

- ***READ Proverbs 4:20-27/PRAYER*** One of the things you might have noticed as you have been reading through the Proverbs over the past couple of weeks is that Solomon constantly repeats the appealing nature of wisdom and the benefits of seeking God's wisdom in our lives, and he does so through different words and descriptions. In the **chapter 1:9**, Solomon describes wisdom as a *"graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck."* In **chapter 2:20**, Solomon simply says that seeking and obtaining wisdom will allow us to *"walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of righteousness."* In **chapter 3:15**, wisdom is said to be "more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her." And then finally in our text of **Proverbs 4:20-27**, Solomon says that wisdom benefits us because it will be *"life to those who find them and health to all of their body."*
- As I read this text, it quickly caught my attention because health has been on my mind recently. A couple weeks ago, Katie and I made some big changes to our diet and lifestyle and have enjoyed some awesome results. But if we're being honest, the results that come from a healthier lifestyle here on earth just can't compare to the spiritual benefits that are gained from seeking to be healthy disciples.
- I think about what Paul says in **I Timothy 4:7,8** and am reminded that while bodily exercise and discipline in this life come with some benefit...spiritual exercise and discipline comes with much greater benefits in this life and especially the next! With these things in our minds, I'd like for us to take a few minutes to consider the healthy disciple...why and how we can be healthy disciples and then the benefits of putting in the effort to be such.

I. Pursuing Health As A Disciple

A. Being healthy takes effort.

1. We all know the hard reality that being healthy takes great effort and discipline. Did you notice that this is what Paul said back in **I Timothy 4:7,8**, "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." But Paul.....being disciplined is hard! If you have ever made changes in your eating habits or in other areas of your life then you know this all too well.
2. I was talking with someone about the struggle that so many people have with changing their eating diets and habits, and I made the observation that there are really two things that people struggle with when it comes to changing how they eat. 1) The fact that there become things that you cannot eat anymore. For some people that can be a monumental struggle. But 2) is the issue that there are things that you need to eat now that you might not have been a big fan of before. Why do healthier diets fail? Because people aren't willing to put in the hard work to do these two things. It is much easier to be just like you have always been and be comfortable.
3. Do you see the connections between what it takes to be physically healthy and spiritually healthy? Just like the physical approach, there are some things that we can't do anymore if we want to be healthy and there are some things that we need to do if we want to be healthy disciples. Much of it comes down to our spiritual diet. If we are willing to put in the hard work and good effort to sustain ourselves in the right way spiritually, then we can achieve good spiritual health.

B. The healthy disciples's diet is the word of God and His wisdom.

1. So what does a strong spiritually healthy diet look like? That question is a physical diet sense could be answered in a few different ways because the medical community has different ideas at times...but God's answer is consistent. A healthy spiritual diet looks like steady and consistent helpings of Jesus. In fact, Jesus said that those who want to have life in this life and the next need to eat his flesh and drink his blood. (**John 6:47-58**) Obviously this would sound crazy coming from a religious teacher, but when we take a step back and consider why Jesus said this then it makes sense, right?
2. Obviously we could really break this down and consider how his broken body and shed blood on the cross bring us life through our faith and obedience, but consider how it is everything about Jesus that sustains us, gives us energy, and gives us strength. If our lives will revolve around Jesus's will for us through lives that contain a steady diet of spiritual things, reading, praying, singing, assembling, and the like...could you imagine the vitality that our spiritual health would enjoy! The fuel we put in will determine what we are able to do in this life. Do we want to run on low quality fuel or the very Son of God? The person who consumes Jesus in the form of God's word and wisdom will be a healthy disciple.

C. Being healthy comes with unmatched benefits.

1. So why ought we put in the work to be people who are consumed with Jesus, the Bible, and God's wisdom? When we consider the benefits of spiritual fitness and health...the better body function, more energy, higher possibility of longer life, etc...the sacrifices don't seem that extreme. The exact same thing is true for our spiritual health. When we consider the benefits of putting in the effort to be spiritually healthy....well...God will be at work in our lives in many ways and through many blessings.
2. Surely the greatest blessings will be the unloading of so much of the sin and anxieties that come with them in this life. Just like extra weight on our bodies, sin weights us down and hinders us in this life. Solomon describes this type of unhealthy lifestyle well in **Proverbs 4:14-19**. We don't want this do we? of course not! We want freedom, a clear conscience, and peace in our hearts and these things come through Jesus and healthy spirituality. But what things specifically within the spiritual body of the disciple are bettered by our efforts? Let's finish up by quickly looking at what Solomon lists as the benefitted portions of our spiritual body through healthy living and discipline.

II. Benefits of Being A Healthy Disciple

A. A healthy heart that is a pure source for our lives. (**Proverbs 4:23**)

1. Healthy spiritual living benefits us by giving us a pure source for everything else in our lives to flow from. Jesus states in **Mark 7:21-23**, *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."*
2. Our hearts determine what will be the products of our lives. In **Matthew 12:33-35**, Jesus says that good things will only come from a good heart, so guess what? If we want to enjoy the blessings that God gives in this life then we best give every effort to be spiritually healthy so that our heart will lead us in the right way of life.

B. A healthy mouth that puts forth only godly speech. (**Proverbs 4:24**)

1. Not only is the heart affected by our healthy spiritual living, but we come to possess mouths that only put forth those things that would fit the description of Paul's words in **Ephesians 4:29**, *"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."*
2. Why is this important? Why ought we seek out to have a healthy mouth? Look again at **Matthew 12:36,37**. We must seek out to have a healthy mouth so that we will be judged as having been righteous and be justified before God.

C. Healthy eyes that aren't distracted by this world. (**Proverbs 4:25**)

1. Our eyes are what lead us through this life, and if we want to be on the way that leads to heaven then we must be sure that we are able to stay on that path by keeping our eyes *"fixed straight in front of you."* (**Prov. 4:25**)
2. The road we travel in this life is not an easy one according to Jesus in **Matthew 7:13,14**. It is a path that will require our careful attention so that we will not stray off of it. Healthy spiritual living helps us to keep our eyes straight ahead and focused on the goal of heaven.

D. Healthy feet that lead us to God and not to evil. (**Proverbs 4:26,27**)

1. Finally, it isn't only that we have healthy eyes that are focused ahead on the goal of heaven with God, but we actually have feet that are walking straight ahead. Again, our hearts are what lead to everything else that we do. If we have dark hearts then our feet will desire to go to the left or the right, but our healthy hearts keep us going straight.
2. In doing so, Solomon says that our way will be established...it will lead to the right place and that place is wherever God is and where Jesus wants us to go. Remember, our body will only operate as the fuel we take in allows...if that fuel is Jesus then we will be able to do all things He wishes.

Healthy decisions are always the easiest to make because we often want to do what is easiest. We'd rather get that fast food that is cheap and doesn't require us to cook or clean up. However, the results of that fast food are not what is best for us. May God help us to put forth the extra effort to seek out those things that lead to healthy spirituality in this life so that He may be pleased and we reap the awesome benefits of being healthy disciples! Thanks be to God for the godly advice of Solomon. May we all take it to heart and live it out.