

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 19, Wisdom from the Natural World, Proverbs 30:18-33 Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, everyone. We're diving deep into some unexpected wisdom, and, you know, it's from nature this time. From nature? You mean, like, trees and stuff? Well, yeah, but more specifically, we're looking at the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 30.

Book of Proverbs. Interesting. Okay, so what kind of wisdom can we expect from, you know, the birds and the bees? That's the thing, right? You wouldn't think that watching an eagle fly or noticing, like, an ant colony could teach us about relationships or, you know, societal structures.

Yeah. I guess not at first glance. But that's what we're going to unpack here.

It's pretty amazing, actually. Okay, I'm intrigued. Where do we start? Well, let's jump right into Proverbs 30:18-20. It talks about the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship in the sea, and get this, the way of a man with a maiden.

Whoa, that's a pretty diverse lineup. What's the connection, you think? Right. It's like, what do those things even have in common? Well, the key is that word way in Hebrew.

It's derek, which has a deeper meaning of path. Path. Okay, so it's about direction or a journey.

Exactly. And Proverbs, you know, it's all about guiding us towards the right path in life. I see.

I see. But what do eagles and snakes and, well, romance have to do with any of that? Good question. Think about it this way.

An eagle, a snake, a ship- they don't really follow any set paths, do they? The eagle just soars freely, the snake slithers wherever, and the ship, well, it's navigating a vast open sea. Hmm. Yeah, I guess that makes sense.

So it's like they each forge their own Derek. Exactly. It's like Proverbs is saying there isn't just one predetermined way to do things, you know? So how does this apply to, say, relationships? Well, think about it like this.

Have you ever had, like, this huge crush on someone and thought, "This is it, this is destiny? Oh, yeah. I think we've all been there at some point. And sometimes it worked out, but other times it's more like a detour and maybe a pretty messy one at that.

Right. And you're left wondering, how did I even get here? Exactly. And Proverbs seems to be saying that sometimes we can mistake a strong attraction, you know, that initial spark, for the right path, even when it might actually lead us astray.

Whoa. That's deep. So you're saying it's not about denying attraction, but more about, like, navigating it carefully.

Yeah, I think so. I mean, think about the proverb itself. It even specifically mentions the way of an adulterous woman.

Oh, wow. Yeah. She thinks she can just defy the natural path of commitment.

But ultimately, those choices, well, they have consequences. Right. Right.

So it's not just about where you are right now, but where you're headed to. Exactly. The derek, that path, it matters just as much as the initial attraction.

It's like proceed with caution, I guess. Not necessarily love at first sight. Right.

It's more like look before you leap. Use wisdom and discernment, especially when it comes to relationships. And you know what? Proverbs has even more to say about these paths and how they can lead us in unexpected directions.

Okay. Now I'm really curious. What else is there? Well, let's talk about those times when everything feels upside down, you know, when the world seems to be turned on its head.

Oh, yeah. I've definitely been there. Proverbs 30.21-23 paints a pretty vivid picture of these upside-down situations.

A servant who becomes king, a fool who has, like, an abundance of everything, and even a maidservant who ends up displacing her mistress. Wow. Those are some serious shakeups, especially that last one.

Yeah, it's intense, right? It reminds me of that biblical story of Sarah and Hagar. All that tension, that uncertainty about who would inherit, who would hold the power. Oh, absolutely.

Family dynamics, especially back then, could get really complicated. Yeah. You know what? Those power struggles, those anxieties about being displaced, they still resonate today, don't they? Absolutely.

You see it all the time in families and workplaces, even in, like, global politics. It's this timeless human drama. It makes you wonder, though, right? Is there value in established hierarchies? Like, how do you balance the need for order with the potential for injustice? That's a great question.

I think that's what Proverbs wants us to think about. By highlighting these upside-down scenarios, it's not necessarily saying all hierarchies are bad. Right.

It's more like a nudge to examine them, to question our assumptions about power and who deserves to hold it. Yeah. It's like a reminder that things aren't always as they seem.

So maybe it's not about advocating for chaos, but about recognizing that those in power, well, they don't always deserve to be there. And sometimes the people we underestimate, they might be the most capable. Exactly.

It reminds us to stay humble and be open to unexpected sources of strength and wisdom, right? I bet that made a few rulers back then pretty nervous. But you know, it makes you think about those times when someone you never expected steps up and leads, while someone who seemed to have it all together, well, they completely fumble. Oh yeah.

I've definitely seen that happen. I guess it's a reminder that we all have the potential to be the underdog and to rise to the occasion when we least expect it. Absolutely.

And maybe it's time to embrace that upside-down perspective a little more, you know, see what hidden potential we might discover within ourselves and in others. Yeah. I love that.

