

Our society has embraced the sexual revolution
that promised freedom and happiness to all.

All manner of sexual sins—from adultery to homosexuality to fornication—
have been encouraged and rewarded.

But what has it produced?

Has it produced joy and peace?

Far from it.

It has reaped the harvest that it sowed.

The self-indulgent quest for pleasure invariably reaps a harvest
of pain and anguish.

Divorce rates have skyrocketed (and while sometimes divorce is necessary,
no divorce is ever pleasurable!),

and sexually transmitted diseases have brought both fear and death.

Unwanted pregnancies have resulted in a meteoric rise in the abortion rate as well.

In order to hide from the consequences of breaking the seventh commandment,

people are frequently breaking the sixth commandment as well,

murdering the unborn, hoping to escape

from the consequences of their sins.

Sin produces fear, misery, and death.

That is the message of Proverbs 6-7, as it reflects upon the seventh commandment.

108. Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is cursed by God. We must therefore detest it from the heart and live chaste and disciplined lives, both within and outside of holy marriage.

109. Q. Does God in this commandment forbid nothing more than adultery and similar shameful sins?

A. Since we, body and soul, are temples of the Holy Spirit, it is God's will that we keep ourselves pure and holy. Therefore He forbids all unchaste acts, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever may entice us to unchastity.

1. The Price of Adultery (6:20-35)

Proverbs 1-9 is directed to young men—
teenagers, in particular.

And this lesson is central to a young man's future.

If you get caught up in the pursuit of easy sex,

then you will surely make a complete mess of your life.

When you walk, who will lead you?

when you lie down, who will watch over you?

when you awake, who will talk with you?

Wisdom?
Or the Adulteress (the foreign woman)

In other words,
the question is,
who will be your companion at night?
With whom will you spend your time?
Whom do you desire?

When you walk, wisdom will lead you; when you lie down, she will watch over you;
and when you awake, she will talk with you.
*For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.*

Discipline.
Tonight we are talking about sex.
But the principle applies to every aspect of life.
“The reproofs of discipline are the way of life.”

Proverbs speaks a great deal about the importance of discipline:
5:12 – after your failure and ruin you will cry out “How I hated discipline...”
5:23 – “He dies for lack of discipline”

If you lack discipline now, you will pay for it in the future!

Verse 25 identifies the root of the problem:
Do not desire her beauty in your heart.

Long before the son commits adultery with the foreign woman,
he will have desired her in his heart.
When Jesus said, “whoever looks at a woman with lustful intent
has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28)
he was simply saying what Proverbs had been teaching for centuries.
“Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes
In other words, “do not covet your neighbor’s wife.”
The word “desire” is the same word translated “covet” in the Ten Commandments.

Men, guard your hearts.
Do not lust after other women.
When Jesus said “if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out,”
he didn’t mean “lust isn’t that bad, you can toy with it for a while!”
If you can’t use cable TV responsibly, cut it out.
If you can’t use the internet wisely, cut it out.
Do whatever it takes to flee from sin.

Coveting begins with the eyes.
You are looking too intently at her.
Your eyes and your imagination is what you must guard.

I have focused on men—because it is a father warning his son.
But women deal with lust as well.
The desire to be appreciated and affirmed
 can lead a woman to imagine and desire another man.
The warning is the same:
 guard your heart!

There are two arguments against adultery given in verses 26-33 and 34-35.

1) adultery's inevitable penalty

*Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?
Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?
So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
 none who touches her will go unpunished.*

There are no exceptions.

If you play with fire, you will get burned.

If you think that you are the exception—that you can get away with it—
I have news for you: you won't!

But not only is the penalty severe and inevitable, it is also unending!

*People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry
but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold;
he will give all the goods of his house.*

We have sympathy for a starving thief.

But he who *commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*

Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his disgrace will not be wiped away

Certainly adulterers deserved death according to the law,
 but it would appear that leniency was often extended.

But such leniency resulted in perpetual disgrace.

Forever the stigma of adultery would remain upon the adulterer—
 like a Scarlet Letter that could not be removed.

The second argument (in verses 34-35) against adultery turns to the jealous husband.

After all, if you have committed adultery with a married woman,
 there is going to be a very angry man that you will have to deal with.

And jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.

He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.

He will see to it that you are destroyed.

2. The Path of Adultery (7:1-27)

Chapter 7 brings the warning against folly to its climax.

The father warns his son against the seduction of the adulteress.

The challenge for the father is to help his son understand the temptation,
and yet make it repulsive.

This is hard!

We want our children to be well-prepared to deal with life—
so we need to give them an honest lesson in what they will face.

They need to understand that they *will* be tempted—
and yet we need to show them where the temptation leads:
Folly invariably leads to death.

Once again,

the father opens his lecture by addressing, *my son, keep my words,
and treasure up my commandments with you;
keep my commandments and live;
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;
bind them on your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

The law was written on two tablets of stone.

The father understands that in order for us to live,
the law needs to be written on tablet of your heart.

This is the blessing of the new covenant, according to Jeremiah 31.

Jesus is the one whose heart was pure—who indeed kept the whole law,
and did as his Father commanded.

Therefore, in Jesus, the law is written on our hearts,
and we are more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

And once again,

the father says that the reason for his lecture
is to draw you to wisdom and keep you from folly.
*Say to wisdom, 'you are my sister,' and call insight your intimate friend,
to keep you from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words (v4-5).*

What happens when you say “I do”?

What happens when you say “I take you to be my wife”?

By that speech, something happens.

They are merely words—and yet they accomplish something.

When the pastor says, “I pronounce you man and wife!”

there is something irreversible that happens.

When you say to wisdom, “you are my sister,”

something irreversible happens.

