

Dr. August Konkel, Proverbs, Session 22, Work and Wealth Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Konkel, Proverbs, Session 22, Work and Wealth, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. August Konkel's lecture, the 22nd in a series on the Book of Proverbs, **focuses on the intertwined themes of work and wealth**. He **examines biblical perspectives**, drawing parallels between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, highlighting the concepts of "toil" (etzev) and "busyness" (inyan) as inherent aspects of human work. Konkel **argues against the modern concept of retirement**, advocating instead for work as a life-long endeavor and **emphasizes finding joy and fulfillment in one's labor**, rather than solely pursuing wealth. He concludes that true satisfaction comes from working in harmony with God's plan, finding meaning in the work itself.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Konkel, Session 22 – 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_Session22.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Konkell, Proverbs, Session 22, Work and Wealth

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. August Konkell's Session 22 on Proverbs, focusing on the topic of "Work and Wealth":

Briefing Document: Proverbs - Session 22: Work and Wealth

Overview:

This session explores the biblical perspective on work and wealth, primarily drawing from the book of Proverbs but also incorporating insights from Ecclesiastes and Psalms. Dr. Konkell emphasizes that work is an essential part of life and that while it can be a source of toil and busyness, it also holds inherent value and the potential for joy and fulfillment. The pursuit of wealth as an end in itself, however, is cautioned against, as it can lead to dissatisfaction and enslavement.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. Work as Toil and Busyness:

- Konkell identifies two key Hebrew words related to work: "etzev" (or "etsep"), meaning pain, struggle, or toil; and "inyan," meaning busyness. He notes that our experience of work often includes both of these elements.
- He connects this experience of toil to the fall in Genesis, where humanity's choice to "know what's good" resulted in a world where work becomes a struggle. This is not just a past event, but the present reality.
- He references Psalm 127, which states that efforts are "in vain" unless the Lord is involved, emphasizing that even our work is ultimately dependent on God's blessing. "It is in vain that the builders build the house unless the Lord is building it."
- He quotes Psalm 127:2 which says "... it is in vain that you ate the bread of toil ... the Lord gives to his beloved sleep" to illustrate that the Lord gives rest to those who trust Him with their work.

1. The Purpose and Value of Work:

- Work is presented as an inherent part of life, not a curse. God put humanity in the world to "plant it and to keep it" (Genesis 2). The lament in Genesis is that there was no one to work the ground.

- Proverbs 14:23-24, is referenced which explains "there is merit to work". The point is that there is always some value to be found in work.
- Konkel emphasizes that work is meant to be a source of joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction. These are what we should look for from work.
- He highlights the importance of enjoying the work itself and the daily provisions that God provides. "The best thing that there is is to enjoy my work each day and to enjoy each day the food that I have."
- He emphasizes that a good outcome from work is to be able to provide for one's needs, and to live in harmony with those around us.

1. **Wealth: A Tool, Not an End:**

- Work can generate wealth, which is good if it is generated honorably (Proverbs 8).
- The danger arises when wealth becomes the primary motivation for work. Working to fulfill desires results in slavery because "our desires are never fully satisfied".
- Wealth is presented as inherently fleeting and insecure (Proverbs 23), quoting the proverb that "wealth takes up wings and it flies away". There is no guarantee that the wealth we accumulate will remain or that we will be able to pass it on to our children.
- Konkel also illustrates the impermanence of wealth by pointing out how war and other unforeseen circumstances can destroy the fruits of a lifetime of labour.
- Ecclesiastes 6:7-9 is mentioned to reinforce the idea that wealth is "insatiable" and that pursuing it can rob us of appreciating what we already have.

1. **The Trap of Chasing More:**

- The desire for more wealth is described as a trap. The pursuit of insatiable desires distracts us from our current blessings.
- He also points out that "pursuing what we want can sometimes rob us of pursuing what we have".

1. **Work and God's Will:**

- The world, set in our minds by God, is a mystery in that we don't fully understand how God is working everything out.

- He quotes Ecclesiastes 8:16-17 to illustrate how the work of God and our own toil are a mystery.
- Work only becomes satisfying and meaningful when it's part of God's work.

1. **Challenging the Concept of Retirement:**

- Konkel critiques the modern idea of retirement, pointing out that it isn't a biblical concept but is "human thinking, not divine thinking." He explains how the concept was developed out of post First World War economics to free up jobs for young people.
- He argues that work is an appropriate activity at all stages of life, even older ages. He believes that God still has a desire in us "working in whatever way that [we] can."
- He cautions against making retirement a religion and encourages people to see work as an "enrichment of your life and not something that enslaves your life."

