

# Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 3

© 2024 August Konkell and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number three, lecture one, The Gang, The Call of Lady Wisdom.

Welcome back to Proverbs, our third session in this series of lectures.

In the last session, we were introduced to Proverbs 1, verses 1 through 7. Here we want to get introduced to the whole section of teaching that we said was most of chapters 1 through 9. In this section of the teaching of Proverbs is a series of talks. I've called them lectures. That may be a bad term because when you think of a lecture, you might think of a professor, maybe someone like me, who drones on endlessly at the front of the class and can paralyze the most brilliant of minds in just a few minutes.

Well, that's not what these are about at all. They're a talk. They're a father always addressing his son, which is a generic term.

It should be known in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew language, like many languages of the world, is distinguished by the use of gender in enabling the function of nouns. So, you don't know whether a noun is a subject, an object, an indirect object, or a genitive.

It goes together with the way that a noun is identified in terms of its gender, which creates a little bit of confusion sometimes when a noun actually also involves the gender distinction of sexuality, like a son or a daughter. And so most languages in that regard become generic and are inclusive. That's what the Hebrew is with the word son.

And the English language used to be that way with the word man. But of course, all that has changed. So here we have the father introducing the child, and you'll find that happening specifically 10 times in the first nine chapters.

Now, there are various interludes, and other kinds of information that are given between these 10 little talks of the first nine chapters. But we're going to begin with the first talk. Now, why the talk begins here, immediately after the introduction, which is then followed by the call of Lady Wisdom in this chapter, is no longer evident to us.

We don't know how the collection of Proverbs came to be. It's sensible enough because what the Proverbs does is introduce the way in which these talks take place. So here is the first one.

Hear, my son, the instruction of your father. Pay attention to the teaching of your mother, for it is a garland of grace around your neck. It is a wreath upon your head.

The most distinguishing and dignified thing you can ever do, the highest position that you can have in terms of societal relations, as far as the wise person is concerned, begins with listening to your parents. Honor your father and your mother. That is the attitude of one who has the fear of the Lord.

And so, all of these talks begin that way. You are a person who needs to know. The life skills don't come just naturally.

And there's one source of that knowledge for them. And that logical source is the people who gave you life so that you are now part of a family and are in this world. So this is an assumption as to the basic way in which society is going to work.

As my mother used to say in a proverb, so goes the home, so goes the nation. Society is always structured around homes. And homes must include a knowledge of children as to who their actual biological parents are.

Every child wants to know that. There's just no exception to that rule. Not every child does.

That's the sad reality of the disruption of what family is supposed to be. Every parent wants to have a child that understands them, listens to them, and respects them. That's just an innate relationship, a nexus that cannot be broken no matter how we try to redefine family.

Well, the person who fears the Lord and the wise person knows that. So, teaching happens in families. And we have little snippets of that in the scripture.

In 1 Kings 1.6, the reason that there was a rebellion within David's household was that he had failed to discipline Adonijah, and failed to correct him. So, a proverb provides and represents this parental instruction. It's not a classroom, but these little talks, they can happen in kind of any sort of context, which is much more effective than a classroom.

And of course, the youth is not a mere child. The youth in the book of Proverbs, the word *na'ar*, always refers to someone, at least in the age of adolescence, someone who is entering into the time of adulthood, and someone who needs to learn the way in which society will work. And so wisdom gives this kind of reality.

It's the most important and fundamental education that there is. And as we see from Proverbs, and in its various allusions, the Torah, the teaching of Moses, was

fundamental to all of this instruction. What had to be learned was those basic things that God said about honoring your father and your mother, not kill, not steal, not commit adultery, and so forth.

All of these fundamental values are the things that parents have to teach their children. Now, there's a great challenge to youth. The great challenge to youth always is their friends.

All youth want to be accepted. That's their yearning. So, they want to be integrated into their own families and loved ones.

But outside of their own families, they want acceptance. Now, this becomes a real problem if, in fact, the family unit breaks down and the children don't have the care of the parents the way that they should. The other fact of the matter, though, is that bound up in the heart of all of us is this temptation to decide for ourselves what is good.

We will decide what it is that is right and what it is that is wrong. And of course, when we do that, independently of the fear of God and of wisdom, the choices are always going to be bad. And so, this first lecture that we have here is one in which we need to be careful about the choice of our friends.

The friends we choose become sometimes a group. We can call them a clique. But sometimes they're more sinister.

We call them a gang. And the gang is intent on its own interests. This passage describes in the most graphic way the very nature of a gang, its values, and how it works.

And in this sense, it hasn't changed a bit since the talk of the father in the time when this proverb was brought together until our present day. What does the gang promise? Well, they said, we're your friends. We're going to give you companionship.

