

Dr. August Konkel, Proverbs, Session 17, Instructions for a Civilized Life, Proverbs 27:23- 29:27, Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, everyone. We're about to take a deep dive today that takes us way back in time, all the way to ancient wisdom, you know, but with a surprisingly modern kind of twist to it. Oh, yeah.

Yeah. We're going to be exploring these societal values, not in some like abstract way, but through the lens of the book of Proverbs. Yeah.

And we're going to be looking at a lecture from Dr. August Konkel. Okay. He focused on chapters 27 through 29.

And what's so cool about this is he actually connects these ancient Proverbs to challenges that we're facing today. Yeah. It really is amazing how these principles, they just, they last; you know, it's like we've been searching for a good and flourishing society forever, like for millennia.

Right. And the wisdom in Proverbs, it's still relevant, you know, it still has something to say to us today. Totally.

And he starts with something so basic. It's almost like, well, duh, obvious. He talks about God's provision for our needs, the essentials.

Right, right. Food, clothing, that kind of thing. Yeah.

He points to Proverbs 27.23-27, where it talks about tending flocks and fields, those everyday things that we need to survive, you know? Yeah. And what I find interesting is how Dr. Konkle sees this as a subtle reminder that we depend on something bigger than ourselves, on God. So it's not just about, like, working hard and being resourceful.

It goes deeper than that. Exactly. Exactly.

It's about recognizing that reliance on God, that trust. Dr. Konkel suggests that if we were content with just meeting our basic needs, if we really believed in that reliance on God, it would lead to a much healthier society. He thinks that this contentment, this trust, would actually free us from always wanting more, from that anxiety that comes with it.

It makes you think, doesn't it? Like, is our constant desire for more just because we've forgotten that deeper reliance, you know? It really is a question worth thinking about. And this actually leads us to Dr. Konkle's main point in Proverbs 28 and 29: the impact of leadership, good or bad, on society. Okay.

He explores this contrast between what he calls righteous rule and wicked rule. And he highlights the huge consequences of each. Interesting.

So he uses some specific verses to kind of paint that picture, right? He does. Proverbs 28.12, for instance, it says, When the righteous thrive, the nation rejoices, but when the wicked rule, the people groan. Wow.

And then in 28.28, he talks about how when the wicked are in power, people hide, but when the wicked are overthrown, then the righteous can flourish. So it's not just about having leaders in general, right? It's about the character of those leaders. Like their character, their actions, they actually influence the whole atmosphere of a society.

That's exactly it. Dr. Konkle isn't giving us a history lesson here. He's challenging us to really look at how leadership, even today, can shape our communities and our nations.

For sure. And it makes you think about what's going on right now, doesn't it? Like, mention a current event related to leadership. I mean, could we use this lens from Proverbs to understand what's happening there? Well, it certainly gives us a way to understand the impact of leadership, both the good and the bad.

If we apply these principles from Proverbs to the current event, we might ask ourselves, are the people in charge acting righteously? Are they helping things flourish or are people groaning under their rule? Are they focused on what's good for everyone or just on their own power? That's a really insightful way to look at it, actually. It helps us see past the surface and really judge leadership based on these timeless principles. And that's exactly what Dr. Konkle wants us to do.

To engage with these ancient texts, not as something from the past, but as living wisdom that can help us understand today. Now, Dr. Konkle links these Proverbs about leadership back to something he calls Torah values. Could you explain what he means by that and how they play into his analysis? Sure.

So Torah refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Right. And they form the basis for Jewish law and ethics.

Dr. Konkle argues that these Proverbs reflect those core Torah values that are key for building a just and stable society, even outside of the Jewish context. Oh, interesting. So even if someone isn't Jewish, these values are still relevant to them.

Absolutely. They address concerns that every human has: honesty, integrity, justice, compassion, respecting authority, and the importance of community. You know, they provide a blueprint for a society where people feel safe, where things are fair, where everyone has the chance to thrive.

That makes a lot of sense. It's like a framework for a healthy society, no matter what you believe, really. So what specific examples of those Torah values does Dr. Konkle pull out from Proverbs 28 and 29? Well, one that really stands out is this idea of poor people abusing other poor people.

