

## Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 7

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This is Dr. August Konkell and his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number seven, Sanctity of Marriage, lectures eight, nine, and ten.

Welcome back to our Proverbs talks. We have been discussing, essentially the introduction to the Proverbs themselves, which occur in chapters one through nine. And we have pointed out that this section has talks, or we might call them lectures, of the parent to the child with some interludes. So, in today's talk, what we want to do is look at the final three lectures, all of which have their focus on something that is very, very important in the values of the covenant, and therefore very, very important in wisdom and in the teaching about the fear of God.

That subject is the sanctity of marriage. The fundamental premise is that which is given in Genesis, in which God creates man and woman. And the man says this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

And therefore, a man will leave his father and his mother and will cleave to his wife, and they will be one flesh. That's just a very straightforward proposition, but a very profound one. Because the only way that we can be humans is through father and mother.

And in terms of our growth and our education, we need to become independent of our own father and mother. And exactly as we read in one of the previous lectures, my father taught me the way I am teaching you. So, you leave your father and mother and you form a family with your children.

But in order for that to happen, there has to be a covenant loyalty. And so for three whole talks, the focus is entirely on the maintenance of this covenant loyalty as the highest priority. Of course, the covenant sometimes fails.

The Torah itself acknowledges that. Because we are humans and because our own ability to fulfill our own desires is limited, the covenant of marriage fails like others fail. But that never is to compromise the goal.

The goal and aspiration is to preserve that unity in every way that we can. That is the aim of the wisdom teacher. Now in Proverbs, we encounter four women.

And I think in order to help us understand these three talks of the parents to the child, it is useful for us to make sure that we have distinguished these women who in each case are representative. But representative in a somewhat different fashion. So we have already been introduced to woman wisdom.

We looked at her call in chapter 1 verses 30 to 33. We are going to see that she prepares a great banquet at the conclusion of this section. And we're going to see that she is the one who is the companion in some sense of God in chapter 8 verses 22 to 31.

She has the closest of relationships with God and she delights in humans. We will come to discuss that point a little bit further. Then there is woman folly who is the very converse of woman wisdom.

We find her in the conclusion of this section in Proverbs 9 verses 13 to 18. She is the one who embodies foolishness. She is boisterous.

She is seductive. Her fare is stolen bread and stolen water. The third woman has been introduced to us already as the foreign woman.

That is the one who is not faithful to the marriage vow and the marriage covenant. And we're going to find her in the three of the talks that we're looking at today. But we're introduced to her briefly in the purpose of wisdom as it was outlined in chapter 2. She is characterized by her allurements, by her flattering speech, by all of the wilds and temptations that she exercises.

But following her is always folly and following her is going to lead to destruction, to the loss of a life, and eventually to death itself. And then, of course, the fourth woman is the marriage partner, the faithful marriage partner. And in chapter 5 verses 15 to 19, we actually have the one section in scriptures that extols the ideal of what a marriage relationship should be.

The ideal to which we all ought to strive because it is for our own good. And in some way, there is no doubt that this ideal is represented in the woman that concludes the book of Proverbs, sometimes called the valiant woman or the strong woman in Proverbs chapter 31 verses 10 to 31. So, in our talk 8, we have a strong statement on the importance of loyalty to the marriage covenant.

It begins with an exhortation that comes from wisdom. It is wisdom that is going to protect us. It's going to guard us from the dangers of a wayward path that can lead us into a destructive way of life.

The foreign woman is the one who holds fast, that is, she has deliberately chosen the way of death in Proverbs 5.5. Her feet go down towards death. Her steps have literally taken hold of Sheol, the place of death. She has chosen against the way of life.

So, the important point for the young person is to be sure that they steer clear of such seduction. Because such seduction is a thief. For one thing, what it does is it steals your strength.

If there's one thing that ought to characterize the young man, it is his strength for God and his strength to be able to live in an honorable way. The unfaithfulness in marriage steals this strength in various ways. Not only in terms of the fact that the father is going to lose the influence and the education that he should have over his own children, but of course, it's also going to be financially very costly.

