

Dr. August Konkel, Proverbs, Session 6, Wisdom as a Tree of Life, Proverbs 3:13-20 6-min. Video Overview

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You know, in the ancient book of Proverbs, there's this incredible metaphor that frames wisdom not as just a bunch of rules, but as a literal source of life. So today, we're going to unpack that idea and figure out what it actually means to find a tree of life in our own lives. Okay, let's just dive right in with a big question.

What is the path to a truly flourishing life wasn't about cramming your head full of facts, but about grabbing hold of something much more fundamental. Something that was described thousands of years ago as a tree that literally gives life. And this is the verse that's at the very heart of it all.

Proverbs chapter 3 makes this incredible claim, personifying wisdom as a she and calling her a tree of life. Now, this isn't just some pretty poetry; this is a concept with a really deep and fascinating story that we're about to get into. To really get what Proverbs means here, we have to see that this whole tree of life idea, well, it doesn't just appear out of nowhere.

It's actually a thread that's woven through a much, much bigger story. Yeah, this whole tree of life thing isn't a one-off mention. It's a theme that shows up across the entire biblical narrative.

We see it first way back in the past, at the very beginning of the story in Genesis. Then, Proverbs comes along and tells us it's accessible right now, in the present. And then it pops up again in the future, at the very end of the story in the book of Revelation.

So, let's start where it all began. So, in the book of Genesis, God plants two very special trees in the garden. The tree of life was this constant living reminder that life isn't something we just have or control on our own.

It comes from God. But then, there was the other tree, the tree of knowledge. And that one represented a choice.

Are we going to trust God's definition of good and evil, or are we going to try to seize that knowledge for ourselves to try and become like God? And if we fast forward all the way to the end of the story, in the book of Revelation, we see that access is restored. It paints this picture of a future where the tree of life is available to everyone, and it's yielding fruit every single month. It's a symbol of continuous, uninterrupted life, a world with no more death.

Okay, so we've seen the past and the future, but that leaves a huge question. And honestly, it's the most crucial point of this whole explainer. If access to that original tree was lost, how in the world can Proverbs claim that we can find a tree of life right now, today, in the present? The key to unlocking this is in this word, blessed.

Proverbs says that the people who find wisdom are blessed, and they're the ones who get to grasp this tree of life. But, you know, blessed is a word we throw around all the time. To really understand what's meant here, we've got to go a little deeper.

The original Hebrew word is *asherah*, and it doesn't mean just having a good day or a fleeting feeling of happiness. No, *asherah* describes a person's fundamental character, a deep state of being that comes from living in a certain way. It's about who you are, not just how you feel in a given moment.

So what does this character actually look like? Well, centuries later, Jesus would use this exact same concept to describe the people in his kingdom. They are poor in spirit, which means they don't pretend they have all the answers. They mourn their own faults.

They're meek or submissive to a wisdom that's way bigger than their own, and they hunger for righteousness. This, this is the kind of character that finds the tree of life. And get this, according to Proverbs, this isn't just some good advice.

This wisdom is literally woven into the fabric of the universe itself. It's the underlying order, the operating system that God used to lay the foundations of the world. So to grasp wisdom isn't just a good idea.

It's to align yourself with the way reality actually works. Now this abstract idea of a life-giving tree didn't just stay an idea. It was actually forged into a powerful physical symbol in the history of ancient Israel.

And that symbol was the menorah, the seven-branched lampstand from the temple in Jerusalem. I mean, just look at its design. It was intentionally tree-like.

For the Jewish people, it became this tangible representation of this whole concept that God's teaching, the Torah, was their wisdom and their tree of life. But this powerful symbol of life and wisdom, its story would end up taking a tragic and really ironic turn in history. So in the year 70 AD, the Roman general Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its temple.

And to celebrate his victory, this massive arch was built in Rome. And if you look closely, carved right into its stone is this scene: Roman soldiers carrying away all the treasures from the temple. And what's right there, front and center? The menorah.

The very symbol of life is being paraded around as a spoil of war, a trophy of death and conquest. And all of this brings us right back to the central theme of Proverbs. Because the physical symbol might have been carried off, but the choice it represented? That remains.

And this is the core message, really. Yes, the path back to the literal tree in the garden was blocked, but the writer of Proverbs insists that there is another way to find life right here and now. And that way is the path of wisdom.

Ultimately, the choice is framed as two completely different paths, a concept that goes all the way back to Moses. One path is wisdom, and it leads to life. The other path, choosing to define good and evil on our own terms, ultimately leads to death.

It's a simple, profound, and absolutely timeless choice. This ancient idea of a tree of life isn't just some dusty piece of history. It's a living metaphor for a decision that every single one of us has to face.

So, looking at these two paths, the question it really leaves us with is: which one are we on today?