

Dr. August Konkel, Proverbs, Session 7, Sanctity of Marriage [Lectures VIII, IX, X] Podcast Audio Overview

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Hey everyone, welcome back for another deep dive with us. You know we love to go deep on all sorts of topics, and today we're diving into some ancient but surprisingly relevant wisdom. We're talking about marriage, specifically what's in the book of Proverbs.

Oh yeah, the book of Proverbs, it's full of practical advice. So are we talking like the whole book or is there a particular section that's especially interesting? Well, we're actually going to be focusing on some lectures about marriage in Proverbs by Dr. August Konkel. He brings up some really fascinating points that, you know, really get you thinking about the choices we make in relationships.

You know, I've always found it fascinating how these ancient teachings can still be so relevant today, even though the cultural context is so different. It's like they tap into something fundamental about human nature. Exactly, and one of the things that Dr. Konkel talks about that I found really intriguing is this idea of four women in Proverbs.

Four women, that sounds interesting. I don't recall coming across that in my own reading of Proverbs. It sounds kind of like a Greek myth, right? Each woman represents a different path, and you know each has different consequences.

So the first one is woman wisdom. Woman wisdom, okay, I'm intrigued. Tell me more about this woman wisdom.

Well, she's basically the embodiment of making wise choices, you know, and she's connected to God. Like, she represents that deep connection with the higher power. I see, so she's kind of like the ideal, the one we should all aspire to be like.

Exactly, but of course there's also the opposite, right? Woman folly. Woman folly, oh boy, that doesn't sound good. What's she all about? Woman folly represents the temptation to take that easy route, you know, to indulge in those short-term pleasures that ultimately lead to, well, destructive outcomes.

It's like she's whispering in your ear, go ahead, do what feels good in the moment, don't worry about the consequences. But we all know that those consequences can be pretty devastating. Exactly, it's like she's leading you down a path of regret and brokenness.

Now the third woman is where things get a bit tricky, at least for me. It's the foreign woman. Foreign woman, that's an interesting term.

What exactly does that represent? It's important not to get hung up on the literal term foreign here. Think of her as representing temptations that pull us away from what we truly value. Okay, I'm starting to see where this is going.

So it's not about nationality, but rather a symbolic representation of those things that entice us, that promise excitement and novelty, but ultimately leave us feeling empty and maybe even a little bit lost. It's like those relationships or substances or distractions that seem appealing on the surface, but deep down you know they're not good for you. They lead us away from a deeper sense of purpose and connection.

Exactly, so we've got woman wisdom, woman folly, the foreign woman. Who's the fourth woman in this framework? The fourth figure is the faithful marriage partner. Okay, so she represents that ideal, committed, loving relationship.

It makes me think of that description of the valiant woman at the end of Proverbs. Right, the one who's strong and capable, who brings so much to the table. Both of these figures point to the idea that a faithful, committed relationship can be incredibly rewarding.

Absolutely, but it also takes work, right? It does, and speaking of work, Dr. Konkel makes this really interesting point about how straying from that marriage covenant, you know that commitment to faithfulness, it can actually steal your strength. Kill your strength? What does that even mean? Like it's not like someone's literally taking away your energy, right? It's more about the consequences that come with being unfaithful. In ancient times, it could have meant things like, you know, losing influence over your children or facing financial ruin.

Because you're trying to support multiple households. Exactly, and even today you can see how infidelity can drain a person emotionally and mentally. It can leave them feeling depleted and lost.

So it's not just about breaking a rule? It's about the very real, tangible consequences that ripple outward, affecting not just the individuals involved, but also their families and communities. It's almost like a slow leak in your soul. I like that: a slow leak in your soul.

Wow. You can really feel the weight of those consequences even thousands of years later. Right.

You know, Dr. Konkel gives an example from Proverbs 24 about provisions made for estranged wives if the husband decides to leave. And it shows that even the husband who strays doesn't just walk away scot-free. So there are consequences for both parties, even if it seems like one person is getting away with something.

Precisely. And it's interesting because while you might expect these ancient lectures to be all doom and gloom about staying faithful, there's actually a surprisingly positive portrayal of monogamous intimacy in Proverbs 5. Really? That's not what I would have expected. Tell me more.

Well, there's this beautiful description of marital intimacy being like a well of cool water. Dr. Konkel points out how faithfulness isn't just about avoiding negative consequences. It can be the path to the most fulfilling and refreshing kind of relationship.

So it's not just about rules and restrictions. It's about experiencing something truly special and life-giving. Exactly.