Oh, wow. Which, you know, it's a stark reminder that injustice and cruelty, they're not limited to just those in power. Right.

Sometimes it's the people who've been marginalized themselves who can perpetuate these cycles of harm. Yeah, it's a sobering thought for sure. It is.

And it challenges us to think about how those societal structures and inequalities can actually create these environments where that kind of behavior can flourish. Yeah. We can't just blame individuals without looking at the whole system, you know? Right, exactly.

And then there's this warning against being self-deceived by riches. Okay. Proverbs 28.11 says, A rich man may be wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has discernment sees through him.

Dr. Konkel suggests that wealth can actually make us blind in a way. Oh, interesting. We can't see things clearly, especially our own flaws and shortcomings.

It's funny. It's like that old saying, money can't buy happiness. Right.

Dr. Konkel's saying it can also cloud our judgment and make us lie to ourselves. That's a great connection. Yeah.

And speaking of deception, Dr. Konkel points out the trap of greed. Okay. In Proverbs 28.25, it says, A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched.

You're saying that greed doesn't just create conflict. It also leads to a kind of spiritual poverty. So it's not about the stuff, really.

It's about cultivating contentment and trust. That's it. That's it.

And that brings us to another pitfall that Dr. Konkel talks about. Taking a life for profit. Ooh, okay.

Proverbs 28.17 states that A man burdened by the guilt of bloodshed will flee relentlessly; let no one help him. Wow. And this proverb reminds us that human life is sacred and warns us about, you know, putting profit before people.

Yeah. That's a timely reminder for sure. And finally, Dr. Konkel points to this, this almost shocking example of plundering your own parents.

What? Yeah. In Proverbs 28.24, it says, Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, It's no transgression is a companion to a man who destroys. And this just emphasizes how important it is to honor and take care of our families.

Yeah. Even when it's hard. Wow.

Those are, those are pretty intense examples. It's some heavy stuff, but I think it's important to be really confront these dark sides of ourselves. Oh, absolutely.

These tendencies can really harm society. I agree. Dr. Konkel isn't trying to sugarcoat anything here.

Right. He's presenting a realistic view of humanity, acknowledging that we all have this potential for darkness and destruction inside us. So he's not just giving this rosy picture of Torah values.

He's showing the other side. You know? Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

What happens when you stray from those values? Right. And that leads us into Proverbs 29, where Dr. Konkel really dives into correction and justice in society. And that's where things can get a little tricky.

It can be. Right. Because, I mean, who wants to talk about correction? It's not exactly a fun topic.

No, it's not always easy to hear, but it is crucial for growth. Okay. Both for individuals and for society as a whole.

Right. What Dr. Konkel emphasizes is that correction, even when it's tough, is actually essential for a healthy community. So it's not about punishment.

It's more about restoring balance and making sure things are working well. Exactly. And he uses this really interesting example from Deuteronomy: the recalcitrant child.

The what? Recalcitrant child. You know, the kid who just will not listen. Oh, right.

Right. Yeah. So in Deuteronomy, if you have a child who is totally defiant, completely uncontrollable, the parents, they're not left to deal with it alone.

It becomes a community issue. Wow. They bring the child before the whole community so that they can set some boundaries, even if it requires a little force.

That's pretty intense. It is. But it does make the point that raising responsible members of society is everyone's job, not just the parents.

Exactly. And it makes us think about correction in our own lives and in society. When do we need to be corrected? When do we have a responsibility to correct others? It's definitely a balance, but Dr. Konkel says it's a crucial one for keeping justice and order in a community.

It makes me think about all the talk about accountability these days and cancel culture. Yeah. Are we striking the right balance between holding people responsible for their actions while also giving them a chance to grow and redeem themselves? That is a complex issue.

And Dr. Konkel's insights from Proverbs offer a really helpful framework for navigating that complexity. So what else does Dr. Konkel pull out from Proverbs 29? Well, he emphasizes that if you reject correction, it's ultimately going to hurt you. OK.

