

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33 Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Konkell, Proverbs, Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. August Konkell's lecture analyzes Proverbs 30:18-33, focusing on numerical sayings using patterns of three and four. **He examines the comparisons** between the unpredictable paths of eagles, snakes, and ships, and the complexities of human relationships, particularly the dangers of adultery. **Konkell then explores** how seemingly vulnerable creatures like ants and spiders survive, illustrating the importance of resourcefulness and self-confidence. **Finally, he discusses** the difference between confident dignity and arrogant schemes, using the Hebrew word for "squeeze" to highlight the consequences of harmful actions. The lecture uses natural imagery and cultural examples to explain the proverbs' meaning.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Konkell, Session 19 – 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).



**Konkell_Prov_Session
19.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Konkel, Proverbs, , Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. August Konkel's Session 19 on Proverbs, focusing on Proverbs 30:18-33:

Briefing Document: Dr. August Konkel on Proverbs 30:18-33 (Session 19)

Overview:

This session focuses on a unique section of Proverbs (30:18-33) that uses numerical sayings (specifically sets of three and four) to draw comparisons between the natural world and human behavior, relationships, and societal structures. Dr. Konkel explores the symbolism and wisdom embedded in these seemingly simple comparisons. He breaks the section into three primary thematic areas that build upon each other:

1. **The Mysterious "Ways" (30:18-20):** This section discusses four things that are mysterious and not fully understandable, utilizing the 3+1 structure: the way of an eagle in the sky, a snake on a rock, a ship at sea, and a man with a maiden. The focus is on the "way" (Hebrew: *derek*) as a metaphor for life's paths, highlighting the unique, unstructured and unmappable nature of these things compared to a fixed path for humans, specifically emphasizing the unpredictable nature of relationships, especially sexual relationships.
2. **The Wisdom of the Small (30:24-28):** This section pivots to showcase how small, seemingly vulnerable creatures exhibit wisdom and resilience through their specific skills and adaptations. It includes four examples: ants, rock badgers, grasshoppers, and spiders (or lizard). This section emphasizes that perceived weakness or low status does not preclude wisdom, dignity, and ultimately survival and success in some capacity.
3. **Dignity and the Dangers of Arrogance (30:29-33):** Here, the focus shifts to things that possess natural dignity and the dangers of arrogance, using the 3+1 structure again: a lion, a cock (or male goat), and a king, plus the final proverb warning about the effects of "squeezing" or stirring trouble in others and in a community. The main goal in this section is differentiating true confidence from arrogance.

Key Ideas & Themes:

- **Numerical Sayings:** The 3-and-4 pattern is a deliberate literary device used to juxtapose different concepts and create a cumulative effect. The final one (four) of each group provides the concluding takeaway.
- **The "Way" (derek):** The Hebrew word *derek* ("way" or "path") is central to the first numerical saying. It normally is a metaphor for how we live our lives and our moral conduct. However, in 30:18-20, the absence of a literal path for eagles, snakes, and ships highlights the mysterious, undefined and sometimes dangerous nature of human relationships, especially in the realm of sexuality and marriage. Konkell notes: "What is the way or the road or the path for a snake or for a ship or for an eagle? Well, actually, in all three of those cases, there's no path." The "chemistry" metaphor is discussed as being similarly mysterious.
- **Adultery as a Deviation:** The specific example of the adulterous woman is used to demonstrate the problem with thinking there is no established path when it comes to the commitment of marriage, that somehow this area is undefined and up for grabs like the path of an eagle. This is in direct contradiction to the idea of an established "way" for human relationships as depicted in the rest of Proverbs, and in stark contrast to the "ways" of the small creatures. This reinforces the idea that there *is* a way/path in human conduct, and deviation from it has consequences. Konkell states: "The adulterous woman thinks she thinks that this way is like a ship or a snake or an eagle, and it's undefined... But of course, what the whole numerical saying is illustrating is the way in which this kind of thinking is wrong. There is a way. There is a way."
- **Wisdom in Vulnerability:** The examples of small creatures like ants, rock badgers, grasshoppers, and spiders showcase that even creatures that appear vulnerable or insignificant possess wisdom and skills that enable them to survive and thrive. Konkell notes: "And so, the whole point of these three and four small things here is that we needn't be discouraged. And we shouldn't be discouraged if we feel that we are vulnerable and that we are weak." This is in direct juxtaposition to how humans sometimes conduct themselves, forgetting to value the knowledge and survival skills of their fellow humans, especially when they are small or in positions of weakness or oppression.

- **Dignity vs. Arrogance:** The third section explores how certain beings naturally exude dignity, but there is a distinction between this and arrogance. The examples of the lion, rooster, and king are illustrations of natural authority, and are used as a template for human self confidence in the context of our own dignity as image-bearers of God.
- **The Danger of Squeezing/Stirring:** The final proverb in the numerical saying is a warning against actions that stir up conflict. The Hebrew word "mitz" (translated as squeeze) is explored in its multiple meanings: churning cream to make butter, twisting a nose to get blood, and stirring up strife. Konkel states: "And so when you churn cream, you get butter. When you twist the nose, you get blood. And when you twist the nose, you get a fight." This ties together how all of these actions of stirring or squeezing can have disastrous consequences, concluding the entire series with a very powerful image.

