

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 1, Where is Wisdom to be Found? Proverbs as Wisdom Literature, 6-min. Video Overview

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Today, we're going to dive into one of the most practical and yet really profound guides ever written, the Book of Proverbs. We're going to explore its ancient insights, looking at it through the lens of Dr. August Konkell, a professor who's dedicated his life to this stuff. So let's get into it.

Where is wisdom really found? You know, we all use these short, catchy sayings to kind of get through life. But what if I told you the Book of Proverbs says that's just scratching the surface? It actually lays out a path to a kind of wisdom that isn't about quick tips, but about fundamentally changing the way we live our lives. Let's start with one that pretty much every single one of us knows.

It's a classic for a reason, right? It's simple, it's visual, and everybody gets it. When something goes wrong that you just can't fix, you've got to move on. But for Dr. Konkell, this was way more than just some abstract idea.

Get this. As a farm boy, Dr. Konkell literally had to milk cows. So picture him, sitting on this one-legged stool, pail between his knees, and sometimes the cow would just kick.

The pail goes flying, and all that hard work is just spilled all over the barn floor. So what do you do? Well, you can't unspill it; you just pick up the pail, and you start all over again. It's such a perfect, real-world lesson in resilience.

And that right there, that's the power of a proverb, taking a huge life lesson and boiling it down to a simple, memorable image. Okay, but the wisdom we're talking about in proverbs goes so much deeper than spilled milk. To really, truly understand it, we need to get our heads around a key Hebrew concept.

It's the very foundation of the entire book. And that word is *hokmah*. Now, in English, when we think of wisdom, we usually think of having a lot of knowledge, or maybe making the right call in a tough spot.

But *hokmah* is... It's so much broader. It's more like a skill for living. Almost like a craft that you perfect over your entire lifetime.

It's about your whole disposition, the attitude you bring to, well, everything. This contrast here really gets to the heart of it. See, our modern idea of wisdom is often transactional.

We use it to get a specific result. But *hokmah*, *hokmah* is foundational. It's not just what you do; it's the whole posture you have while you're doing it.

It's the starting point for a truly well-lived life. And this brings us to the absolute core principle of the whole book. You see it again and again.

The starting point for hokmah isn't how smart you are, or how much you've been through. It's a specific disposition. This phrase, the fear of the Lord, isn't about being scared.

Think of it more like awe. A deep reverence and respect for the way the world is designed. It's about recognizing you're a part of something so much bigger than yourself.

And according to Proverbs, that is where real wisdom begins. So if hokmah is this special skill for living, how does it fit in with all the other guidance in the Hebrew scriptures? Well, it's actually one of three very distinct ways of understanding our place in the world. Yeah, it really helps to think of it in three parts.

First, you've got the Torah. That's the foundational instruction, the laws and the stories that set the whole stage. Second, you have the prophets.

They apply that instruction to specific moments in history. And then third, you have wisdom literature, like Proverbs. And that's the path of reflection, of just observing the world to figure out how to live well within that order that's already been set up.

And inside that wisdom tradition, the three main books each kind of tackle a different layer of life. Proverbs is super practical. It asks, okay, how should we live day to day? Ecclesiastes gets way more philosophical, asking, why should we even bother? And then Job.

Job pushes us to the absolute limit, asking, what can we actually know for sure, especially when things go horribly wrong? And these wisdom books express these massive ideas in this really beautiful, poetic way. I mean, take this famous verse from Ecclesiastes. On the surface, saying the day of death is better than the day of birth sounds, well, incredibly dark.

But the point is all about legacy. A newborn has all this potential, sure, but their story's totally unwritten. A person who dies with a good reputation, a good name, has finished their story.

Their legacy is locked in securely. It's a finished piece of work that can't be ruined anymore. And this leads to an absolutely crucial point.

A proverb isn't a universal law like gravity. No, it's situational wisdom. I mean, look at these two sayings.

They seem to totally contradict each other, right? But we all know they're both true. It just depends on the situation. Proverbs are like tools, and hokmah is knowing which tool to use and when.

Okay, so with that understanding of what wisdom really is, we can now turn to the book of Proverbs itself. And you'll see it's not some random collection of old sayings. It's a carefully structured guide with a very, very clear purpose.

The book literally tells us its purpose right there in the first few sentences. It says its goal is to teach discipline, insight, and even a kind of craftiness to the naive. This isn't just about being a good person.

It's about becoming skilled, discerning, and savvy in the actual art of living. This is a practical training manual. And this manual is organized into two main parts, which makes it pretty easy to follow.

Chapters one through nine are kind of like the training course. They're these longer poems, like from a father to a son, laying out the big fundamental choice between wisdom and foolishness. Then chapters 10 to 31 are the collection of all the short, punchy Proverbs.

It's the practical application of all those big ideas to hundreds of everyday situations. So as we start to wrap this up, what's the big takeaway from this ancient book of wisdom? For me, it's that becoming a wise person is not an accident. It is an active, lifelong pursuit.

This proverb, which Dr. Konkel actually shared from an African source, just perfectly captures the spirit of Chokmah. Wisdom isn't something you just have. It's something you have to cultivate.

It needs your attention. It needs work. It needs care.

You have to tend to the garden of your own character and understanding if you ever hope to harvest a meaningful life. And that brings us right back around full circle to that idea of legacy. If a good name is the ultimate goal, and that name is built bit by bit, day by day, then the wisdom of Proverbs isn't just for ancient sages.

It's a challenge for us right here, right now. So the question it leaves us with is a simple one. What are you cultivating in the garden of your life today that will become the legacy you leave behind tomorrow?