And what's interesting is that Proverbs doesn't just focus on marriage in isolation. It links faithfulness in marriage to the broader concept of following the Torah, God's law. So they're saying that being faithful to your spouse is part of a bigger picture of living a good and meaningful life.

You could say that. There's actually a reference to the prayer in this section, which talks about loving God with all your heart, soul, and strength. That's a powerful connection.

So it's about aligning your life with a set of values that have stood the test of time: marriage, honoring your parents, loving God. It's about living a life of integrity and commitment. It is.

But you know, I have a feeling there are also some pretty strong warnings about what happens if you don't choose this path. Oh, I'm sure there are. I bet they didn't hold back on the consequences of unfaithfulness.

You're right. They definitely didn't. In fact, adultery is depicted as far more costly than stealing.

Wow. Stealing is a pretty big deal back then, too. So I'm guessing they use some pretty strong imagery to get that point across.

Oh, absolutely. There's this vivid comparison to walking on hot coals. You know, you're getting burned.

Ouch. That's intense. I can feel the heat just thinking about it.

And to really drive home the seductive power of temptation, Proverbs 7 uses this incredibly vivid story of a woman who Dr. Conkle calls the night lady. The night lady. Okay, now I'm really intrigued.

Tell me more. So picture this. Her husband is away on a trip, and she's out looking for a lover.

The text even describes her luxurious bed, her enticing perfumes. She's clearly wealthy and experienced in the art of seduction. So she's not just any woman.

She represents a certain level of temptation and danger, someone who's deliberately setting a trap. Exactly. And the young man she targets is completely drawn in, oblivious to the danger ahead.

There's this striking simile comparing him to an ox being led to slaughter. I remember Dr. Conkle sharing a personal story about seeing this on his family farm. It's a chilling reminder that sexual temptation can be incredibly powerful.

It can lead us down a path we don't fully comprehend until it's too late. So we've got warnings about the dangers of temptation, the importance of fidelity, and the potential rewards of a committed relationship. What's the ultimate takeaway from all of this? What do we do with all this ancient wisdom? Well, the concluding message that Dr. Konkel emphasizes is this: the importance of pre-commitment- deciding beforehand to be faithful.

That makes sense. But isn't that a bit unrealistic? I mean, don't we often make decisions in the heat of the moment? How do we really prepare ourselves for those moments of intense temptation? Well, that's a really good question. It's something we all struggle with.

Proverbs suggests that it's not just about willpower in the moment. It's about cultivating a certain mindset, like a way of life that makes faithfulness a more natural choice. So it's about surrounding yourself with people who support your values, those people who remind you what's truly important, almost like building guardrails before you find yourself teetering on the edge.

Yes, exactly. It's like building a strong foundation for your house so it can withstand those storms. You wouldn't wait till the hurricane hits to start reinforcing the walls.

That's a great analogy. And it makes me think about personal responsibility too. We always hear that message: follow your heart.

But Proverbs seems to be saying, hold on, maybe you need to train your heart first. That's a really good point. Proverbs really emphasizes that we have the power to shape our own desires, to make choices that align with our values.

It's not about blaming external forces or saying, "Oh, I couldn't help myself. It's about owning our choices, recognizing that we are not just passive bystanders in our own lives. That's right.

We have a responsibility to be intentional about who we become and what we believe in. And how we choose to live. It's about taking ownership of our own growth, both spiritually and in our relationships.

It's like being proactive, not just reactive. And it also involves surrounding ourselves with people who will encourage us to stay on that right path. It's like having a team of personal cheerleaders, people who want to see you succeed and make those wise choices, not those who are going to tempt you into decisions that you'll regret later.

But even with the best support system, we're all bound to face temptation at some point. I keep thinking back to that image of the ox being led to slaughter. It's so powerful, but also a bit unsettling, right? It is unsettling.

But it reminds us how easily we can be deceived by our desires. We can be lured into situations that seem harmless at first, but well, they can quickly spiral out of control. The good news is Proverbs doesn't just give us warnings.

It also offers us solutions. Okay. I like the sound of that.

So what are some of the antidotes to temptation that they suggest? How do we resist those seductive whispers that promise us the world, but ultimately leave us empty? Well, remember how we were talking about woman wisdom as the ultimate guide? Proverbs encourages us to cultivate that same wisdom in our own lives. And this means studying scripture, seeking counsel from wise people, and just reflecting on our own experiences. So it's about actively pursuing wisdom, not just hoping that it'll magically appear one day.

Exactly. And this is where the connection to the Torah comes in. It's not just about following a bunch of rules.

