

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 4

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number four, the work of wisdom, lecture two. Welcome to our fourth talk in our meditations on Proverbs.

In our first three talks, we have been introduced to Proverbs, its structure, and the call of Lady Wisdom. That brings us to the second talk of the introduction, or what I have called lecture two, which is the second chapter of the book of Proverbs. This is a unique chapter in Proverbs and within the whole section of instruction.

It is a cohesive chapter of 22 verses in which is given the means and the end of pursuing wisdom. It's all constructed as one long conditional sentence. A conditional sentence is an if-then kind of sentence.

So, the conditions are if. So, if you will receive my words, if you will lend your ear to my wisdom, if you will call out to understanding, if you will seek her the same way that you will seek money, then there are some results. And the results are given in two sections, chapter two, verse five, and chapter two, verse nine.

Then what you will acquire is the fear of the Lord. Now here's what we said earlier on. The fear of the Lord is not simply a decision you make.

It starts with the decision you make, but it is something that you must learn. And then, in verse nine, we get something of the content which we already received in the introduction. You will get righteousness, justice and equity.

This is what wisdom is all about. And what will be the result? Well, there are two people in the book of Proverbs that you need to watch out for. One of them is the person who leads you down the evil way, the person who influences you in the wrong way, the wrong path.

The second is the foreign woman. The foreign woman is not foreign in that she speaks another language. It's a term that we use for the companion that lures you into fulfilling your own lusts and desires.

She's the woman who is not your wife. The final result then begins in verse 20. You will walk and live in a way that is good, and your life will be long in the land.

Proverbs chapter 2, verses 20 to 22, really are a virtual quotation from the book of Deuteronomy. So, in lecture two, what we have then is the description of wisdom as if it were a treasure. It tells us about our relationship with God.

That's the first then. It tells us about our relationship with people. That's the second then.

It warns us against the wicked person or going the wrong way. That's the first result. It warns us against the flattery of the enticement to simply pursue our own pleasures.

And then finally, it concludes with the promise that if we seek this as a treasure, what we're going to get is everything that we want. This, of course, is kind of the irony. The gang says, we'll give you everything you want, and their end is death.

Wisdom says, you listen to me. I'll tell you how you should live, and then you're actually going to get everything that you want. Now, how do you get wisdom? Well, this is where the if statements start out.

Listen. Listen. So, you can get knowledge and skill and reason.

Now, knowledge here is not something like memorization. That's just something that's written. But rather, it's knowing how to do something.

In this case, knowing how to make the right kinds of choices and getting along with other people. Knowledge informs intelligence, and expertise. It gives us craftsmanship, erudition, a perception, a strategy.

So, you've got to bend your ear to what's called the Tevuna. This is an intelligence at work. It's competence.

It calls out to understanding and to comprehension. Again, it's something that is conceptual. It is understanding a situation.

It is an ability that you can use to solve problems that come your way. You've got to search for it. This is an effort.

The whole point of this protasis in this long conditional sentence is to emphasize that wisdom can't just happen. You really have to want it. And if you are going to get it, it's going to take a consistent and persistent effort.

That's the whole point of the if. Don't take this for granted. Proverbs need to be read.

They need to be read repeatedly. They need to be responded to repeatedly. But not only Proverbs.

The Torah and the Neivaim as well. In other words, the reading of the Revelation has got to be an intense effort. But the result of that intense effort is that we will get something that we really do want to have.

Something we've already discussed is the fear of the Lord. Now, it's cognitive. There's a bit of a problem in translation in that the Hebrews don't have a word for mind.

The Greek language does. In the Greek language, the mind is the word nous, which Paul refers to numerous times. This refers to the mind.

But Hebrew doesn't have such a word. Instead, it uses the word for heart, lev. Or it uses the word for spirit, ruach.

Both of these are concepts that refer to the mind. So often in the translation, instead of using the word mind, we just use the word heart. But that's not quite getting the sense of what this is about.

Proverbs is about the mind. It's about something that you learn. It's about something that you understand.