Important Quotes:

- "The section of Proverbs that we are looking at today is one of the most unique in the book in that it deals with what we call numerical sayings. That is, there are three things and there are four. And what happens in this section is that something from the natural world is compared to something within society and its order."
- "It is the word that is very, very common in the book of Proverbs, and in other wisdom sayings. It is the Hebrew word derek, which we have translated as way, but which means something like a path."
- "But what is the way or the road or the path for a snake or for a ship or for an eagle? Well, actually, in all three of those cases, there's no path."
- "The adulterous woman thinks she thinks that this way is like a ship or a snake or an eagle, and it's undefined... But of course, what the whole numerical saying is illustrating is the way in which this kind of thinking is wrong. There is a way. There is a way."
- "And so, the whole point of these three and four small things here is that we needn't be discouraged. And we shouldn't be discouraged if we feel that we are vulnerable and that we are weak."
- "And so when you churn cream, you get butter. When you twist the nose, you get blood. And when you twist the nose, you get a fight."

Conclusion:

Dr. Konkel's analysis of Proverbs 30:18-33 highlights the profound wisdom found in observing the natural world. Through the use of numerical sayings, the passage offers insights into human relationships, resilience in the face of weakness, and the importance of dignity without arrogance, and warning about the danger of stirring up conflict, especially for selfish purposes. These proverbs remind us that even in the seemingly chaotic and unpredictable aspects of life, there are lessons to be learned from the natural world, and that there are paths that are to be followed, and paths that are to be avoided.

4. Study Guide: Konkel, Proverbs, , Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33

Proverbs: Wisdom from the Natural World Study Guide

Quiz

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

1. What is unique about the section of Proverbs discussed in this session, and what pattern does it employ?
2. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word *derek*, and how is it used in this context?
3. How are the eagle, snake, and ship similar in the context of Proverbs 30:18-20?
4. What does the "chemistry" between a man and a maiden represent, according to the lecture?
5. How does the lecture apply the metaphor of the "way" to the adulterous woman?
6. What kind of disruptions to society are discussed in this section of Proverbs?
7. What is the main idea that the small creatures in Proverbs 30:24-28 (ants, rock badgers, grasshoppers, and spiders) are meant to illustrate?
8. What are the three things that are stately in their stride and the four things that walk with dignity, and what do they represent?
9. What is the difference between self-confidence and arrogance, according to this lecture?
10. How does the lecture connect the act of "squeezing" to anger, fighting, and trouble making?

Quiz - Answer Key

1. This section of Proverbs is unique because it uses numerical sayings (three things and four things). It compares aspects of the natural world to societal order using a specific 3-4 pattern with distinct objectives.
2. The Hebrew word *derek* means "way" or "path," and it is a metaphor for how we conduct our lives. In this context, it focuses specifically on how we conduct ourselves in relationships, particularly with the opposite sex.

3. The eagle, snake, and ship are similar because they do not have a literal path or road. They move according to their nature or external forces, unlike humans, who typically follow established routes.
4. "Chemistry" between a man and a maiden is a metaphor for the mysterious attraction and compatibility that can either lead to harmonious relationships or be potentially explosive. This chemistry is likened to chemical reactions, which are unpredictable.
5. The metaphor of the "way" is used to show the error of the adulterous woman's thinking. She believes her actions have no path, or consequences, like the eagle, snake, or ship, when, in reality, there is a defined path that she is violating.
6. This section of Proverbs discusses societal disruptions such as the wrong person being in charge, the rightful ruler being displaced, and fools prospering. It also includes examples of contentious servants ruling the household and a servant girl disinheriting the mistress.
7. The main idea is that even vulnerable and small creatures, through their skills and wisdom, can survive. This demonstrates that a sense of confidence and personal dignity should not be compromised due to being viewed as unimportant in society.
8. The stately things are the lion, the rooster/male goat, and the king. They represent strength and authority, but also carrying yourself with personal dignity, regardless of your place in society.
9. Self-confidence is about recognizing one's inherent value and dignity, while arrogance is an excessive pride that leads to foolish and inappropriate actions. The lecture explains how to have confidence without being arrogant.
10. The act of "squeezing," (Hebrew word *mitz*) is connected to making trouble. Churning cream causes butter, but squeezing a nose results in a bloody nose, which is connected to anger and fighting. The act of stirring or squeezing can make trouble.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following essay questions thoroughly, demonstrating a clear understanding of the source material.

