

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 17, Instructions for a Civilized Life, Proverbs 27:23- 29:27 (Appendix), 6-min. Video Overview

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Today, we're going to dig into some ancient secrets from the Book of Proverbs, using Dr. August Konkell as our guide. We're going to see how this timeless wisdom might just offer a blueprint for building a more stable, more civilized life, even in our pretty chaotic modern world. Alright, let's just jump right in with a piece of advice that honestly sounds almost laughably out of date.

Tend your flocks well. I mean, it sounds like something for ancient shepherds, right? But what if? What if this one simple phrase holds a profound secret about building a thriving society? And that really gets to the core question we're exploring. What could these ancient shepherds possibly teach us about building a better society today? As you're about to see, the answer is surprisingly deep and actually incredibly practical.

So let's start with section one, the shepherd's secret. This is where we're going to unpack how this simple instruction is actually a powerful metaphor for the very foundation of civilization itself. According to Dr. Konkell, tending your flocks isn't really about sheep and goats.

It's a metaphor for securing life's most basic needs. You know, food and clothing. It's all about the daily, consistent effort of managing what you have.

So this breaks down that shepherd's wisdom. The essentials for life? They're actually pretty simple. But here's the catch.

Our provisions are always temporary. This teaches us that we can't just rely on what we've stockpiled. We have to trust in that steady, daily effort.

And when we do that well, when we care for our flocks, our households flourish. This is the bedrock. Okay, so that's the household.

Now let's see what happens when you scale that principle up to an entire society. Section two gives us this really stark contrast that you see all throughout Proverbs. A tale of two rulers, and the two very different worlds they create.

First, just think about the impact on public life. Good, righteous rule creates a society of splendor, a place where people can thrive openly. But under wicked rule, good people are forced into the shadows.

They have to hide, and their positive influence is just lost to everyone. And next, what about prosperity? Well, a good ruler fosters a society of bounty, one that actually empowers its citizens to do well. A corrupt leader, on the other hand, is just destructive.

It actively tears down the good that people are trying to build. And the ultimate outcome of all this is social order. Righteous governance creates a happy, stable society.

But you know, wicked rule? It inevitably leads to a breakdown of order, a rise in crime, and just the decay of the whole community. Okay, so if that's the goal, this framework of good governance, how do we actually build it? Section three is all about the essential pillars that support it. These are the core values rooted in divine teaching, specifically the Torah, which is the foundation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

And here they are, the pillars of a righteous society. It all starts with security. Then you need a common understanding of justice and a shared belief that integrity is worth way more than wealth.

Honoring parents strengthens the family, which is like the first building block of society. And finally, you need this collective trust that, in the end, wrongs will be made right. That's what gives people the stability to build for the future.

But now we've got to look at the dark side, the vices that can crack that very foundation and threaten to bring the whole structure crashing down. Dr. Konkel shares this really powerful and, frankly, heartbreaking anecdote from his work. It reveals this awful truth about what happens when a society breaks down.

When things collapse, desperation can drive even the most vulnerable people to turn on each other, just to survive. And at the root of that kind of social decay is a vice that Dr. Conkle calls one of life's greatest traps: greed. And the real danger of greed is how easily it hides in plain sight, even from ourselves.

And this is that quiet, sneaky inner voice of greed, isn't it? It's not some loud demand. It's just a constant whisper, promising that happiness is just a little bit further away. It's a relentless and totally deceptive voice in our heads.

And once greed gets a foothold, it just opens the door to other corrosive things. The self-deception that wealth equals security, the willingness to trade your integrity for some tiny favor, and even the shocking act of exploiting your own family. And the great irony? This relentless chase for wealth often leads straight to ruin.

So if these cracks start to appear in a society's foundation, can it be saved? Well, our final section looks at the crucial role that correction and justice play in preventing a total collapse. The core principle here is that, yeah, correction can be hard; it can be uncomfortable, but neglecting it causes far, far more harm to the community in the long run. See, justice isn't just about punishment.

It's the very framework that holds a society together. And these ancient texts actually lay out this escalating path of correction. It begins in the home, with parents.

If that's not enough, the community has to step in to set boundaries. And only as a last, last resort does the state have to intervene with force. It's this layered approach, all designed to preserve social order.

And this brings us right to the heart of Dr. Konkel's whole message. Building a civilized life. It's not just about our external behavior or, you know, following a bunch of rules.

It's about our internal attitude, our worldview, our values. And what we decide is truly important. And so, we're going to leave you with this question.

From the humble shepherd all the way up to the powerful king, a healthy society is built on a set of core values. So what are the values that shape your world and your community?