

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

## Subject: Wisdom Perfects Our Path (Proverbs 4:10-18)

**Personal development** covers activities that [improve](#) awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build [human capital](#) and facilitate [employability](#), enhance the [quality of life](#) and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. Personal development takes place over the course of a person's entire life. Not limited to [self-help](#), the concept involves formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as teacher, guide, counselor, manager, life coach or mentor. When personal development takes place in the context of [institutions](#), it refers to the methods, programs, tools, techniques, and assessment systems that support [human development](#) at the individual level in [organizations](#).<sup>1</sup>

### Definition of spiritual growth - what is personal spiritual growth

There is no official and exact definition of spiritual growth. We - and many others - use personal spiritual growth as synonyms for other terms like e.g. personal spiritual development, to develop higher awareness or to develop higher consciousness.

With [our understanding of spirituality](#) , one can also define personal spiritual growth as way to integrate spirituality to a higher and higher degree in our daily live.

We have seen [here](#) that we can compare human development with the achievement of virtuosity in a particular activity (for example making music, sport, handcrafts etc.). The basic rights of existence (the equal right of all beings to be on the earth, to develop and to carry out their tasks) must be so strongly internalized that in every situation we automatically act according to these rights without having to think about it. We refer to this ability in the following as awareness or consciousness. Spiritual growth means developing this ability further.



We can use the model of a bright lamp to represent our level of awareness or [level of consciousness](#) : Our body represents the lamp which is lit ever more brightly as our awareness (consciousness) increases. The brightness of our awareness (consciousness) lights up our surroundings so that we can see and hence perceive additional aspects of ourselves and our surroundings.

The light fully illuminates a space around us which is approximately the shape of a sphere. In the following we will describe this space as the awareness sphere or consciousness sphere. It serves as model for our spiritual level or spiritual growth: We can clearly perceive everything within the sphere with our common sense or our intuition. Outside the awareness sphere (consciousness sphere) the brightness of our lamp is no longer sufficient. The further away something is from our sphere the less easy it is to perceive it.

We can now define personal spiritual growth as follows: Personal spiritual growth is the personal development to enlarge the diameter of the above mentioned sphere of consciousness. As such, personal spiritual growth is an integral part of our purpose of life.

### **Here are three things we want to focus on in being a better me: Personal Development**

1. Direction is important
2. Decision is imperative
3. Destination is inevitable

**The key verse in chapter 4 is verse 18, "But the path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The picture is that of the sunrise ("the first gleam of dawn," NIV) and the increasing of the light on the pilgrim path as the day advances. If we walk in the way of God's wisdom, the path gets brighter and brighter and there is no sun-set! When the path ends, we step into a land where the light never dims, for "there shall be no night there" (Revelation 22:5).**

**God has a plan for each of His children** (Ephesians 2:10), and if we walk in His wisdom, we can confidently say, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me" (Psalms 138:8, NKJV). Our path may not be an easy one, but it will always be a fulfilling one as we walk in the will of the Father. This involves three responsibilities on our part: knowing God's Word (Proverbs 4:19), trusting God's providence (vv. 10-19), and obeying God's will (vv. 20-27).

**Knowing God's Word (vv. 1-9).** Some children don't like to hear Dad say, "Now, back when I was a boy..." but they might learn a lot if they paid attention and listened. He learned wisdom from his father and now he's passing it on to the next generation. This is the primary way God has ordained for His truth to be preserved and invested from generation to generation (Deuteronomy 6:3-9; Ephesians 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; 2:2; 3:14-17). Children who have godly parents and grandparents ought to give thanks to the Lord for their rich heritage, instead of scoffing at that heritage and abandoning it for the way of the world.

**"Get wisdom"** (Proverbs 4:5) suggests, "buy wisdom," because the Hebrew word carries the idea of a commercial transaction. There's a price to pay if you want to know God's truth and obey it. "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (23:23). Parents and grandparents can teach us, but only we can receive the Word into our hearts, cherish it, and pay the price to obey it.

The father tells his sons to treat wisdom the way they would treat their mother, sister, or wife: love her, honor her, embrace her, exalt her! The bumper sticker that asks, "Have you hugged your children today?" ought to be balanced with, "Have you hugged wisdom today?" In Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a beautiful woman who invites us to her lavish banquet, while Folly is the adulteress or prostitute who tempts us to poverty and death. The one you love is the one who will control your life. Embrace Wisdom and you will have security (4:6), honor (v. 8), and beauty (v. 9).

