



PROVERBS 5

Proverbs 5 is a warning against adultery. This chapter, half of chapter 6, and all of chapter 7 are all about adultery, so it must be a very important subject. Obviously, it is a topic we need to learn more than a little bit about. For some people, sexual lust is an intense desire that demands gratification and becomes one of the strongest temptations they face.

The Bible teaches us not to have sexual intercourse prior to marriage and not to have sex after we are married with anyone other than our spouse (vv. 15–21; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:15–7:3). The writings of Proverbs make clear that it is very unwise—and sinful—to commit adultery.

Proverbs 5 depicts an unfaithful woman attempting to lure a man into her trap. Both men and women struggle with sexual sin. According to the Institute for Family Studies, 20 percent of men and 13 percent of women have extramarital affairs. Based on this research and other studies, it appears that men are more easily tempted to commit sexual sin than women are. But as we look at what Proverbs has to say about the subject, let's remember that the warnings apply to both men and women.

Adultery is presented as a sin that lures one in through

enticements such as seductive words and suggestive manners of dress (7:5, 10, 21). A seducer is also persistent, but in a sly and cunning way, drawing in the victim gradually (7:10–27).

An adulterous affair begins with little things that may seem harmless when looked at individually. A woman at the office occasionally takes donuts to a man who is her “friend.” She compliments him and his work. He needs and values her affirmation, because when he gets home from work at night, his wife is exhausted from dealing with several children and household duties all day. She needs and expects her husband to say and do things to build her confidence, yet she fails to realize that he needs the same from her. Since he is “compliment deficient,” when the woman at work compliments him, he cannot help but enjoy the praise and perhaps find himself wanting to see her more often during the workday—simply because she makes him feel good about himself. The temptation to unfaithfulness may then develop to include imaginations and thoughts that are unwise.

Under the Old Covenant, those who committed adultery broke one of God’s Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10). Doing so was a punishable offense. Jesus goes a step further and says:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:27–28

If we find ourselves thinking about what a romantic relationship with someone other than our marriage partner would be like, we should realize that the enemy is trying to set up perfect circumstances for us to ruin our lives. That's exactly what will happen if we keep going in the directions our minds are trying to take us.

The wisest course of action for a person being tempted would be to stay away from the tempter. If that is not possible because of social or work duties, it is critically important to find other effective ways to create barriers between you and the temptation—through accountability with a trusted friend, even making dramatic changes in an employment or social situation. Saving a marriage from ruin is worth whatever extraordinary measures it takes to put space between the person being tempted and the temptation. We must be aggressive against the temptation to do evil. Otherwise, it won't give up, and we will be caught in its trap.

Do you aggressively resist temptation?

IN THE END

According to the writer of Proverbs, the adulterous woman has lips that “drip honey” and speech that is “smoother than oil; but *in the end* she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave” (vv. 3–5, emphasis mine). I want to call your attention to three words in verse 4: *in the end*.

Quite often people live as though there is no tomorrow, but tomorrow always comes. In other words, we may behave as though our actions have no consequences, but they do. Eventually we will be faced with having to deal with those consequences. Our actions today will produce either tomorrow's joy or tomorrow's sorrow. It's up to us!

The young man in Proverbs 5 is urged to listen to wisdom and keep far away from the adulterous woman. Don't go near her, "lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel" (v. 9). If we don't listen to what wisdom says, we read that strangers will feast on our wealth, and our toil will "enrich the house of another" (v. 10).

Verse 11 continues, "At the end of your life you will groan." Notice the words again: *at the end*. The sensual thrill of adultery lasts for a short time, and then the people involved are left with the consequences, which may include anything from a guilty conscience to the destruction of an entire family. If a family falls apart, it is usually the children who are hurt worst. People need to remember what is at stake when they encounter sexual temptation.

Adultery is a sin that can and usually does have long-lasting negative effects. It can be committed in a few minutes, but its results may last a lifetime. Wisdom always thinks about the result of our actions and asks, "Will I be satisfied later with what I choose today?" Wisdom tells us that people guilty of surrendering to seduction or sexual temptation will ultimately say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or turn

my ear to my instructors. And I was soon in serious trouble” (vv. 12–14). They will regret it, but by the time they do, it will be too late.

