginning in January. *Godly conversation about important matters* is something young men need to learn to do early in life.

Application 2: If these are the men who will one day be the covenantal heads of their own households. If we expect them to obey this passage:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall **talk** of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Critical point: The Hebrew there says: “You shall speak of them...” It is a command.

[25] Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.

Job 31:1, “I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a woman...”

Jesus said that when we put our hand to the plow, we must not look back (Luke 9:62).

Lot’s wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Achan and his whole family were stoned to death because, according to his own testimony:

“When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, *I coveted them and took them.*”

Samson’ first words recorded in Scripture are: “I have seen a woman...”

And David’s downfall began with: (2 Sam. 11:2), “... And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful *to behold.*”

[26] Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. [27] Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

Watch where you go and what you do - and know that every decision and action in our lives has consequences. “Ponder” the path of your feet - where do you see yourself going. What is the end of your behavior. Watch these things closely - encourage young men to watch them closely.

Charles Bridges wrote: “Invaluable are these rules as our safeguard. Assaulted as we are at every point, every inlet of sin must be strongly guarded — the heart --- mouth — the eye — the feet. First — the heart — the citadel of man — the seat of his dearest treasure. It is fearful to think of its many watchful and subtle assailants. Let it be closely garrisoned. Let the sentinel be never sleeping on his post. " Take heed to thy way, and keep thy soul diligently." (Deut. iv. 9.) But the heart must be known in order to be effectually kept. Nothing is more difficult, while nothing is more necessary. If we know not our hearts, we know nothing to any purpose. Whatever else we know, to neglect this knowledge is to be a fool at the best. If we know not our weak points, Satan knows them well...”

Contempt of Christianity is a danger to young men who think they know everything already.

Extol and speak of the wisdom of God as much as possible with them. Set it before them and pray that the Holy Spirit of God will bring them to love it.