Embracing the unexpected. And speaking of hidden potential, we're about to dive into the surprising resilience and wisdom found in some of the smallest creatures imaginable. Oh, bring on the ants and spiders.

I'm ready to see what they have to teach us. So we're diving into the wisdom of small things, right? Those tiny creatures that we often just like overlook, you know? Yeah, exactly. It's easy to dismiss them, right? But Proverbs 30.24-28 actually lists four creatures that are considered, get this, exceedingly wise.

Exceedingly wise. Okay.

Listening. And these creatures, they're all pretty small. We're talking ants, rock badgers, locusts, and, uh.

And spiders. Spiders. Hold on.

The spiders I find in my basement don't exactly scream wisdom to me. Yeah. I get it.

But think about their survival skills. Like the proverb points out, ants, even though they're not strong, are incredibly resourceful. Yeah, that's true.

I mean, they're always working, always preparing. Exactly. They spend all summer gathering and storing food, you know, getting ready for those lean times ahead.

It's like they're living by the motto, be prepared. Always thinking ahead. Right.

Always planning for the future, even when things are good. Smart. What about the rock badgers? What's so special about them? Well, those little guys are pretty unassuming, right? But they make their homes in, like, the crags of rocks, you know, finding safety and security in the most unlikely places.

So they're turning a weakness into an advantage. Yeah. They figured out how to thrive in a harsh environment, you know? By using what they've got, their size, their agency.

Pretty impressive. Okay, now locusts, I've got to be honest, I mostly think of them as like a destructive swarm. Yeah, I think that's the image most people have, you know, a force of nature that can wipe out crops in no time.

Not exactly a symbol of wisdom, at least at first glance. Right. But here's the thing.

The proverb highlights their incredible coordination. Coordination. How so? It says they have no king, yet they all advance in range.

It's like they have this like innate ability to work together towards a common goal. Hmm. Interesting.

And they do it without a designated leader. Yeah, exactly. No hierarchy, no boss telling them what to do.

Huh. Makes you wonder if we humans could learn a thing or two from those locusts about teamwork and collaboration. Maybe we could.

Okay, now for the spider. All right, the spider. Lay it on me.

What wisdom can we possibly glean from a, well, you know, a spider? Well, the proverb says that the spider takes hold with her hands and is in kings' palaces. Think about that for a second. Hmm.

Okay. This tiny creature with its, you know, delicate web can capture prey much larger than itself, and it's so adaptable, you know, it can even thrive in like the grandest of places, a king's palace. You know, I've always been fascinated by spider webs, the way they're so intricate, so delicate yet strong.

Yeah, it's amazing. And to find them in a king's palace says something about their resilience, you know, their ability to not just survive but flourish anyway. It's a good reminder that we shouldn't underestimate ourselves or others based on outward appearances.

Absolutely. These small creatures, they might be overlooked, even dismissed, but they have these remarkable qualities that allow them to thrive. It's almost like a pep talk for anyone who's ever felt, you know, underestimated.

Yeah, like the ultimate underdog story. So maybe we all have a little bit of ant or spider in us just waiting to be unleashed. I think so.

You might not be the strongest or the loudest, but you can still be resourceful, resilient, and surprisingly influential. It reminds me of this co-worker I used to have. So quiet, so unassuming, but when it came to problem-solving, she was like a secret weapon.

Everyone went to her for advice. I love that. Never underestimate the quiet ones, right? We see these small but mighty examples every day if we just pay attention.

Yeah, it's about recognizing the unique strengths we already have. Exactly. It's not about wishing we were bigger or stronger.

It's about using what we've got to our advantage. Okay, so we've learned about resilience, adaptability, but Proverbs also talks about something else, something pretty crucial to the human experience. Oh, what's that? Dignity.

Dignity. Hmm. Okay, I'm curious.

How do animals teach us about something as complex as dignity? Well, let's move on to Proverbs 30.29, verse 31. It introduces four creatures that are stately in their stride and walk with dignity. And you know, some of them might supervise you.

Okay, now you've got me really intrigued. Who are these dignified creatures? Well, we've got the lion, of course. Okay, yeah.

The lion makes sense. A symbol of strength and power. Right.

Then there's the rooster, the male goat. Wait, the rooster and a goat? Yeah, and of course a king. Okay, so we've got the lion, the king.

Those make sense. But the rooster and the goat, I'm not so sure. I know, right? It's unexpected.

But think about it. The lion, it's the classic image of majesty. But then you have the rooster strutting around, you know, confident, head held high.

Yeah, I can picture it now. He's totally owning his space. And the male goat leading his flock with a sense of purpose.

So it's not just about brute force, right? It's about how you carry yourself, that confidence. Exactly. Even a rooster, which, let's be honest, is often seen as kind of comical.

