

PROVERBS

One of the great challenges of preaching the Bible verse by verse is that you come to difficult passages and you have to face them head on. In all of my years going to church, I have never heard these chapters of Proverbs preached. I've heard all sorts of sermons about the do's and don'ts of sex and lust, I've heard lots of discussion on how to resist temptation. But I have never heard these passages talked about directly and clearly in a helpful way.

And yet the good life that God has for us encompasses every aspect of our lives – our spirituality is not one compartment, but it touches upon every aspect of our lives. And God wants us to have the good life, to realize it in a way that affects our bodies and our souls. So it is no surprise that our sexuality matters to God. God isn't a killjoy – he is the lover of our souls who wants us to delight in him and his good gifts in ways that honour him.

So when we come to Proverbs 6 & 7, what we find is maybe surprising to us – there are clear commands and warnings, but there is so much more here for us. Let's consider what God has for us in this passage that will point us to the Wisdom of Christ.

Internalize Gospel Wisdom for Obedience (6:20-24; 7:1-5)

In the two speeches of these chapters from the parents, most people pick up on the commands. They hear the words to avoid lust and adultery, but what they fail to begin with is the good news that empowers this young man. If we fail to see the good news here, all we will hear are the commands, and they will sound like rules and burdens that we have to do to keep God happy with us. But if we begin with the heart of the father and mother, what we find is a call to love God.

First, notice how the father and mother make the connection to Deuteronomy's command to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. In Deuteronomy 6:4-7, the words that Moses had commanded the people to teach the future generations the gracious words that God had written on the tablets of stone and bind them to their heads and arms. But here, we have the parents using the same language of Exodus 24:12 – that the commands that God wrote on stone are to be written in the heart. They are to be cherished, loved, and adored as you walk, lie down, and go along the path.

Second, the words of the parents aren't merely personal opinions and advice. They are the very words of life from the Lord himself. What they are encouraging is for the heart to be bound to wisdom like a sister or an intimate relative (7:4). The way that "sister" is used here is similar to Song of Songs – an affectionate term that a man would use for his wife. English has a hard time capturing the sense of endearment here. But the point should be understood – what the parents want for this young man is for him to love God's wisdom so deeply from the heart that he would trust God, believe his Word, and from that obedience would follow.

Living the Good Life: Avoiding the Death Trap of Lust - Proverbs 6:20-7:27

CBC Ilderton

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For many people, they fail to see how Proverbs is deeply rooted in the good news. Many people connect Proverbs' wisdom to creation. But the wisdom of Proverbs is rooted in the gospel promises of God – to form a people and be committed to them by his covenant promises. And this becomes the foundation for the parental wisdom about sex here. Intimacy between a man and a woman is designed by God to be in the context of a marital covenant because a covenant guards, protects, and secures love.

And this is the good news of the Gospel – that God has so dearly loved us that he is committed to our eternal joy and happiness and love in him. His love is steadfast so that it would keep you from falling away from his love.

Hear the Warnings (6:25-35, 7:6-23)

Throughout this passage, the parents give their son several warnings. First, they warn their son that getting involved with a married woman will mean that you will be hunted down by her husband (vv. 25-26). The consequences of adultery according to the law of Israel was the death penalty (Lev. 20:10), and here the son is warned that he should stay far away from lust.

The second warning is that adultery will cost you everything you have (vv. 27-31). You can't play with fire and not get burned. Sexual temptation is like playing with gasoline and fire – it is explosively dangerous. If you think you can manage it, you will discover that temptation isn't managed. It must be resisted. A thief can steal bread because he is hungry and find pity, but someone who is caught in lust will destroy themselves. And we have heard stories of high profile people who have lost their homes, relationships with their children, their careers, and their reputation because of being caught in a sexual scandal. In the moment, the temptation feels good. But the long term implications are horrifying – v. 31 says you will give up the wealth of your home.

The third warning is that lust will lead you to lose your senses and your life itself. Disease, dishonour, and disgrace come. A moment of enjoyment can produce a lifetime of mistrust from others. It is a self-destructive path, especially when you get involved with someone who is married. I have never heard anyone say, "That one moment was worth it – my life is so much better because of it!" But I have seen how painful a moment is and how people wish they could take back their indiscretion.