Now, we see this in various ways in the Torah of Moses. One of the ways that we see it as a cost is when there is a death. But it is a more tragic cost in a way when there is a separation.

And so, in Proverbs chapter 24, the first three verses are a provision that is to protect the estranged wife in the event that her husband should leave her. What that provision really exemplifies in Proverbs chapter 24 is the cost that this is going to be to the husband who has left. And it always is.

It was in ancient times and it is in present times. So, that's a pragmatic aspect of it. But more importantly, there are the consequences of regret.

Not only is it destructive for this individual family, but it's destructive for the whole community, which is what the father, the parent is pointing out to the child. One of the conflicts of marriage often is that of sexual relationships. And so, that particular point is addressed in verses 15 through 20.

These verses just describe in the most delightful way the fact that a monogamous relationship is the most satisfying relationship if it can be pursued with the right attitude and can be pursued with the right considerations. And so, intimacy in marriage can be something that is a well of cool water. It's that which is always refreshing, always sustaining.

And that is the way that it is described here. Now, in contemporary terms, I have listed here on the screen a couple of books that have come out from some very prominent women extolling the fact that they have had experience with both promiscuous relationships and committed relationships. The women that I have listed here are Lauren Winner, who is a university professor, and Dawn Eden, her writer's name, but she was a newspaper reporter in New York.

But each of their books, *Real Sex* and *The Thrill of the Chase*, is something of a personal pilgrimage. But what both of them do is point out the fact that the most satisfying and fulfilling relationships are those of marriage chastity. And they

illustrate this and describe this in various ways, both the pain of not having such a relationship as well as the fulfillment that such a relationship can be.

And so, the married person should be, as is described here by the writer to Proverbs, as being lost in your love, lost in satisfaction. This is a verb that he repeats here several times in these verses in order to describe the complete kind of devotion that one should have to one's spouse, which one should have to one's wife. This is the straight road.

The converse of it is the meandering road. The Lord directs, and that verb is used twice in this passage, the ways of a person in the right way, but it is bonds and cords and chains that wrap around the person who misses this ideal. In the sixth lecture, we are given a lesson on the price of unfaithfulness.

It begins with the logical place. What does the Torah have to say? And here we essentially have in chapter 6, verses 20 to 24, a recounting of Deuteronomy 6, 4 to 9. You'll recall that Deuteronomy 6, 4 to 9 is kind of the summary of what it means to be committed to God in the sense of the fear of the Lord. It's what's known as the Shema.

Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad, V'avta et Adonai Eloheka, B'kol Levavka, B'kol Napheshka, B'kol Meodeka. You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your desire, and with all your wealth is probably the most appropriate way to express all of that. And then you etch these values on your mind so that whether you come in your door or leave your house, whether you get up in the morning or lay down at night, whether you are going on the way or are coming home, these are the values that guide you.

Now here is a reference exactly to that passage. The Torah is for life, the Torah is a light, and the Torah is a protection. So, keep this covenant value before you at all times.

And what does that entail? Well, it entails the affirmation of the family, honoring your father and your mother. It entails the affirmation of marriage, you shall not commit adultery. And that clearly is the high point of this passage.

There is a deliberate comparison with a prostitute in this chapter in verses 25 and 26. The paying for sex, a certain monetary price, is in certain ways limited only to that price which you pay. But when you are dealing with someone else's wife, with the foreign woman as she's described here, there is another issue because as this verse here says, she is hunting for your life.

This is going to cost you everything. And don't think, don't ever once think you're going to escape the penalty of meddling with the vow of marriage. Because you can't walk on hot coals and not get burned.

And even if you are a thief and you get caught stealing for bread because you're hungry and you just want to stay alive, says this proverb, if you get caught, you're still going to pay the penalty of being a thief, which is to repay everything you've stolen plus all of the damages. But for the adulterer, the shame is much greater than simply that of being a thief. It means that you will bear this shame all of your life, that you will never escape it.