Key Quotes:

- "Proverbs, of course, as we've already observed, are sayings, they're aphorisms that are an observation that you can see are true in human relationships."
- "It is in vain that the builders build the house unless the Lord is building it."
- "The Lord gives to his beloved sleep."
- "Our choice to want to be like God... has brought about this etsev, this etsepon."
- "The best thing that there is is to enjoy my work each day and to enjoy each day the food that I have."
- "The desire for more can be a trap."
- "Work is a part of life appropriate to every stage of life."

Conclusion:

Dr. Konkel's session emphasizes a balanced perspective on work and wealth. While work is acknowledged as often being difficult and time-consuming, it is fundamentally good and purposeful. The pursuit of wealth should not be the driving force behind our labour. Instead, our focus should be on finding meaning and joy in the work itself, trusting God, and living in harmony with others. We must be wary of the trap of chasing after more and the human construct of mandatory retirement.

4. Study Guide: Konkell, Proverbs, Session 22, Work and Wealth

Work and Wealth: A Study Guide on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each:

1. According to Dr. Konkell, what is a key characteristic of the proverbs, and how do they relate to human experience and the natural world?
2. What are the two Hebrew words discussed by Dr. Konkell that are related to our experience of work, and what do they mean?
3. How does Psalm 127 relate to the concepts of work, toil, and God's role in human endeavors?
4. According to the lecture, what was the consequence of humanity's desire to know good and evil, as described in Genesis, and how does it relate to our experience of work?
5. What did the Preacher (Kohelet) discover about wealth and fulfilling desires, and what is the significance of this discovery in relation to the pursuit of wealth?
6. According to Dr. Konkell, how does the pursuit of wealth become a form of slavery, and what does it cause us to lose?
7. According to Dr. Konkell, what is the main message of wisdom regarding work?
8. What does the lecture suggest about retirement and its origins, and what is the biblical perspective on work throughout life?
9. What is the relationship between work, wealth, and honorable living, as explained by Dr. Konkell?
10. What is the relationship between toil, enjoyment, and wisdom?

Answer Key

1. Proverbs are sayings or aphorisms that are observations on human relationships and, sometimes, associations observed in the natural world. They are not scientific cause-and-effect statements, but rather connections based on experience and association.

2. The two Hebrew words are *etzev* (or *etsevon*), which means pain, struggle, or toil, and *inyan*, which means busyness or what occupies us. These words describe the difficult and often consuming nature of work.
3. Psalm 127 states that it is vain to build a house or guard a city if the Lord is not involved. It suggests that all work, including building a family, will be in vain unless it is part of God's will. It implies that trusting in God is a source of rest in the midst of toil.
4. Humanity's desire to know good and evil resulted in *etzev* (toil) in both bearing children for Eve and working the land for Adam. This symbolizes the ongoing struggle and pain associated with work as a result of the fall.
5. The Preacher discovered that even great wealth and satisfying all desires do not make life better. He realized that toil solely for wealth and desires is unsatisfying, and true satisfaction lies elsewhere.
6. Working to fulfill desires becomes slavery because desires are insatiable, leading to a constant need for more. It can also cause us to miss the present joy in life, including the beauty that God has already provided.
7. The main message is that work is inherently good and has a benefit in itself. While it may be difficult and require toil, work should enrich life rather than enslave it. It is a necessary part of life.
8. Retirement originated as a social and political solution, particularly during the Depression, to create jobs for younger people. However, the Bible does not advocate for a complete cessation of work in older age; rather, it sees work as appropriate throughout life in different forms.
9. Work can generate wealth, which is good, but it must be generated honorably. Wisdom guides us in working for wealth in a way that is right and good and recognizes that wealth is not to be pursued for its own sake, but for the benefit that it provides.
10. While toil is an inherent part of work, wisdom teaches us that true fulfillment comes from enjoying our work each day and being satisfied with what God provides. This suggests that a balanced perspective, and recognizing God's provision, rather than endless pursuit, makes work fulfilling.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between work and wealth as presented in the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes. How do these two books complement each other, and what perspective do they offer on the nature of work, wealth, and human satisfaction?
2. Analyze the concept of "toil" (*etzev*) in the context of Genesis, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. How does the understanding of toil affect our perspective on work and its purpose in life?
3. Explore the idea of work as an end in itself, rather than solely as a means to wealth or satisfaction of desires. How does this perspective challenge modern ideas about career and personal fulfillment?
4. Compare and contrast the biblical and modern perspectives on retirement. How do these different viewpoints influence our understanding of work in old age, and what implications do they have for society?
5. Evaluate the wisdom perspective on the fleeting nature of wealth, as discussed in the lecture. How can this perspective help individuals cultivate a healthier relationship with both their work and the resources they acquire?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Aphorism:** A concise, often witty statement of a general truth or principle.
- **Etzev/Etsevon:** A Hebrew word meaning pain, struggle, or toil, often used to describe the difficult aspect of work.
- **Inyan:** A Hebrew word meaning busyness, or what occupies one's time, particularly in the context of work.
- **Kohelet:** The Hebrew name for the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, often translated as "the Preacher" or "the Teacher".
- **Masoretic Text:** The authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament, used in many English Bible translations.
- **Proverbs:** A collection of wisdom sayings or aphorisms, primarily attributed to King Solomon, offering practical advice on various aspects of life.
- **Toil:** Hard and continuous work; exhausting labor, often carrying the implication of struggle and pain.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of biblical writings, including Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, that emphasize practical advice, moral teaching, and reflection on the meaning of life.