HOW TO HANDLE TEMPTATION

Understanding temptation and aggressively resisting it with God’s help is the only way to stay one step ahead of the enemy. Temptation is a part of life; even Jesus was tempted. The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil forty days and nights (Luke 4:1–13). And Hebrews teaches us that Jesus is our high priest because He has been tempted in every way as we are, yet He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). He was tempted but was able to resist it, and so can we.

When teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus told them to pray that they would not come into temptation (Matthew 6:13). Notice that He did not tell them to pray that they would not *be tempted*, but that they would not *enter into* temptation. I’ve heard people say, “So-and-so fell into adultery,” but that person did not accidentally “fall” into sexual immorality; they chose it, one step at a time. Manipulation and deception are formidable enemies, but wisdom, discretion, discernment, and understanding are greater, and they are quite able to defeat these enemies if we will listen to them.

We have all probably found ourselves reaping an unpleasant harvest in some area of our lives and asking ourselves, “How did I get here?” We may have been so deceived that

we didn't recognize the signs pointing us in a negative direction. If we did recognize them, we were not listening to wisdom. We often allow heated emotions to override everything else we know, but we must take responsibility for our sinful actions or we will never be free from them.

The enemy often tries to convince us that we simply cannot resist the temptation to sin. We should never allow him to get away with this, because we definitely can resist temptation. God has promised to never allow more to come on us than what we can bear. With every temptation He will "provide a way out so that you can endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Don't be afraid you cannot resist temptation, but don't make the mistake of thinking you are so strong that you cannot be tempted. The Bible says that "anyone who thinks he stands [who feels sure that he has a steadfast mind and is standing firm], take heed lest he fall [into sin]" (1 Corinthians 10:12 *AMPC*). We can do nothing without God (John 15:5), but we can do anything with Him (Philippians 4:13). In our human strength, many things are impossible, "but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Always, always, always lean and rely on God because He is your strength, and He enables you to resist sin.

GOD SEES ALL

All of our ways "are in full view of the Lord" (v. 21). God wants us to remember that He sees everything that everyone does. I believe that truly desiring to please our Lord and

training ourselves to live in the realization that He sees all will help us avoid wrong actions that end in trouble for us.

Consider and meditate on these scriptures:

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:13

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

Proverbs 15:3

Realizing that God sees everything I do and knows every word in my mouth, even ones I have not yet spoken, is very helpful to me, and I believe it will help you, too (Psalm 139:4).

There is nowhere we can go from the presence of God (Psalm 139:7). We can take great comfort in knowing that He is with us all the time and that He is always ready to help us if we cry out to Him. But we must also recognize that He sees everything we do and hears every word we speak. Perhaps realizing this will help us have the reverential fear and awe of God that is the beginning of wisdom, according to Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10.

Do you live your life with an awareness of God's presence?

LISTEN TO WISDOM'S WHISPER

In studying Proverbs as I prepared to write this book, I began to hear wisdom whisper to me throughout the day, and I continue to hear it. This morning I was trying to decide which of my tops to wear. In my closet, I have a section of casual tops, and I wanted one of those, since I would be home all day. As I pushed hangers back and forth trying to make a decision, I heard the faintest whisper in my heart say, "Any of them will be just fine." We waste a lot of time and add frustration to our lives by being double-minded about things that could be very simple.

Another example occurred yesterday when I overheard part of a conversation about something taking place at our office. I immediately began to go over in my mind all the various scenarios I thought could be happening, and then wisdom whispered, "You don't need to get involved in this." I have turned most of the daily operations of our office over to other capable people, and that means I need to let them do their jobs and trust that they will call on me if and when they need me.

When we get involved in situations we don't need to be involved in, we can quickly lose our peace and our focus. Staying out of situations in which we don't need to be involved keeps our minds at rest and gives us time to focus on our priorities instead of being distracted by other things.

Train yourself to listen to wisdom. Ask God to help you hear it, even when it whispers. The more you pay attention to wisdom, the more you will enjoy your life.