

MANAGING OUR THINKING FOR BLESSING
Part I: Managing Our Thinking Over Yielding It To Others
(Proverbs 4:1-13, 14-19)

I. Introduction

- A. Throughout my ministry as a pastor, I have noticed a challenge exists for myself and other believers to manage our own thinking as opposed to letting other errant parties dictate it for us.
- B. The Apostle Paul spoke of this issue in 1 Timothy. (a) Negatively, men who pay heed (*prosecho*) to myths and genealogies veer from Scripture (1:3-4; 6:3-5) and/or indulge (*prosecho*) in lustful excesses (3:8). They may often end up paying heed (*prosecho*) to deceiving spirits and demonic doctrines (4:1). (b) Opposite this, Timothy was to manage his thinking in paying heed (*prosecho*) to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching (4:13) and being attentive (*epecho*) to his life and doctrine (4:16).
- C. Well, Proverbs 4 offers insight on **how to manage** our thinking so we can escape defeat and be blessed, and just **why** this is *necessary*. We view that chapter in depth for this particular application:

II. Managing Our Thinking Over Yielding It To Others, Proverbs 4:1-13, 14-19.

- A. Before even considering the views others suggest we adopt, we should heed the teaching our parents gave us about those with whom we **should** or should **not** trust and befriend, and how and why, Proverbs 4:1-4.
- B. Above **all**, we must apply **Scripture** teaching on what to **think** as being *right*, Pr. 4:5-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17:
 - 1. Solomon's call to acquire wisdom in Proverbs refers to aligning one's self to God's fixed moral order, Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature," *Bib. Sac.*, 136:543, p. 221-238.
 - 2. As such, we should make reading and applying Scripture that reveals this order the **final** authority on knowing what to think, in knowing what is right and wrong, and why, Pr. 4:5-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
- C. Then, there is the following **procedure** to use on *managing* our **thinking** in relating well to other people:
 - 1. Part One - We first heed the direction of our parents and Scripture on **what** is a **good** concept to nurture, and what is a **bad** one to avoid (see "B,1-2" above). That way we can apply what Solomon says about discerning the "wicked" and the "righteous" from what views they suggest in Pr. 4:14-19:
 - 2. Part Two - Once we thus **know who** and hence **why** one is "wicked" and whose ideas and association to resist or "righteous" and thus to heed and befriend, we **relate** to them as follows, Pr. 4:14-17, 19:
 - a. Step One - If we **must** interact with the "wicked", we should avoid what he **believes** and **does**, 4:14.
 - b. Step Two - Next, we should not even *mentally dwell* on his sinful **beliefs** and **acts**, Proverbs 4:15a.
 - c. Step Three - We should **then block** even **allowing** ourselves to be **exposed** to *thinking about* his evil views and actions through **occupying** ourselves to **think** and **do** what is *right*, 4:15b: this **choice** of **preoccupation** is needed as the "wicked" is not content to let us "just say no" to his pathway, rather he will try to influence us to traverse his way out of his inherent evil bent to practice violence to the innocent party's beliefs and way, Proverbs 4:16-17.
 - d. Step Four - Fourth, we are to **recall** how treacherously self-destructive is the "wicked" party's pathway, a way that causes him to stumble in defeat without knowing why. This recollection acts to **motivate** us to **apply** steps one through three listed above in Proverbs 4:14-17 (Proverbs 4:19).
 - e. Step Five - We should work to avoid the evil path and associate with the "righteous" in the good way of beliefs and deeds, for this leads to increasing insight and blessing, Pr. 4:18; 2 Tim. 2:22.

Lesson: *The difference between ending up experiencing either tragedy or blessing in our encounters with "wicked" and "righteous" parties in general depends upon what we LET our minds focus, and that FOCUS is vulnerable to influence by wayward tendencies within the erring parties we encounter. Hence, God calls us to MANAGE our THINKING as taught in Proverbs 4 rather than letting OTHERS manage it for us; then we guard ourselves from adopting erroneous beliefs that lead to tragic living!*

Application: *God hold us responsible to DIRECT our ATTENTION toward what SCRIPTURE says it should focus ABOVE ALL OTHER influences from other parties, for there are evil forces within "wicked" parties that will otherwise captivate our thinking to our harm. This way we CHOOSE the right path to gain blessing and escape the evil thinking and actions that are so self-destructive.*