

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 12, The Tree of Life – Proverbs 10-15 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Konkell, Proverbs, Session 12, The Tree of Life – Proverbs 10-15, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. August Konkell's lecture on Proverbs chapters 10-15 uses the "tree of life" motif to **explore the concept of wisdom and righteousness**. He **examines the Hebrew meaning of key terms**, such as "nephesh" (soul), contrasting it with Greek interpretations. Konkell **analyzes proverbs** related to the impact of words, the importance of hope, and the consequences of righteous versus unrighteous living, **emphasizing the development of virtuous character** and its communal benefits. He concludes by **distinguishing between actions and character** as the focus of Proverbs, highlighting the lasting influence of a righteous life.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Konkell, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows
media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and
click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms &
Wisdom → Proverbs).**



**Konkel_Prov_Session
12.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Konkell, Proverbs, Session 12, The Tree of Life – Proverbs 10-15

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided source, "Konkel_Proverbs_EN_Session12.pdf":

Briefing Document: Proverbs Session 12 - The Tree of Life (Proverbs 10-15)

Overview: This session focuses on the motif of the "tree of life" as it appears within the collection of Solomon's proverbs (Proverbs 10-15). Dr. Konkell explores the meaning of this metaphor, its cultural context, and how it connects to themes of wisdom, righteousness, and the power of words. He emphasizes the importance of character development over a simple cause-and-effect understanding of Proverbs.

Main Themes & Key Ideas:

1. The Tree of Life as a Metaphor:

- The "tree of life" is a common motif not unique to the Bible. It's found in ancient cultures, particularly in the representation of the Asherah (a Canaanite goddess). "We find that idea of a tree of life most commonly in what the Bible calls the Asherah."
- The tree represents life, rejuvenation, and generative power. "So, the idea that a tree represents life and that a tree can rejuvenate even after it's been cut down is one that is very common."
- This idea is used metaphorically in Proverbs to represent things that generate and sustain life.

1. Fruit of Righteousness as a Tree of Life (Proverbs 11:30):

- The proverb states: "the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life." This means that a righteous person benefits those around them.
- The second part of the verse, "the one who saves souls is wise," is examined. Dr. Konkell explains the nuances of the word "soul" (*nephesh* in Hebrew, meaning breath/person), highlighting that a wise person "captures" others by influencing them towards righteousness or "saves them" from death through wisdom.
- Konkell states, "So, the essential common denominator here for soul is it simply represents a person." He also suggests, "the wise person captures people so they become righteous...He rescues them. He saves them".

- This second part of the verse is open to multiple interpretations, including a Christian understanding of salvation, highlighting the flexibility of Proverbs. He also notes that the translation by Tyndale is, "not wrong," even if that wasn't exactly the intended meaning of the original language.

1. **Hope as a Tree of Life (Proverbs 13:12):**

- A desire fulfilled is like a "tree of life", bringing encouragement and forward momentum.
- Dr. Konkel shares an example from his own life; "...A desire that happens is a tree of life...it just fills you with all encouragement and makes you say that you want to go forward"
- Delayed hope weakens the mind and leads to disillusionment. "Hope delayed disappoints the mind. It disillusiones the mind; it weakens the mind."
- The loss of hope is considered the worst loss. "When you've lost hope, you've lost everything."

1. **The Power of Words (Proverbs 15:1-4):**

- Words have immense power to either heal or harm. "Apples of gold and engravings of silver are like a word that's spoken at the right time" and "a healing tongue is a tree of life."
- A soft answer can dissipate anger, while a painful one stirs it up. "a soft answer dissipates anger... But a painful answer...stirs up anger."
- A wise tongue brings useful knowledge, while a foolish mouth produces babble. "a wise tongue brings about useful knowledge. But the mouth of fools simply babbles foolishness."
- Dr. Konkel illustrates this with a personal anecdote about a parking lot encounter, stating, "I don't use soft answers nearly often enough, let me tell you that."

1. Proverbs as Motivation for Character Development:

- Proverbs are not simply about a direct cause-and-effect relationship (doing good will always lead to good consequences). "There is no assurance that because you did all the right things, good consequences are going to come."
- The primary message of Proverbs is to "be the right person." "Rather, Proverbs was saying, be the right person. Be the right person. And in the end, that's going to be the right thing."
- Focus is on internalizing values and character, which lead to a good reputation, a positive legacy, and influence on others.
- Dr. Konkel states, "Proverbs develops values. So, as the student, as the adolescent, as the naive person, learns wisdom, they internalize values."
- This character is to be lived out within the community. "It's not just the individual, it is the community as well."
- The value of "reputation", as seen in Proverbs, is key to a life that is secure and blessed. "the security that you know that your reputation with others is going to be known and that you are safe with God."

1. The Impact of Righteousness on Community:

- Righteousness benefits the community, bringing prosperity and blessings, while unrighteousness brings destruction. "In the blessing of the righteous, the city is exalted. The speech of the wicked overthrows the city."
- The influence of righteousness among a group brings blessing. "when there is the influence of righteousness among a group of people, there is a blessing that ensues."
- Wise people understand their own fallibility. "You know, sometimes people do things that are wrong. And when you're the one who knows it, you realize that you aren't that different, and you also do things that are wrong. And it doesn't have to be told."

