

Proverb: Four Proverbial Lessons (Proverbs 6:1–19)

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Session 8

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. August Konkell examines Proverbs 6:1–19, focusing on four distinct proverbial lessons embedded within the overarching parent-child instructions of Proverbs 1–9. The text first warns against the financial hazards of co-signing loans and backing guarantees for outsiders, encouraging swift action to escape unmanageable debt. It then contrasts human laziness with the diligent, self-directed labor of ants, showing that work is a God-given necessity required to prevent sudden poverty. Finally, the lesson exposes the deceptive tactics of clandestine schemers and enumerates seven abominations detested by God that engage physical body parts in falsehood, malice, and division.

Outline

I. Introduction to Proverbs 6:1–19

- A. Context within Proverbs 1–9
 - 1. Completion of 10 parental lectures
 - 2. Interludes within the lectures (e.g., Tree of Life, Four Proverbial Lessons)
- B. Purpose of the four proverbial lessons

II. Lesson 1: The Problem of Borrowed Money and Financial Security (Proverbs 6:1–5)

- A. Historical context of borrowing and debt
 - 1. Ancient roots dating back over 3000 BC (Sumeria, Old Kingdom Egypt)
 - 2. Emergence of currency as a representation of goods
 - 3. Necessity of security/pledges to prevent default and theft
- B. Deuteronomy and Torah provisions on loan pledges
 - 1. Provisions for loans given for basic necessity (e.g., food)
 - 2. Regulations on using a cloak/tunic as security
 - 3. Requirement to return the outer garment by evening for warmth
- C. Warning against securing loans for foreigners/outside (Proverbs 6:1–5; 20:16)
 - 1. Lack of covenant obligation in non-Israelite borrowers

- 2. The danger of acting as a mediating guarantor for a friend
- 3. Complete financial loss upon borrower default
- D. Practical principle of financial prudence
 - 1. Avoid covering debt beyond discretionary means
 - 2. Plead relentlessly to escape unmanageable financial obligations

III. Lesson 2: Work, Labor, and Laziness (Proverbs 6:6–11)

- A. The fundamental role of work in society
 - 1. Economic output and productivity (Gross National Product)
 - 2. Labor as a God-designed aspect of human existence meant for delight
- B. Transformation of work into toil (Etzev)
 - 1. Genesis narrative and the consequences of human self-assertion
 - 2. Work becoming struggle, pain, and labor (etzebon)
 - 3. Frustration of effort through weeds, thorns, and thistles
 - 4. Apostolic teaching on labor (Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians)
- C. The lesson of the ants
 - 1. Contrast between human sluggards and diligent ants
 - 2. Self-motivation and constant activity without overseers
 - 3. Contrast with drone bees in hive structures
- D. Consequences of foolish laziness
 - 1. Necessity of working at the right time in proper order
 - 2. Sudden arrival of poverty and destitution

IV. Lesson 3: The Clandestine Troublemaker and Schemer (Proverbs 6:12–15)

- A. Characteristics of the deceitful schemer
 - 1. Non-verbal signals (squinting eyes, shuffling feet, pointing fingers)
 - 2. Secretive planning to manipulate and exploit others
- B. Literary illustration: P.G. Wodehouse's Ukridge
 - 1. Ensnaing friends into unrealistic, high-yield schemes
 - 2. Inevitable disaster for the schemer and all involved
- C. Outcome of malicious schemes
 - 1. Inability to generate lasting profit
 - 2. Sudden, irreversible calamity and destruction

V. Lesson 4: The Seven Abominations Despised by God (Proverbs 6:16–19)

- A. Comparison to historical concepts (e.g., seven deadly sins)
- B. Catalogue of seven detested behaviors

1. Haughty/proud eyes
 2. Lying tongue
 3. Hands that shed innocent blood
 4. Heart devising wicked schemes
 5. Feet quick to rush into evil
 6. False witness breathing lies
 7. Person sowing discord among brethren/friends
- C. Involvement of physical body parts in moral corruption
1. Eyes, tongue, hands, heart, feet, mouth
- D. Practical takeaway: Avoidance of abominable conduct and corrupt association