You are caught, as it were, in a net. Because, of course, the tangle of relationships only gets worse as life goes on. This hardly needs to be illustrated.

The tangle of relationships that we see with so many that have fallen into this is just all around us. Of course, this is not to suggest, in Christian terms, this is not to suggest that this is some kind of unforgivable sin. It is not that at all.

This is just one of those ways in which our lives may fail and with which we suffer the consequences. But we should always know that there is mercy and redemption that God offers to all of us. Finally, in this last lecture, the Father gives an illustration of this overwhelming drive for sexual satisfaction.

He starts off again with the emphasis on wisdom. If you're looking for an intimate partner, if you're looking for someone to always be with you, then wisdom provides that dignity. Wisdom should be your confidant.

You can confess everything to her. You can share everything with what you need to know, and she will in turn instruct you. So, make wisdom your highest priority.

And then he gives this sajah. Now, this whole sajah of the night lady here needs to be put a little bit in its context. As this whole description goes on, what we see is that there is a woman whose husband has gone on a distant journey.

He's taken with him his bag of money. He's not coming back until after the month ends sometime. He's doing business.

And in the meantime, his wife has decided that she is going to find some satisfaction of her own. And she has made her vows, and now she's repaying her vows. The days, whatever that vow might have been, that's not specified.

The day when you repay your vow is the shalom. It's the shalom offering. It's the peace offering.

It's when you have a big meal, and the meal is shared with everybody. And you kind of celebrate because this is the achievement of something that you had planned for. And so here is this woman, and she's looking for her partner, and she's out lurking on the streets.

And the young man has left. Of course, all of this is figurative because somebody looking through his window and seeing this young man could never follow all of these steps. He's describing what he knows happens.

And she finds him, and she embraces him, and she allures him and tells him how her bed has been luxuriously covered with linens from Egypt and the way in which she's spiced it with aloes and cinnamon and everything else. And she's obviously a woman of some prestige and some wealth, which is, of course, the most dangerous kind of woman that you could ever get involved with or meddle with. And so, the young man, enticed by her, falls into the fatal trap, which is described as an ox being led to the slaughter.

I do often think of that because that was something that happened regularly at home on the farm. And I often contemplated the fact that when it came to that day and we led the ox to the slaughter, the animal had absolutely no fear whatever. It had no idea what was happening.

It just stood there and was the way that it always was. And then all of a sudden, bang, and it was all over. I'm sorry for such a graphic description, but that's exactly what this proverb gives you, the ox being led to the slaughter, where the animal has no idea that it's being led straight into its death.

And that is what's happening with the young man who is allured by this licentious woman, and it's going to cost him. She lurks for his life. So, the concluding metaphor here is that sexual temptation is like an animal and a trap.

The stag runs right into the snare of the ropes. The path of seduction is very easily followed, but it always ends up with the same destiny, a life that is lost. So, it is the father's exhortation that this is something you decide beforehand.

You think about this now. You don't think about this when the woman comes around the corner or when the opportunity suddenly presents itself, which it could do in various sort of ways, often without warning or announcement. This is something you've decided ahead of time.

And because you've been taught this, and because you know, and because you know the importance of maintaining the integrity of the family, this is the wandering path away from the straight way that you will be careful to avoid in order that you may enjoy the strength of your own labor, the etzev, as it's called here in Chapter 5, that

toil, that work, that perspiration, everything you invest into your work for your life, that that will end up being yours and you're not going to end up giving it to someone else, either in support of children that they are in control of or in support of payments that you have to make. In ancient times, it would be in terms of land and other resources. But rather that you will retain cohesion as a family, your toil will belong to you, and your life will belong in the land.

Not enough can be said to emphasize the importance of faithfulness to the wife of your youth, as the Prophet Malachi says it.

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