

Family TableTalk

Conversation 97

Heart Health

read

Proverbs 23:12

think

There are four little words my dad used to regularly speak to me during those times when my teenage-self was especially in need of guidance and direction: “Privileges come with responsibility.” This was just one of his many short little “proverbs” that he would drop on me to provoke my thinking, teach me a truth about life, and lead me to mature thinking and living. My dad would often repeat other short little sayings from the Old Testament Book of

Proverbs, a treasure-chest filled with wise guidance that will help us to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Tim Keller says that “a proverb is like hard candy: If you just bite down on it, you get little out of it and may even get a broken tooth. Instead, you must meditate on it until the sweetness of insight comes.”¹

In Proverbs 23:12 we read a proverb about listening to, meditating on, and following the insights and instruction that we find not only in the Book of Proverbs, but throughout all of the Bible. This is urgent and important because we all live in a world where a variety of voices continually scream in our ears and summon our allegiance. In the midst of all these voices we have to work hard to focus on hearing and learning the truth. The writer of Proverbs addressed this reality in ancient times, as the same struggle to know truth that exists now existed then. So, where do we turn to find truth, and who should we listen to?

In Proverbs 23:12 we are commanded to “apply” both our ears *and* our hearts to God’s truth. The word translated “apply” means that we are to actively participate in the task of seeking out truth so that it might enter into our ears and then into our hearts. It is not just in seeking and hearing God’s truth, but in embracing God’s truth internally (in our hearts!) that we are changed and sent in the right direction. Our ears and our hearts are always to work together.

- Ok. . . let’s have a little fun. Parents, what were the sayings (proverbs) that you heard your parents utter the most when you were growing up? Children and teens, what are the sayings you hear most from your parents as you are growing up? Which of these have you found to be most valuable, and why?
- What are the life-shaping voices in today’s world that speak loudest to parents? To children and teens? Which of these voices are trustworthy and safe? Why? Which of these voices are incredibly tempting to listen to, but should be avoided? Why?
- What are the best practices we can follow as a family – alone and together – to keep our ears and hearts in tune with God’s instruction and knowledge?

apply

pray

Almighty God, thank you that you have not created us and then walked away, leaving us to find our way on our own. There are far too many voices calling us to “come and follow” which lead nowhere but to our undoing. Thank you that in your Word you speak loudly to instruct us, giving us all the knowledge we need to live to your glory. Give us hearts that long for you. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

¹ Timothy Keller, *God’s Wisdom For Navigating Life*, p. 1.

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