5. FAQs on Konkel, Proverbs, Session 22, Work and Wealth, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Work and Wealth from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

1. **What is the relationship between work and wealth according to the book of Proverbs?**
2. Proverbs suggests a correlation between diligence and wealth, while sloth leads to poverty. However, it's not a simple cause-and-effect relationship. The core message is that work is necessary for providing for life's needs, and wealth generated through honorable means is good. Work can lead to material benefits but should not be solely focused on the accumulation of wealth. The focus should be on a good work ethic and finding satisfaction in the work itself, rather than making it a pursuit of riches.
3. **Why do we experience work as toil and struggle, and what biblical explanation is given?**
4. The Bible, particularly through the concept of *etzev* (toil) and the word *inyan* (busyness), acknowledges the struggle associated with work. This toil is linked back to the consequences of humanity's choice to "know what's good" and act independently of God as described in Genesis. This resulted in the world experiencing pain and difficulty, making work a struggle. Psalm 127 reinforces this by saying all work is in vain if it is not blessed by God.
5. **How does the book of Ecclesiastes contribute to the understanding of work and wealth?**
6. Ecclesiastes explores the futility of striving solely for wealth and the satisfaction of desires. The Preacher, having experienced the accumulation of great wealth, discovered that it did not improve his life. Ecclesiastes argues that even great wealth cannot satisfy our deepest longings. The book emphasizes that the best approach is to find joy in one's daily work and to be content with the necessities of life, rather than trying to get more and more.

7. What is the "best" perspective on work according to the wisdom literature?

8. The wisdom literature, particularly Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, suggests that the "best" perspective on work is to view it as an end in itself. This means finding satisfaction in the work itself and in the provision it provides rather than working to accumulate wealth or power. Work, when done with integrity, yields its own benefits. It should be about doing something worthwhile and finding some enjoyment in that.

9. Is the accumulation of wealth inherently bad? What warnings are given about it?

10. The accumulation of wealth isn't inherently bad, but the Bible warns against pursuing it as the primary purpose of work. A significant problem is that the desire for more is insatiable and can be enslaving. Wealth can be fleeting and can be lost through various circumstances, emphasizing that humans are not in control of it. Pursuing wealth at the expense of a balanced life and integrity will rob one of real fulfillment. Work should generate benefit, not become an obsession.

11. How can we find joy and fulfillment in our work?

12. To find joy and fulfillment in work, we should focus on engaging in work as God intended - as a part of a life enriched by it, not as something that enslaves it. Work should produce what we need, and we should find harmony in that process, and learn to recognize when it does not. We should seek to make our work meaningful and to find satisfaction in our daily tasks, rather than focusing solely on the outcome of the accumulation of wealth or external recognition. The goal is to make work a part of God's larger plan.

13. What does the Bible say about retirement?

14. The concept of retirement, as a complete cessation of work, is not a biblical concept. Rather, work is seen as a part of life that is appropriate to every stage of life. The idea of retirement, primarily based on social and economic considerations, came into existence much later. The biblical view is that God has a purpose for each person throughout their life, including working in some capacity. It does not say that we must work until we are exhausted or beyond our physical capabilities, only that ceasing to work entirely is not necessarily desirable.

15. What is the ultimate purpose of work as understood in the context of these teachings?

16. The ultimate purpose of work is to participate in the creative activity of the universe and to provide for our needs, to bring joy and fulfillment to our lives, and not become an all consuming endeavor. It's not just about the economic output or personal recognition but is instead part of God's intended design for humanity. The goal is to find meaning in our work, to live in harmony with others, and to contribute to the well-being of both ourselves and our community, while recognizing that there is no true lasting security in material possessions.