1. Analyze the significance of the 3-4 numerical pattern in Proverbs 30:18-33. Discuss how it adds depth to the comparisons between the natural world and human behavior.
2. Explore the concept of "chemistry" as presented in the lecture. How does it function as a metaphor for human relationships, and what does this metaphor reveal about the complexities of these relationships?
3. Discuss the meaning of the "way" or *derek* in Proverbs 30:18-20. How does it contrast with the "pathless" journeys of the eagle, snake, and ship, and what implications does this have for human behavior?
4. How does this section of Proverbs balance the importance of humility and self-confidence? Use specific examples from the text to support your points.
5. Explain the connection between the concept of "squeezing" and the idea of making trouble, as presented in the lecture. Use specific examples from the text to support your points.

Glossary of Key Terms

Agur: The author of Proverbs 30; mentioned here as “the son of Yaka”

Numerical Sayings: A type of saying used in Proverbs that organizes ideas in patterns using numbers (e.g., three things... four things).

Derek: A Hebrew word meaning “way,” “path,” or “road,” often used metaphorically to describe how one lives or behaves.

Chemistry: A metaphor used to describe the attraction or interaction between individuals, especially in romantic relationships, often with unpredictable or powerful results.

Adulterous Woman: A specific example in Proverbs that the lecture discusses to demonstrate the importance of following a “path,” rather than acting as if any path is ok.

Rock Badger: A small, vulnerable animal that finds safety in rocky places, used as an example of wisdom and resourcefulness.

Stately: Having a dignified and impressive appearance, like a lion. Used to show how even seemingly small or insignificant things can still have dignity.

Arrogance: Excessive pride and a sense of self-importance, contrasted with healthy self-confidence.

Mitz: A Hebrew word meaning “squeeze.” This word connects a seemingly disparate collection of ideas related to churning, squeezing, and making trouble.

5. FAQs on Konkel, Proverbs, , Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Proverbs 30:18-33

1. **What is unique about the section of Proverbs 30:18-33?** This section is unique because it employs a pattern of numerical sayings, specifically using "three things... and four" to compare elements of the natural world to human behavior and societal dynamics. This pattern is a different way of teaching wisdom than what is often used in Proverbs, focusing on observation of how the natural world operates to offer insights into human relationships and society.
2. **What is the significance of the word "way" (*derek*) in Proverbs 30:18-20?** The word "way" or *derek* signifies a path or manner of living. In this context, it highlights how different entities, like eagles, snakes, and ships, move without a set path, unlike humans who often follow a prescribed course. This comparison leads to the analogy of the "way of a man with a maiden," where the unpredictable nature of romantic attraction is similar to the pathless journey of those natural entities.
3. **How is the concept of "chemistry" related to the passage about a man and a maiden?** The concept of "chemistry," in this context, is a metaphor for the seemingly inexplicable attraction and interactions between people, similar to how chemicals react. It illustrates the unpredictable nature of human relationships, suggesting that just as there are no set paths for a snake, an eagle, or a ship, romantic attraction is not always explainable or predictable. This chemistry can lead to both positive and negative outcomes in relationships.
4. **How does the passage address the concept of adultery?** The passage criticizes the adulterous woman for viewing her actions as pathless, or without consequences, like the path of an eagle or a ship. Unlike these creatures, human relationships are governed by a moral path and commitment. The text asserts that adultery is a departure from this path and is not a matter of inconsequential choice.

5. **What societal disruptions are mentioned in Proverbs 30?** Proverbs 30 discusses societal disruptions such as the wrong person being in charge, a ruler being displaced, fools living prosperously, and contentious servants gaining power or displacing their masters. These disruptions illustrate how the natural order of societal hierarchy can be wrongly upended, creating chaos and injustice.
6. **How does the passage use examples of small animals to teach about wisdom and survival?** The passage highlights small, vulnerable creatures like ants, rock badgers, grasshoppers, and spiders to teach about survival and wisdom. It suggests that even those who seem disadvantaged or weak can survive and thrive through their skills and adaptations. Ants are used as examples of preparedness and diligence, while rock badgers find security in their chosen habitat, highlighting the need for cunning, resourcefulness, and adaptability.
7. **How does the passage address the topic of dignity?** The text uses examples of the lion, cock, and king to underscore the concept of dignity. It suggests that even if someone has a humble status in society they should not compromise their personal dignity. They should have a quiet confidence in who they are and how God sees them. These creatures represent different kinds of dignity, from the lion's strength to the rooster's proud strut.
8. **What is the significance of the term "squeeze" (mitz) in the last numerical proverb?** The word "squeeze" (*mitz* in Hebrew) ties together the ideas of churning cream to make butter, twisting a nose to cause a nosebleed, and provoking anger. The proverb uses this word to illustrate how actions, both physical and emotional, lead to predictable outcomes. The proverb also ties anger to the nose and this physical reaction to a larger message about people who "squeeze" or stir up trouble. The point is to avoid actions or situations that lead to negative results like anger, strife, and violence.