Key Takeaway: Dr. Konkel's session emphasizes that the "tree of life" motif in Proverbs is more than just a metaphor for physical vitality. It represents the life-giving power of wisdom, righteousness, hope, and carefully chosen words. The book of Proverbs, he suggests, is not merely a set of rules, but is a call to develop a character of wisdom, resulting in personal and community benefits, even in the face of suffering.

Concluding Remarks: The briefing provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Konkel's session on Proverbs 10-15. The explanation of the "tree of life" motif, along with associated concepts, creates a powerful interpretation of this section of the Book of Proverbs. The emphasis on character, the power of words, and community benefits reveals a deep engagement with the text and presents practical takeaways for application.

4. Study Guide: Konkel, Proverbs, Session 12, The Tree of Life – Proverbs 10-15

Proverbs: The Tree of Life - Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Konkel, what does the "tree of life" metaphor commonly represent in various cultures, including biblical and non-biblical contexts?
2. How does Proverbs 11:30 use the "tree of life" imagery in relation to righteousness?
3. What is the key difference between the Greek concept of "psuke" and the Hebrew concept of "nephesh" when discussing the idea of "soul"?
4. How does Konkel interpret the phrase "the one who saves souls is wise" in the context of Proverbs, considering both its traditional translation and the Hebrew understanding?
5. According to the lecture, what does Proverbs 13:12 teach us about the importance of fulfilled desires and the dangers of delayed hope?
6. What practical advice does Konkel give based on the proverb that "a soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1)?
7. What distinction does Konkel make between a fool and someone who is simply wrong?
8. According to Konkel, what is the significance of Proverbs 15:4: "A healing tongue is a tree of life"?
9. How does Konkel explain the motivation behind Proverbs, and how does it differ from some scholarly interpretations?
10. How does the lecture relate righteousness and community, especially regarding leadership and influence within a city?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The "tree of life" commonly represents life, vitality, and the ability to rejuvenate, appearing in various cultures in connection to both divine figures and general

symbolism of nature. Konkel highlights the prevalence of this imagery and its association with fertility and life.

2. Proverbs 11:30 states "the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life," meaning that a righteous person's actions and character bring benefits and life to those around them, similar to a tree bearing life-giving fruit. Wisdom, in this context, is a benefit to those around him.
3. "Psuke" (Greek) refers to a non-material soul, often seen as separate from and sometimes imprisoned by the body, while "nephesh" (Hebrew) primarily refers to breath, the physical essence of life, and by extension, the person themselves. This illustrates different cultural views on the nature of the soul.
4. Traditionally, the phrase is understood as a person who brings others to righteousness and salvation, but Konkel also suggests the Hebrew meaning highlights a wise person's ability to influence others towards righteousness, "capturing" them from a path of destruction.
5. Proverbs 13:12 explains that a fulfilled desire is invigorating and like a "tree of life," while delayed hope can weaken and disappoint. This highlights the importance of positive outcomes in sustaining life and encouragement.
6. Konkel emphasizes the power of a soft answer to defuse anger, contrasting it with painful or angry responses that escalate conflict. He shares a personal anecdote to illustrate the effectiveness of a calm approach to conflict.
7. Konkel distinguishes between fools and people who are simply wrong by noting that fools are not necessarily unintelligent, but are stubbornly wrong. They often believe they are correct despite evidence to the contrary, whereas a wise person can accept correction.
8. Proverbs 15:4, Konkel explains, means that kind words and wise speech can bring healing and life to others, while deceitful or harmful words can cause great damage and a broken spirit. This reinforces the power of language to both help and harm.
9. Konkel emphasizes that Proverbs is not about a simple cause-and-effect relationship between right action and a positive outcome, but about cultivating a right character. He suggests that being a righteous person is the essential thing, and it will leave a lasting good legacy.

10. Righteousness positively influences a community, with righteous people contributing to the prosperity and stability of a city. Conversely, unrighteous people's words and actions can harm or even destroy the community. There is a correlation between individual behavior and its impact on the social structure.

Essay Questions

1. Explore the concept of the "tree of life" as a recurring metaphor in Proverbs. Discuss its various interpretations within the text, using specific examples from Proverbs chapters 10-15. How does this metaphor connect to the themes of wisdom, righteousness, and the consequences of both?
2. Analyze the significance of the Hebrew word "nephesh" in understanding Proverbs. How does the concept of "nephesh" influence the interpretation of proverbs related to the soul and the actions of the wise? Compare and contrast the Hebrew understanding with the Greek concept of "psuke," and discuss their implications.
3. Discuss the role of language in Proverbs 15, particularly the power of words in shaping life. Using examples from the chapter, elaborate on the destructive potential of harsh and deceitful language, as well as the life-giving potential of a wise and healing tongue. How can this chapter guide our daily communication?
4. Compare Konkel's interpretation of the purpose and function of Proverbs with the scholarly view that believes Proverbs is a system of retribution theology. Discuss how Konkel's understanding emphasizes personal development and the establishment of virtues rather than simply promising specific consequences for certain actions.
5. Examine the importance of community within the teachings of Proverbs. How do the texts in chapters 10-15 emphasize the interconnectedness of individuals within a community, especially as it pertains to righteousness and leadership? Use specific proverbs to explore the reciprocal impact of individual behavior and the well-being of the community.