Proverbs 29.1 says, "He who is often rebuked and hardens his neck will suddenly be destroyed, and without remedy. Yikes. So, like refusing to learn from your mistakes.

Yeah, exactly. You end up doing the same things over and over and getting the same bad results. Right.

And that connects with another key point: that justice supports a community while deceit destroys it. OK. Proverbs 29.4 states, by justice a king gives stability to the land, but one who takes bribes overthrows it.

Dr. Konkel points out that justice, fairness, and integrity are the foundation of a good and strong society. Right. But things like corruption and dishonesty, they chip away at that foundation.

It seems like the common thread here is that our choices, they all have consequences that can impact everyone around us. Absolutely. And Dr. Konkel highlights another important insight in Proverbs 29.7. The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such concern.

This reminds us that we need to take care of the people who are vulnerable and marginalized in our communities. So it's not just about being personally good or following the rules. Right.

It's about working to create a society that's just and fair for everyone. Yes, exactly. That's a great way to put it.

And then there's this beautiful prophet in 29.18, where there is no vision, the people perish, but he who keeps the law happy is he. OK. And Dr. Konkel explains that vision isn't just about having a plan or a goal.

It's about sharing the same values. You know, having this moral compass that guides our actions. So, like, a collective understanding of what's right and wrong.

Yeah. And a shared commitment to living by those principles. Right.

And without that, without that foundation, society falls apart. These are all amazing insights, but how do we, like, actually live this out? How do we take these ancient Proverbs and make them real in our lives today? That's a great question. Like, how do we bridge that gap right between these ancient Proverbs and, like, the real world? Well, Dr. Konkel doesn't leave us hanging.

He knows we all live in these imperfect societies. Right. And trying to live out these principles is hard.

It's a challenge. But he ends with a powerful reminder. OK.

He says the choice is between righteousness and wickedness. It's not just about how we act on the outside. You know, it's about our attitude, how we see the world.

So it's about developing a certain way of thinking, a way of being in the world that puts those Torah values first. Yes, exactly. And he says developing that mindset, it's a lifelong thing.

It's constantly trying to align our thoughts, our words, and our actions with what is good and just and true. It's a lot, but I can see how it could be really empowering in a way. It means we're not just sitting back watching things happen.

Right. We actually have the power to choose righteousness, to make a difference in our own little corner of the world. Exactly.

And he reminds us that we're all connected. Our choices affect other people. He asks us to think about how we can, even in a less than perfect world, contribute to the well-being of everyone around us. It's like that quote: be the change you wish to see in the world.

But in this case, it's more like live the values you want to see in the world. That's perfect. It's not just talking the talk.

It's walking the walk, living those values in our everyday lives, in how we treat people, even how we think about ourselves. So it's not about finding some perfect society. It's about choosing to do what's right one step at a time, even when things are messy.

That's it. That's it. And that might look different for everyone.

Yeah. For some, it might be speaking out against injustice. For others, it might be being incredibly generous.

For someone else, it might just be being honest in their work. So it's not always about these big, grand gestures. It's about consistently making those choices that are in line with those values, even if they seem small.

And those small choices, they can have a ripple effect. You know, they can inspire others to do the same. Yeah.

Dr. Konkel reminds us we're all in this together. The choices we make, even in our own little part of the world, can make a difference for the whole of society. It's like we're all weaving this tapestry together, right? Each thread is our own individual choices.

And those threads create the big picture. I love that analogy. It really captures the idea that we're all connected, like Dr. Konkel's saying.

And he leaves us with this challenge. What thread will you contribute? How will you choose righteousness, not just for yourself, but for everyone? Wow. That's a powerful question to think about as we wrap up this deep dive.

I want to thank you for joining us as we explored this ancient wisdom and what it means for us today. It's been great diving into these ideas with you. And don't forget, you can find all the resources we talked about in the show notes.

We'd love to hear your thoughts. What stood out to you from Dr. Konkel's lecture? How do you see these proverbs playing out in your own life? Share your reflections with us online or on our website. Until next time, keep seeking wisdom, keep choosing what's right, and keep weaving your thread into that tapestry of a better world.