

Proverbs 10:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

Analysis

This proverb presents the two paths through instruction and correction. "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction" identifies the blessed path. Orach chayyim (אֹרַח חַיִּים, the way of life) is the road leading to genuine flourishing, both temporal and eternal. "Keepeth" (shomer, שָׁמַר) means guards, observes, heeds—active preservation of instruction (musar, מוֹסֵר, discipline, correction).

The contrasting path belongs to "he that refuseth reproof." Azav tokhachah (עָזַב תּוֹכַחָה, forsaking correction) describes rejecting guidance. The result: "erreth" (to'eh, תֹּעֵה), meaning wanders astray, goes astray, errs. Refusing correction doesn't maintain the status quo—it leads to wandering from truth and life.

The proverb establishes correction as directional guidance. Those who welcome discipline stay on life's path; those who refuse it drift into error. Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches that God disciplines those He loves, producing righteousness in those trained by it. Psalm 119:105 declares God's Word "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Christ is Himself "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)—receiving His instruction is receiving life itself.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, fathers instructed sons in Torah and practical wisdom. Accepting correction demonstrated humility and teachability, essential for mastering trades, understanding Scripture, and navigating society. Refusing correction marked fools

who trusted their own judgment above experienced elders. The contrast between life's path and error's wandering would have resonated in a covenant community where faithfulness brought blessing and disobedience brought cursing (Deuteronomy 28).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you typically respond to correction—with defensiveness or with teachability?
2. What guardrails (Scripture, mentors, accountability) help you stay on the 'way of life' rather than wandering into error?
3. In what areas might you be refusing reproof and consequently erring from God's path?

Interlinear Text

אֵל בַּח	לִּי חַיִּים	שׁוֹמֵר	מוֹסֵר	וְעַל ב
He is in the way	of life	that keepeth	instruction	but he that refuseth
H734	H2416	H8104	H4148	H5800

תּוֹכַח חַת	מִתְעַרֵּה:
reproof	erreth
H8433	H8582

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 6:23 (Parallel theme): For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

Proverbs 15:10 (Parallel theme): Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

Luke 11:28 (Parallel theme): But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Proverbs 29:1 (Parallel theme): He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Proverbs 3:18 (Parallel theme): She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Proverbs 5:12 (Parallel theme): And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

Proverbs 12:1 (Parallel theme): Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.