Yeah, more like a nuisance sometimes. But even the rooster has that swagger, you know, that self-importance. And in a way, it's kind of inspiring.

He's not trying to be anything other than what he is. I like that, owning it, whatever it is. And then, you know, you have the king, the ultimate symbol of authority.

But the proverb puts him alongside these other creatures. It's like it's saying that dignity, it's not just for royalty. It's not tied to your position or status.

Exactly. It's something that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can embody. Which is a really powerful message, especially in a world that often equates dignity with wealth and status.

Right. It's like Proverbs is reminding us that true dignity comes from within. It's about recognizing your own worth and carrying yourself with self-respect.

It's about that inner strength. Yeah. And, you know, I've met people who might not have much in terms of material possessions, but they just radiate this quiet dignity.

Exactly. Like they have this inner confidence that shines through. So the question is, how do we cultivate that kind of dignity? How do we recognize it in ourselves and in others? Great question.

And I think Proverbs is encouraging us to really think about that. It's about being mindful of how we treat ourselves, how we treat others. It's about acting with integrity.

Exactly. And recognizing that inherent worth in every human being. It's like true leadership isn't about bossing people around.

It's about inspiring them with your own sense of purpose and self-respect, just like that male goat leading his flock. I love that analogy. So Proverbs is challenging us to redefine what it means to be powerful and dignified.

It's not about dominating others. It's about mastering yourself. Yeah.

Cultivating those inner qualities that inspire respect and admiration. Wow. We've covered a lot of ground, haven't we? Attraction, the wisdom of small creatures, dignity, and all through these animal analogies.

It's amazing what we can learn from the animal kingdom, right? And we're not even done yet. There's one final proverb in this set, and it takes us in a bit of a different direction. It's a warning, actually, about the dangers of arrogance and harmful schemes.

Oh, oh. Sounds like we're about to get a dose of reality. I mean, lay it on me.

What do we need to know about this arrogance thing? So about those dangers, spill the tea. What's this warning about arrogance all about? Okay, well, Proverbs 30.32-33, it uses this one Hebrew word. It's mitz, and it means to squeeze or to press.

To squeeze. To squeeze. Okay.

And how does squeezing connect to arrogance and causing harm? I don't quite see the connection. Well, hang on, hang on, because the proverb gives these three examples, right? If you turn milk, you produce butter. Okay.

So far so good. But then if you punch the nose, you draw blood. And then if you stir up anger, you produce strife.

Huh. Okay. Yeah, I see it now.

So it's like applying pressure, squeezing; it can lead to different outcomes. Sometimes good. Sometimes not so good.

Exactly. Like turning milk, it takes effort. Right.

You got to put in the work, but then you get something good. Butter. Right.

But punching someone, that just causes pain and conflict. As you said, it's destructive. Exactly.

And I think that's the point Proverbs is trying to make. It's like, how are we using our energy? Are we creating something good? Or just lashing out, causing harm? Like, violence just leads to more violence. It never really solves anything.

And then there's that last part about stirring up anger. It's like, why add fuel to the fire? You know? It only makes things worse. It makes me think about how we handle conflict.

Like, are we trying to de-escalate? Or are we just making things more heated? You got to pick your battles. Yeah. And think about the consequences.

It's easy to react in the moment, but Proverbs, I think, wants us to take a step back. Ask ourselves, will this action create something good? Or just lead to more pain, more strife? It's like a call to be more mindful, right, of our words, our actions. To be peacemakers, not troublemakers.

Exactly. And when we connect this back to what we were talking about before, you know, confidence versus arrogance. Yeah.

It gets really interesting because true dignity, it's not about puffing yourself up or putting others down. It's about using your influence for good, for building up, not tearing down. Right.

So it's not about avoiding conflict altogether. It's about, like, channeling our energy in positive ways. Exactly.

Be a force for good, you know? Like those ants diligently working or that spider patiently weaving its web. It's about knowing your worth, but not at the expense of others. You know, I've always thought of confidence as a good thing.

But now I'm realizing it can easily tip over into arrogance if you're not careful. Yeah. It's a fine line.

And that's why I think this last proverb is like a cautionary reminder, you know, even the best qualities, if we let pride or ego take over, well, they can be twisted, used for bad purposes. So the challenge is to, what, stay self-aware? Make sure our intentions are good? Exactly. It's an ongoing process, you know, self-reflection, growth.

Well, we've covered a lot today, from attraction to these tiny creatures to dignity and arrogance. It's been quite a journey. And all thanks to these animal analogies, who knew we could learn so much from the animal kingdom? It's amazing, right? The wisdom you can find in unexpected places.

It just goes to show, you know, sometimes those small things, those simple observations, can teach us the most valuable lessons. So until next time, keep exploring, keep questioning, and keep diving deep. See you.