**Trusting God's providence** (vv. 10-19). When you receive God's truth into your heart, God renews your mind (Romans 12:2) and enables you to think wisely. This helps you make right decisions and experience the guidance of God day by day. God in His loving providence directs us and prepares the path for us. Augustine said, "Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence." But King David said it better long before Augustine: "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalms 16:11, NKJV).

If you are willing to do God's will, you will have God's guidance (John 7:17), but if you treat God's will like a buffet lunch, choosing only what pleases you, He will never direct you. As I've said before, the will of God isn't for the curious; it's for the serious. As we look back on more than forty years of marriage and ministry, my wife and I can testify to God's providential leading in our lives in ways that we never suspected He would use.

**But God's children can't expect God's leading if they shuttle back and forth between the path of wisdom and the path of the wicked** (Proverbs 4:14-17). Stay as far away from that path as you can! Don't enter it! Avoid it! Don't go near it! Go as far from it as you can! Certainly we must witness to unsaved people whom the Lord brings to us, but we must never adopt their lifestyle or imitate their ways. God doesn't guide His children when they're walking in darkness. When you're living in the will of God, the path gets brighter and brighter, not darker and darker (1 John 1:5-10).

**The danger is that we let the lessons of wisdom slip through our fingers and we lose them.** "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go" (Proverbs 4:13). Hold on to wisdom the way a child holds a parent's hand and trusts Mother or Father to guide and protect. God is able to keep us from stumbling (Jude 24) if we'll keep ourselves in His wisdom.

**Obedying God's will** (vv. 20-27). This is a wonderful paragraph to us as a personal spiritual inventory to see if we're really living in obedience to the Lord. Let's ask ourselves:

**"What comes into my ears?" (v. 20) Whatever enters my ears will ultimately influence my mind, my heart, and my decisions, so I'd better be careful what I listen to.** Paul warns us to beware of "obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking" (Ephesians 5:4, NIV), and Psalms 1:1 tells us to avoid ungodly counsel. When people speak, we must be able to identify God's voice (John 10:3-5,16) and obey what He says.

**"What is within my heart?"** (v. 23) Whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see. When our children were small, no matter where we were driving, they could usually find the ice cream shops and the toy stores; I must confess that I managed to locate the book-stores! "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (v. 23, NIV). If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread; before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame.

**The Bible warns us to avoid a double heart (Psalms 12:2), a hard heart (Proverbs 28:14), a proud heart (21:4), an unbelieving heart (Hebrews 3:12), a cold heart (Matthew 24:12), and an unclean heart (Psalms 51:10). "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (139:23).**

**"What is upon my lips?"** (v. 24) Whatever is in the heart will ultimately come out of the mouth (Matthew 12:33-34). God's children must be careful to have "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8), speech that's gracious and "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6, NKJV). The ancient Romans, listening to one of their orators, would look at each other, smile, and say, "Cum grano salis" — "Take it with a grain of salt." But Christians are supposed to put the salt into their speech and keep their words pure and honest.

As we shall see in a later chapter, Proverbs has a great deal to say about human speech; in fact, the word "mouth" is used over fifty times and the word "lips" over forty times in the Authorized Version. Among other things, Solomon warns us about perverse lips (Proverbs 4:24), lying lips (12:22), flattering lips (20:19), deceptive lips (24:28), and undisciplined lips (10:19). "He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin" (13:3, NIV).

**"What is before my eyes?"** (v. 25) Outlook determines outcome. Abraham was the friend of God because he walked by faith and "looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Lot became a friend of the world because he walked by sight and moved toward the wicked city of Sodom (Genesis 13:10,12). Everybody has some vision before them that helps to determine their values, actions, and plans. We would all be wise to imitate David who said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalms 101:3), and the writer of Psalms 119 who prayed, "Turn my eyes away from worthless things" (v. 37, NIV). If you are "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) as you walk the path of life, then keep that posture of faith. If you look back (Luke 9:62) or around (Matthew 14:30), you may go on a detour.

**"What is beyond my path?"** (vv. 26-27) The Hebrew word translated "ponder" means "to weigh" or "to make level." It is related to a word that means "scales" (16:11). In his final speech before he drank the hemlock, Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living"; Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5, NKJV). The Lord is weighing our ways (Proverbs 5:21) and our hearts (21:2), as well as our actions (1 Samuel 2:3), and we had better do the same. Life is too short and too precious to be wasted on the temporary and the trivial.

If we're walking in the way of wisdom, God promises to protect our path, direct our path, and perfect our path.

All folly can offer us is danger, detours, and disappointments, ultimately leading to death.

It shouldn't be too difficult to make the right choice!