But there is another warning here that we need to see. Solomon makes it clear that the commands of God are interconnected. In 6:20-21 we see the command to honour Father and Mother; in 6:25-29 – do not covet your neighbour's wife; in 6:30-31 – do not steal; and finally, in 6:32 – do not commit adultery. And here is the wisdom that James would pick up – whoever keeps the law but fails at one point is guilty of breaking the whole law. Why is that? Because sin never comes in little pieces. It comes as a package. Lust, lying, coveting, dishonouring parents,

worshipping something other than God alone – they are all interwoven. So we dare not think that one sin is a little one. One sin often will breed many more.

Finally, the father offers some observations about temptation in chapter 7. In vv. 6-13 he sees how temptation approaches. He sees how temptation comes when you are lacking sense. He sees a simple young man who thinks that he can explore life and discover things for himself. But what he fails to see is how his overconfidence will lead him astray.

In vv. 14-20, the Father warns about the words of the seductress. You can think that there is just the sexual act, but the father sees how this leads the heart into all other forms of struggle. Consider v. 14 – the language of sacrifice comes up again, and as I pointed out two weeks ago, the Bible makes a very clear connection between idolatry and sexual immorality. What we love will show up in our loves, and the Bible makes it clear that for Solomon, he was lead away from the Lord by the gods of his many wives.

You see, in the act of marital intimacy, what the soul longs for is security, steadfastness, and commitment. And that is why covenant matters. Covenant secures the love. It doesn't create it. It protects it. It fences it. And what this young man fails to understand is how the whispers of temptation will lead him astray – not only from love, but from the Lord.

Finally, the impact of these choices is described in v. 22 like an ox going to slaughter. And why is that? Because the wages of sin is death. What happens in Vegas doesn't stay in Vegas because what happens in the heart stays in the heart. So what are we to do?

See the Wisdom of Christ

If we start with rules, then we will see God as a killjoy. But if we start with the gospel, what we discover is that the commandments are for your life. They are a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Paul would make it clear that the gospel motivates us to avoid impurities and lusts. Why?

READ 1 Corinthians 6:15-17. What it means to receive Christ, to ask him into your heart, is more than just a personal relationship. What Paul says is that Christ died to forgive you of your sins AND to unite you to himself. You are becoming one with him. This is the language of intimacy, of connection. This is the way of love. To know that you are forgiven AND you are united to him is to know that what is his is yours and what is yours is his. He takes your sins, your failures, your faults, and he gives you his purity, his love, and his security. There is so much more than "accepting Jesus into your heart." It is Christ taking your heart and giving you his.

This is what it means to be a Christian – it means that you join yourself to the Lord and he joins himself to you. His work of grace – to die for you and bring you to himself – isn't so that you would just be forgiven, but that you would be connected to him forever.

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You have been bought with a price. So honour God with your body! His life was given for yours so that your life might be forever connected to his. All that you are, all that you will be, all that lies in the past and in the future – it is all bound up in Christ now. Why? Because the union of Christ with us is the act of love that shows us that what God is doing in sending Christ is to marry us to himself forever. His heart is for you. His love is for you.

So why would you go anywhere else to find satisfaction? Why would you choose covenantal unfaithfulness?

The good news is that Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians – Christians – who had fallen into all sorts of sexual sins. And he wrote to them to remind them that Christ is their bridegroom, their waiting husband, the lover of their souls.

So how do you flee sexual temptation? How do you handle the pressure?

Two things Jesus tells us to do. First, consider your relationship with Christ. What does it mean that you are united to him? What does it mean that he has not only taken your sins, but he has bought you, loved you, and wants you for himself? Consider Christ. Consider his love for you. Consider the cross. And make it your aim to be amazed by him, to stare deep into the wonders of his love.

The second thing is what Jesus taught us to do – if your hand or eye causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away. It is better to enter life with limitations than for the whole body to be cast into hell (Matt. 18:8-9).

The reason the Bible speaks so clearly about sexual sin is not because God hates sex, but because he has made us so that our worship would be reflected in our sexuality. He has made us to see that sexuality is intended to point us to the One True Love – the One who has given himself for us and is forever committed to us. And this is the reason our sexuality matters to God.