It's about immersing ourselves in a way of life. It's a framework for making decisions that lead to a more flourishing life. So it's about aligning our lives with a set of values that have stood the test of time.

And marriage, as we've been discussing, is a key part of that framework. That's right. Dr. Konkel really highlights how essential honoring that marriage covenant is, not just for the well-being of individuals and families, but also for the health of society as a whole.

It's also interesting how faithfulness isn't just about avoiding those negative consequences. It's also about experiencing something positive, something life-giving. I mean, who doesn't want to experience that well of cool water kind of intimacy? It's such a powerful image.

It is. It reminds us that faithfulness can be its own reward. But let's be honest, it's not always easy.

I mean, we live in a culture that often celebrates instant gratification and even romanticizes those forbidden relationships. It takes work to cultivate a love that lasts. Absolutely.

It's like we're bombarded with messages telling us to go for what feels good in the moment, regardless of the consequences. And that's exactly why pre-commitment is so important. It's about deciding beforehand what kind of person you want to be, what kind of relationships you want to build, and of course, what values you really want to uphold.

It's about having that internal compass that guides you, even when you're surrounded by all those distractions and temptations. But even with the best intentions, we're human. We make mistakes.

What about those times when we stumble? Does Proverbs offer any guidance for dealing with those moments of weakness? Well, it's important to remember that Proverbs isn't about achieving some kind of unattainable ideal of perfection. It acknowledges that we're flawed and we're going to mess up sometimes. The key is to learn from those mistakes, to seek forgiveness, and to keep moving forward.

So it's about grace, not just judgment. It's about acknowledging our humanity, extending compassion to ourselves and to others, even when we fall short. Yes.

And that's where the idea of repentance comes in. It's not just about feeling bad about what we've done wrong. It's about turning away from those harmful patterns and actively choosing a different path.

It's like hitting that reset button and saying, okay, I messed up, but I'm not going to let this define me. I'm going to learn from this, grow from this, and move forward with a renewed sense of purpose. That's beautifully said.

And it's a message that's relevant for all of us, whether we're talking about marriage or any other area of life. I mean, we all have those areas where we struggle, where we fall short of

our aspirations. But instead of getting stuck in shame or self-condemnation, we can choose to see those imperfections as opportunities for growth, for transformation.

It's about recognizing that we're all works in progress, and that's okay. It's about the journey, not just the destination. And I think that's one of those beautiful things about this wisdom literature.

It meets us right where we are with all of our messiness and complexity, and it offers us that guidance and encouragement along the way. This conversation has really been getting me thinking about my own life and relationships. It's easy to get so caught up in the day-to-day that we forget to step back and reflect on the bigger picture.

It's true. We forget to ask ourselves those tough questions like, "Am I really living in alignment with my values? Am I nurturing the relationships that matter most? Those are important questions, and they're ones that we should be asking ourselves regularly. It's not about arriving at some perfect state of being.

It's about being mindful and intentional. And just continually striving to become those best versions of ourselves. So you keep growing and learning to support each other along the way.

It's like we're all in this together, navigating the complexities of life and relationships and seeking that deeper meaning and purpose. And I think the wisdom of Proverbs, even though it's from thousands of years ago, can offer us guidance and hope on that journey. It reminds us that we're not alone, that there are these timeless principles that can help us navigate the challenges of life and relationships, and that true lasting love is something worth fighting for.

You know, speaking of imperfections and challenges, Dr. Konkel actually shares this fascinating story in his lectures about a couple that he counseled. They were on the verge of divorce. Oh, I'm intrigued.

Tell me more about this couple. Well, they had been married for over 20 years, and they had just, you know, reached this point where they felt completely disconnected. They'd stopped communicating, stopped spending quality time together.

They basically became more like roommates than lovers. That's heartbreaking. It's like they just drifted apart, losing sight of the love that once bound them together.

And you start to focus on the differences, the annoyances; you know, you kind of forget about all those qualities that drew you to each other in the first place. It's easy to let resentment build up and to forget how to nurture that love that you once shared. So how did they find their way back to each other? What was that turning point? Well, the wife was actually the one who initiated the counseling.

She said she still loved her husband, but she just didn't know how to save their marriage. She felt lost, hopeless. And so Dr. Konkel started by asking them to reflect on what had drawn them to each other in the first place.

You know, those qualities that they admire, those shared dreams that they had. It's about going back to the source, reconnecting with that initial spark. Exactly.

And as they started reminiscing about those early days, they began to remember what made their relationship so special. They started to see each other with fresh eyes. I bet those memories brought back some powerful emotions.