Glossary of Key Terms

Asherah: A female deity associated with the god Baal in ancient Canaanite religion; often represented by a tree or wooden pole in cultic practices.

Antithetical Proverbs: Proverbs that present contrasting ideas or concepts, often using the structure of "A" is true, but "B" is also true or "A" is good, but "B" is better, common in the book of Proverbs.

Nephesh: A Hebrew word often translated as "soul," but more accurately meaning "breath," "life," or "person," emphasizing the physical and vital essence of a being.

Psuke: A Greek word meaning "soul," often conceived as a non-material entity separate from the body, which can be restricted by physical limitations.

Righteousness: In the context of Proverbs, refers to the quality of being morally upright, just, and wise, reflecting a life aligned with God's principles.

Tree of Life: A recurring metaphor that symbolizes vitality, life, rejuvenation, and the blessings of wisdom and righteousness. It can also represent the life-giving power of wise words and actions.

5. FAQs on Konkel, Proverbs, Session 12, The Tree of Life – Proverbs 10-15, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the "Tree of Life" Motif in Proverbs (Chapters 10-15)

What is the significance of the "tree of life" motif in Proverbs?

The "tree of life" in Proverbs serves as a metaphor for the life-giving and sustaining power of wisdom, righteousness, and fulfilled desires. It's not just about physical life, but about a life characterized by positive influence, blessing, and enduring value. It contrasts with the paths of folly and wickedness that lead to a diminished or broken existence. The motif also links back to older Near Eastern ideas about sacred trees as symbols of life and fertility, though in the biblical context these are reinterpreted and given new meaning.

How does the proverb "the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life" (Proverbs 11:30) connect to the idea of wisdom?

This proverb equates the results of righteous living with the sustaining and life-giving qualities of a tree. In essence, a person who lives wisely and righteously, as described in Proverbs, will not only find fulfillment but will also generate positive effects for others around them. They are like a fruit-bearing tree, providing sustenance (through their wisdom and influence) to the community. The passage also discusses the second half of this proverb about "the one who saves souls is wise", and acknowledges that the Hebrew word "nephesh", translated soul, actually means breath, or a person. So in the original meaning, the proverb is really saying that the person who captures people to bring them to wisdom and righteousness is themselves wise.

What does it mean when Proverbs says "a desire fulfilled is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12)?

This proverb emphasizes the revitalizing and encouraging power of achieving a long-held desire. When a desire is realized, it brings a sense of fulfillment, hope, and joy that invigorates and motivates an individual. Conversely, delayed or unfulfilled hopes can lead to discouragement and despair. However, the proverb can be seen as emphasizing the importance of hope, not necessarily the necessity of achievement, because it highlights the damaging effect of losing all hope.

How do words relate to the "tree of life" in Proverbs?

Words, especially wise and well-timed words, are also described as having the life-giving qualities of a "tree of life". A gentle response can diffuse anger and conflict, while a deceitful or harsh word can break the spirit. A "healing tongue" that speaks truth and encouragement can build up individuals and communities. The tongue is recognized as a powerful force in human life, capable of both destruction and life.

What is the difference between "fools" and "the wicked" in Proverbs?

Fools, in the context of Proverbs, are not necessarily unintelligent, but are people who are wrong-headed or have poor judgment. They often fail to recognize their errors and instead persist in foolishness. The wicked, on the other hand, are those who are actively malicious and who may be schemers. Both groups engage in behaviors that undermine life and community, and are in opposition to the wise and righteous path described in Proverbs.

According to Proverbs, how does a person become "the right person?" Is this a guarantee of good outcomes?

Becoming "the right person" in Proverbs means developing wisdom and internalizing values aligned with righteousness. This involves seeking understanding, pursuing justice, and living according to God's principles. This does not guarantee a life free of suffering, injustice, or difficulty. Instead, Proverbs suggests that being the right person results in a good reputation, a positive influence on others, and a legacy that will be valued. The emphasis is on cultivating character, not on securing easy circumstances.

How does Proverbs address both individual and community benefits of righteousness?

Proverbs highlights that righteous living not only benefits the individual, with honor, security, and a close relationship with God, but also provides benefits to the community at large. Righteous communities are exalted, while wicked ones are torn down through internal conflicts and strife. The influence of wise and righteous individuals can help establish just societies. In contrast, individuals who are dishonest or slander others, can bring destruction to their community.

What is the main point of Proverbs according to this teaching?

Proverbs, according to the source, is not primarily about guaranteeing rewards for good behavior or punishment for bad behavior. Rather, Proverbs are meant to develop values that are aligned with a wise and righteous way of life. Proverbs seeks to help the reader to cultivate a character that is characterized by wisdom, righteousness, and integrity. Ultimately, this way of being, while not a guarantee of an easy life, will leave a positive and enduring impact.