It means that you know what is justice. That is what is really fair. You know, if there's something that begins with life itself, it's some kind of concept of fairness.

I have many delightful memories of our children. When I was younger, I loved to cut wood. But I was always borrowing a chainsaw, and so one Christmas, I brought up this question, could I buy a chainsaw? We did live on a pretty tight budget, but we were burning wood all the time, and I wanted to make more of my own, and I wanted to have my own chainsaw.

So, at that time, there were two children, and my dear wife was at one end of the table, and the two children were between us. And so, I chose dinner time to say, you know, do you think it would be okay if I got a chainsaw for Christmas? And the lovely lady at the end of the table said, sure, that would be fine. And the little girl sitting next to her just burst out and said, but mommy, then he gets a housecoat and a chainsaw.

Well, the second-year-old said, Blythe, you weren't supposed to tell. And she just burst out saying, but I couldn't help it. Fair, it has to be fair.

Well, that's what this word is all about. I will teach you what is fair, what is equitable, what is right, and what is right. That's never a simple or easy question to answer.

And whether or not it was fair for me to get a chainsaw for Christmas, I don't know. But I can tell you, I used that chainsaw until it absolutely fell apart. And I wouldn't sell parts for it anymore.

And then I've owned a couple of much better ones since. So the results of wisdom then. The deliverance from the wicked person.

So, this is the one who leads you down these wrong paths that we can call perversity. Life in Proverbs, that's one of his favorite words. Life is a path.

It's a way. And when you stay on the way, you get to the destination. But if you wander and are going off the way, then you're going to get lost in the woods or the wilderness or wherever it is that you are.

And so, wisdom will keep you on the path. It will make you beware and deliver you from the wicked person who's always saying, Hey, come on over here. I've got something better for you over here.

It delivers you from the foreign woman. And she's essentially the one, and we're going to encounter her in a further lecture in quite a bit of detail. The one who fails to be loyal to her husband.

Now, it's constructed this way within the book of Proverbs, because it's talking about the father speaking to the son, whose temptation is to fulfill his wants and his needs. And to be aware of the woman who's quite willing to gratify him for a price. It could be a very high price, which he doesn't know.

So, that's the way it's constructed in Proverbs. But keep the bigger picture in mind. What Proverbs is saying really is its version of Thou shalt not commit adultery.

And it is saying that the right relationship that's going to get you to the end and the destiny you want, is loyalty in your marriage, your faithful partner. And the one who is not the faithful partner, and it really doesn't matter if it's the man or the woman, the one who is not the faithful partner is the one that's foreign. They're strange.

So, contextualize the metaphor a little bit. It's not actually talking about prostitution or anything like that. Not that prostitution is good.

There's going to be some caution about that too. But the fundamental thing is that families and the raising of children depend on the loyalty of a covenant. And abandoning that covenant, the wife of your youth, as it's sometimes called, is to stray.

And the woman who abandons that covenant is called foreign. But of course, it pertains equally to the man. And in so doing, we will receive the promised land.

So, lecture two is really setting us up for how to read all the rest of the introduction. This is what you need to do. This is how you need to see it.

And this is the end and the destiny to which it's going to get you. So, its intention is to establish the premise that if you don't have wisdom, you won't have life, you get death. It really is the same thing that Moses set out before the people in Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 15.

I set before you today life and death. Now that's what Proverbs 2 is doing. It's saying there's really only two ways.

Like Psalm 1, which also sets out the two ways. The way of the righteous and the way of the wicked which shall perish. Fundamentally, in the end, there are two ways.

Now there are various variations between them and failures and various other things. But this is the option that is there. It really is saying that wisdom is a way to understand how the values of the teaching of the covenant apply in daily life.

It's a lesson you never get done learning. It goes on continuously because life is always changing. I've had 73 years of it now.

And I can tell you that suddenly you're facing decisions that you've never encountered before. Now in some ways, there are the same old issues, but you've never faced them quite this way before. So, Lady Wisdom is calling to the wise and she's saying, listen to the words of the wise because you never get done learning them.

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