Furthermore, we're going to stick together. We're going to have one big bag of money, and we're going to share it. And how are we going to get this big bag of money? Well, you take it from the people who have it.

Where else are you going to get it? And so, the father in two sections here is then warning the son. Here is the appeal. Here is the method.

But this is the consequence. These violent gangs become the victim of their violence. When you live by the sword, you die by the sword, I suppose, is one way to put it.

And so, in essence, violence is a trap. Now, there's some question here as to how verse 17 should be interpreted as a metaphor. What is it saying about a bird and a trap? Is it saying that if the bird sees you setting the trap, it's obviously going to stay away? Or is it saying that you can set the trap right in front of the bird while it's watching, and it'll still fly straight into it? The proverb can actually be read both ways.

But I like the latter way because I think it's more true. My father used to trap animals. An animal is not alarmed by seeing you set the trap.

Most of the time, they're quite... You tie up a... Well, we used to snare rabbits. I realize that that may be a very gruesome thing to some people these days, but it was the way that we caught them to feed the chickens. But the rabbit pays no attention to you tying up the snare.

That's no problem at all. And he'll still run straight into it. And I think that's what the proverb here is saying about setting the net for the birds.

You can set the net, and you can scatter the seeds in it, and the bird can watch you doing it. He's oblivious to it. He'll fly straight into it and get caught.

Now, to me, that's the best picture of what happens with the gang. You can point out what happens to this gang member, this gang member, this gang member, and the awful end to which they come, and the tragic consequences that there are, but it doesn't matter. The person will still join the gang.

It happens all the time. This is the concern of the father. So, he's anxious that this deception not take place.

These gang members, in the end, it's their own lives that are at stake. Their greed is going to destroy them. This brings us then to the problem of the fool, the one who simply doesn't have the fear of the Lord.

And this actually, as we learn in Proverbs, is almost everyone. And we see that here from the call of Lady Wisdom, which is verses 20 to 33 in chapter 1. Now, there is a kind of a chiasmic structure, as we call it. In other words, it ends as it begins, and it develops to a main point.

And the main point is the one right in the middle. In this case, it's verses 26 and 27 of the call of Lady Wisdom, in which, when the calamity comes, wisdom can do nothing but really say, I told you so. The youth may join the gang, and the youth may suffer the consequences of joining the gang.

And what can be said? Well, nothing more than, I told you so. That is the essence of this point, of this call, in which Lady Wisdom appeals to everyone. But she does appeal to everyone.

She's out in the public. She's at the crossroads, at the streets of the gate. Every city, a major city, is walled.

And so, it's got one essential entrance that protects everyone inside the city. And at that entrance, you have to monitor everyone who's coming and going. You want to know whether or not enemies are infiltrating the city.

And so, it's got some open spaces, and it's got various offices on each side of the gate in which you can deal with transactions and businesses that may be going on outside the city. And then, from the gate, the paths diverge to the various areas of the city. And it's right there, at that corner, at that juncture, at that head, as these verses say it, that Lady Wisdom is making her appeal.

And she's telling the gullible that they should grow up. She's telling them, she's warning against the haughtiness that treasures scorn, or against the dolts that think they already know everything. She's calling them to turn back to correction.

Because if they don't, if they dismiss wisdom, her hand is already stretched out. That's a warning. They're rejecting this correction and counsel that she is giving.

That's going to be disastrous. And so, the scorn and the mockery are going to come. Their demise is going to build like a storm.

A day of calamity becomes a day of trouble and a day of torment. So, the fate of the fool is that they have made the mistake of not fearing the Lord. Really what she's doing in this warning to the fool is calling the wise.

She's encouraging them. She's asking them to pay attention. She doesn't actually have hope for the fool.

Because once they've made that decision, once they've rejected the fear of the Lord, they become incorrigible. Now, of course, this is not an absolute rule. This is not to say that people who have gone the right way never turn the course of their lives around and learn the fear of the Lord.

That's not what Lady Wisdom is saying. But she is saying it's the rule. The rule is that once you set your course in life, it becomes very unusual that it changes.

The exception proves the rule in that sense. And so, what must begin is the fear of the Lord and the correction that comes with this teaching. Human savvy on its own is flawed.

It is spurned to the detriment of the person who spurns it. The fool is going to die because of his wandering into the wrong paths. But the obedient, and this is the important point, are those who are going to live with assurance.

And in contrast, they're going to live with security because they don't need to fear the day of trouble, which is coming.

This is Dr. August Kunkel in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number three, lecture one, The Gang, The Call of Lady Wisdom.