They did. And it helped them to see how they had changed over the years. You know, both individually and as a couple, they began to understand how their unmet needs and those unaddressed hurts had created this distance between them.

It's like we get so caught up in the daily stresses of life that we forget to nurture the relationship itself. We take each other for granted. You know, we assume the love will always be there, but it needs to be tended to like a garden.

It's a great analogy. Dr. Konkel encouraged them to start dating each other again, you know, to make time for just the two of them, to rediscover the joy of simply being together. To prioritize the relationship and make a conscious effort to keep the flame alive.

Right. And it's not about those grand gestures either. It's about those small, everyday acts of love and attention and, you know, being intentional about communicating with each other.

Effective communication is so important in any relationship, but it's especially crucial when you're trying to rebuild that trust and intimacy. Exactly. And it wasn't an easy process.

It took a lot of work, but they were committed to saving their marriage, and they were willing to put in the effort. So did they make it? Were they able to rekindle that flame? They did. They actually ended up stronger than ever before.

And Dr. Conkle said one of the keys to their success was their willingness to forgive each other. Forgiveness is such a powerful force. It allows us to let go of those past hurts and to move forward together.

It's not about condoning hurtful behavior. It's about choosing to release the anger and pain that's keeping us, you know, trapped in the past. It's about choosing to love even when it's hard.

And I think that's such a beautiful message of hope for anyone who's struggling in their relationships. It's a reminder that no matter how challenging things may seem, there's always that possibility for healing and for a new beginning. It's about recognizing that every relationship goes through seasons, that even in the midst of winter, there's always that promise of spring.

And that's a beautiful way to put it. It's about holding onto hope, believing in that power of love to transform and to heal. And sometimes, you know, it's about recognizing that we need to reach out for support, ask for help when we need it, whether it's, you know, seeking counseling or talking to a trusted friend.

It's important to remember that we don't have to go through this alone. Absolutely. This conversation has been so insightful.

It's amazing how these ancient teachings can still offer us, you know, guidance and wisdom today. It really is a testament to the power of human connection. And that timeless search for love and meaning.

It's a reminder that no matter how much the world changes, those fundamental needs of the human heart, well, they remain the same. We all long to be seen, to be loved, to be understood. To find a place where we belong, where we can be our true selves.

And that's a world worth fighting for. As we're wrapping up this deep dive into Dr. Conkle's lectures, I'm really struck by that idea of interconnectedness we talked about. It is pretty central, isn't it? It is.

Like, you know how faithfulness in marriage isn't just this isolated thing. It impacts families and communities and even, like, our spirituality. It's true.

It really is like dropping a pebble in a pond, and the ripples spread out. Exactly. Like that John Donne quote, no man is an island, right? Our lives are all connected.

It makes you think about the responsibility we have to each other, to our communities, even future generations. It's bigger than just me and you. Exactly.

And these ancient teachings offer such a valuable perspective on that. I think so. Like they're saying, hey, there's a bigger picture here.

Yeah. Your choices matter, not just for you, but for everyone. It's a message that resonates even today, don't you think? Totally.

Even if people aren't religious. Yeah. There's a growing awareness of how interconnected our lives are.

Right. And how important it is to make good choices, you know? To contribute to that common good. Yes.

Like we see that in social justice movements and environmentalism. Absolutely. Even in how people are thinking about what they buy.

It's like we're all in this together. It is. It's like a call to action to live intentionally.

Yeah. And to really consider those consequences. So as we're coming up from this deep dive, I have a question for you, the listener, and for you too.

Do you think these teachings about marriage, you know, with all the symbolism and strong language, are still relevant for us? That's a good question. Why or why not? Because even though things are different now, the basic principles still speak to us. You know, the desire for love.

Right. The challenges of commitment. We all face that.

I think there's so much value in engaging with these ancient texts. I agree. Even if we don't agree with every detail, just wrestling with the ideas, you know? Right.

And seeing what resonates with our own lives. It's about having a conversation. Exactly.

Blindly accepting or rejecting. Being curious and open-minded. Yeah.

I think even ancient texts can offer us new perspectives. And help us figure out this crazy modern life. Well, I think it's time to wrap up this deep dive.

Yeah. But this is just the beginning. There's so much more to explore.

There is. In Proverbs and Dr. Conkle's lectures. And the whole world of wisdom out there.

So keep diving, keep exploring. Keep asking those questions. And keep seeking that wisdom.

We'll be back soon with another deep dive. But until then, happy exploring, everyone!