

Avoiding Adultery

Proverbs 6:20-35

Proverbs 6:20-35 - *“My son, keep your father’s command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart. Tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you. When you sleep, they will keep you, and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light.*

Correction and instruction are the way to life, to keep you from the wayward woman and from the flattering tongue and smooth talk of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread, and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife. Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving, yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold. He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery lacks understanding. He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy arouses a husband’s fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.”

Background Notes

We’ve seen strong warnings against sexual sin in Proverbs 2 & 5. Further warning about sexual sin is here in Proverbs 6, and we’ll hear more in chapters 7 & 9. Why is there such an emphasis on sexual sin and its consequences? Because sexual sin is a big problem area in life! God does not want us to be ensnared by this destructive and costly sin.

“My son, keep your father’s command, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (v20). We’ve mentioned before that Solomon received teaching from his father, King David, and his mother, Bathsheba. *“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (Proverbs 1:8).*

What do you think David and Bathsheba taught Solomon about sexual sins? From their own sad experience, they surely would have taught Solomon that there are serious consequences to sexual sin. Now Solomon is passing this wise counsel to his own son.

Doctrinal Points

1. Sexual sin is a foolish departure from the way of wisdom.

“Bind them continually upon your heart. Tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you. When you sleep, they will keep you, and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light. Correction and instruction are the way to life, to keep you from the wayward woman, from the flattering tongue and smooth talk of a seductress” (v21-24).

What did Solomon encourage his son to bind on his heart and tie around his neck (v21)? In the context, it is Solomon’s wise counsel, but of course this is also the word of the Lord. And it is the way of wisdom. Observant Jewish men use of phylacteries (little leather boxes containing Scripture that Orthodox Jews bind on their heads and arms) during prayer. This practice traces back to Exodus 13, Deuteronomy 6 and Proverbs 6:21. But the Lord didn’t mean that we should to literally bind words of Scripture to our chests, or hang it around our necks. He meant, of course, that it should be **in our hearts**. We should **study** it, and **know** it, and **live our lives in the light** of it. Knowing Scripture guides us and protects us (v22). Scriptures give us the way of wisdom to teach us and enlighten us (v23), for they are a lamp and a light.

Hebrews 5:14 teaches us that a healthy diet of solid food from God’s Word will train us to distinguish good from evil. Knowing Scripture leads us to walk in the way of wisdom. If we listen to God’s instruction manual and make it a way of life, it will keep us from sexual sin (v24). If we don’t follow the way of wisdom, we’re fools. Sexual sin is a foolish departure from the way of wisdom.

2. Sexual sin is a deceptive departure from the way of wisdom.

“To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread, and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life” (v24-26).

Departing from the way of wisdom in the area of sexual sin is different from robbing a bank. A person who robs a bank is not deceived. He knows what he’s doing, and knows the risks involved. But sexual sin is deceptive: ‘How can it be wrong if it feels so right’ - and good, and pleasant? That’s the point! It’s deceptive.

Be warned about the beautiful face and body, the flashing eyes and flickering eyelashes of the wayward woman (v24-25). The possibility of deception is even greater when the unsuspecting victim is actually the planned prey - like the deceptive lure of pornography (v26). It won’t be long before the foolish and unsuspecting man is reduced to nothing but a loaf of bread – poverty of soul, spirit and life (v26). Sexual sin is a deceptive departure from the way of wisdom.

3. Sexual sin is a costly departure from the way of wisdom.

“Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife. Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving, yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold. He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery lacks understanding. He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy arouses a husband’s fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts” (v27-35).

These verses could not make the point more clearly. Sexual sin is a costly departure from the way of wisdom. Did you ever try to hold fire in your hand, or walk on the burning embers of a campfire with bare feet? You’ll get burned! There are no exceptions. So, too, is sexual sin. If you’re involved in sexual sin, it will burn you. You will be punished (v29). You will probably reap the destruction you have sown in this life, and you surely will in eternity.

Sexual sin is much more costly than many other sins. If a person steals money because he’s hungry, it’s a sin, but people can understand it. The thief is not despised (v30), and the debt can be paid back (v31). But sexual sin is worse. You destroy yourself in the process (v32), and it is impossible to make restitution. *“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).*

Furthermore, with sexual sin, the result may be scandal and disgrace, and dishonor that can never be regained (v33). Think of the recent examples in the lives of some of our government officials and ministry leaders, for example. And you can’t buy off a jealous and offended and enraged husband. He will not spare you (v34-35). Sexual sin is a costly departure from the way of wisdom.

Practical Application

Don’t become desensitized to sin by the media.

We’ve talked about this before, but it doesn’t hurt to emphasize this very real danger for the believer. The moral standards of our culture are very far from the moral standards that God gives us in the Bible. Movies, TV shows, comedians, music, actors and sports “heroes,” social media, even news media – most often reflect our culture’s degraded moral standards. Our culture’s attitudes and lifestyles infiltrate our thinking. Little by little, we begin to adapt - without realizing it’s happening. And if we’re not very careful, we can become desensitized to the sin that defies and denies God’s moral standards.

A Christian can become desensitized by the lies, such as, “Sex is not sin as long as it’s in a ‘love relationship.’” Or the false idea that “Just as the body needs food, it also has a need for sex, so it’s not sinful to satisfy our needs.” Nothing could be farther from the truth! But as these lies are propagated over and over, they’re absorbed into our minds, simply as a part of our culture - and even believers can become less sensitive to sin.

Another big lie in the area of sex is the lie that “As long as no one gets hurt, it’s okay. After all, what people don’t know won’t hurt them.” Even some Christians have been desensitized in this area. The truth is, people **do** get hurt, and secret affairs often **don’t** remain secret. More than that, even if the sin remains secret, in **God’s** eyes it is sin. The Bible doesn’t say that fornication and adultery is not sinful if it’s secret, or if people don’t get hurt. God says that immorality is sin against your own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

If ever the Bible ever wanted to teach that sexual sin is not sin as long as no one gets hurt, it would be taught in the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. After all, who would know? Potiphar was too preoccupied to know or care. Joseph was far from home, so the family’s reputation wouldn’t be hurt. Why not? How could it be sinful if no one would know, and no one would get hurt? Genesis 39:7-9: *“And [Joseph’s] master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master trusts me with everything in his household, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one who has greater authority in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. **How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”** (emphasis added).*

Our culture tells us that happiness is the highest goal in life. It’s a lie! Hollywood would take Joseph’s story and twist it into to a steamy seduction scene. They’d indicate that Joseph could make Potiphar’s lonely wife happy, and no one (including himself) would be hurt. What a lie! Joseph knew the way of wisdom. He knew that adultery is sin, even if stays a secret and no one is hurt. And even if the secret never leaked out, Joseph knew that God sees everything. Sexual sin is **a sin against God!**

Remember Joseph’s words: **“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”** Don’t allow our culture to desensitize you to sin!