

## Apply Your Heart

By Beth Moller

*“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 23:12)*

How do we grow as Christians? Is it by just going to church with your parents, singing hymns, and reading your Bible once in a while? I believe that growing as a Christian requires something more: the desire to grow in your personal relationship with Christ and to apply your heart and mind to learning the things that God wants us to learn. In Proverbs 23:12, Solomon says, *“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.”*

There is so much that God wants us to know, but how can we learn if we do not apply ourselves to learning? After all, it’s pretty hard to learn anything if you don’t apply yourself to it! For example, I am not able to do a very good job on my math lesson if I don’t pay attention as I am learning the concept that the lesson is on. To apply our hearts to instruction, we need to be good listeners and be willing to learn from what people around us are trying to teach us. When I hear *“apply your heart,”* I think about giving something my full attention and working on it to the best of my abilities. First Corinthians 15:58 says, *“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* From that verse, we learn to *“give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord,”* because there is nothing more important than serving our Lord. And, by applying our hearts to instruction, we can grow even more.

Listening to words of knowledge and using our ears to listen to good things rather than evil things is very beneficial to us as we strive to grow in the Lord. We use our ears to listen to a lot of different things. Do you remember that song that I’m sure many of us learned as young children that says, *“Oh, be careful little ears, what you hear”*? When we hear evil things, it’s very difficult to forget them. They seem burned into our brains. However, if we use our ears to listen to words of knowledge, we will have those words of knowledge burned into our brains. By listening to things that Christians share with us and listening to good Christian music, we can have good things in our mind! In Philippians 4:8, Paul and Timothy say, *“Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.”* This verse is saying that God even wants our thoughts to be good thoughts, as well as our actions and words to be God-honoring.

When I thought about an example of a person who listened to the advice of others and applied the instructions to his or her life, I thought of Ruth. I am sure that the story of Ruth is familiar to many of you, but I want to make a few points about how she applies to this verse. Ruth was a Moabite, but she was married to an Israelite who was the son of Elimelech and Naomi. After Naomi’s husband and sons died, Naomi decided to move back to Bethlehem from where they were living in Moab. Naomi told her daughters-in-law to go back to their people instead of going with her to Bethlehem. But Ruth clung to Naomi and was determined to go with her. Ruth listened to Naomi’s advice when she instructed her about Boaz and about gathering grain. By listening to Naomi’s advice and applying the instruction to her life, Ruth was safe when working in the fields, and she met Boaz who was to become her husband. Also, through Boaz she became one of only five women mentioned in the line of Christ! The Lord blessed Ruth in great ways, one of which was giving her Naomi to give her godly advice and instructions.

Rather than letting these instructions fall on deaf ears, Ruth listened to her mother-in-law's advice, and the Lord blessed her for it with a godly husband. She listened to the words of knowledge that Naomi told her and learned from them.

No matter what age we are, we can always learn to "*apply our heart to instruction and our ears to words of knowledge.*" Like Ruth, we should listen to godly advice and apply ourselves to learning. I challenge you today to use your ears to hear words of knowledge and to truly apply your heart to instruction. Many things in this world are easy, but the most rewarding things are often hard. We should strive to grow in the Lord and live for Him with our whole heart.