“Sister” was a term of endearment for one’s beloved in Egypt.
Again, the idea is that you must marry wisdom in order to avoid folly.

But you cannot dance between the two.

The father then recounts a story:

I have looked out through my window and seen among the simple,
I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense.
Unlike you, my son, he had no one to teach him wisdom—
or, perhaps, he refused to listen!
But either way, he lacked sense.
He had never given himself to wisdom.

And he walked down the street near *her* corner.
This was his fatal flaw—
he is simple, he is gullible—
he did not realize where he was!
You see, my son, he was not a fool.
He was not looking for trouble.
But he was not wise.

After all, he approached her house at dusk—
as darkness was falling.

My son,
be especially careful at night.
It is easy to stumble and fall when darkness covers your steps.
You may think that darkness is a cloak that will hide evil deeds,
but the eyes of the LORD pierce every dark corner!
When folly calls you,
stay away from her door.
One of my seminary professors told the story of a man addicted to pornography—
who kept going back to the same store.
One of the first things his counselor told him to do was to avoid that street,
even if it meant going miles out of his way.
Do not go near the door of her house.

And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.
She hides her true identity in order to entice you.
If he had known at first that she was married, perhaps he would have avoided her,
but she seduced him with her smooth talk.
She looks attractive.
She offers cheap sex.

And she is everywhere!

Now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.

She seizes him and kisses him,

and with bold face she says,

“I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows!”

In other words, I have meat at home—

I have the best food!

Come, and share it with me!

I have come out to meet you,

to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.

(Literally, I came out to face you and seek diligently your face.)

In other words, you good-looking hunk, come with me!

And she draws him in with promises of a plush bed, and aphrodisiacs:

myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

“Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.”

After all,

my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey;

he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home.

You have nothing to fear!

The seed of the serpent offers the same promise the serpent had in the garden:

“You will not die!”

There are no consequences for your actions.

She does not try to say that adultery is right,

“But only that they can get away with it because her husband is not at home.”

With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.

All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast

till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare;

he does not know that it will cost him his life.

What we have here is a picture of entrapment.

The adulteress, whether witting or no, is luring him to his death.

Just as stupid animals do not see any connection between traps and death,

even so, morally stupid people do not see any relation between their sin and death.

We died to sin.

How can we live any longer in it?

The wages of sin is death.

The path of folly is nothing more and nothing less than the road to hell.

The father has given his sons an earful.

He has let them hear the very words of the adulteress—
with her syrupy sweet siren song.

Now he calls them back:

And now, O sons, listen to me.

Remember, boys, remember what we are talking about here:
be attentive to the words of my mouth.

*Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,
for many a victim has she laid low,
and all her slain are a mighty throng.*

Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

Her bedroom is a battlefield where corpses lie.

Her bedroom is the gate to hell.

How do you avoid her?

To you who are married, let me ask you:

Do you delight in your wife?

(This could be stated in reverse: do you, ladies, delight in your husband?)

Look back at Proverbs 5:18-19

*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
a lovely deer, a graceful doe.*

*Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love.*

I especially like the verb “intoxicated” in Proverbs 5:19.

This is the verb “to go astray.”

Your love for your wife is to cause you to stray—
no, not to someone else—but to her!

In other words, you are to be so smitten with your wife,
that there is no place for another woman to lead you astray.

Proverbs 5 does not suggest that this will happen naturally.

It takes discipline.

(Verse 23—“he dies for lack of discipline.”)

“Oh, great! The pastor just took the romance out of marriage!”

Well, yes.

If you mean by romance those mushy feelings that you had
when you first got married, then it’s true,

I’m not particularly interested in keeping romance in marriage!

Feelings are notoriously unreliable.

But the path of wisdom calls you to rejoice in the wife of your youth.

You are to let her breasts fill you at all times with delight.

And as is the case with all God's commands,
if you obey him and devote yourself to your wife,
you will find it a true delight.

We saw last week that murder starts as hatred in the heart.

In Matthew 5 Jesus says that adultery starts as lust in the heart.

The outward act results from an inward disposition.

Just as hatred and murder is striking out against the image of God in man,
so also lust and adultery are rooted in a refusal to worship God.

You were created to belong to God.

Part of the way in which you reflect your fidelity to God,

is through your fidelity to your spouse.

(And for you who are single, that fidelity should already exist.

If you are sleeping around before marriage,

that means that you are neither faithful to your future spouse
nor faithful to your God.

Because he created you for himself—that you might a pure and radiant bride.)

As revealed in the garden of Eden,

the sexual relation was designed for one man and one woman,

in a life-long bond of mutual love and service.

The command to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful and multiply,”

which includes childbearing as one of the primary goals of marriage.

The purpose of sexual relations is to reflect something of the image of God.

God created a son after his own image and likeness.

And then in Genesis 5 we are told that Adam

had a son in his image and likeness.

In the sexual relation, God has given to his image-bearers

the ability to reproduce the image of God.

To use our ability to reproduce the image of God

in any other way than that which God commands,

is a perversion of the sexual relation.

Let me repeat that,

because it is really important to understand this:

In the sexual relation, God has given to his image-bearers

the ability to reproduce the image of God.

To use our ability to reproduce the image of God

in any other way than that which God commands,

is a perversion of the sexual relation.

This is *why* the Bible regularly condemns homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery,
and finds polygamy to be stretching the rules at best.

(Jesus makes it clear that polygamy was not included in God's design for marriage

—Mt 19:4-6—and Paul insists that elders must be monogamous.

From which it appears that a polygamist could become a Christian,
but a Christian may not become a polygamist!)
But it is also the reason why the Bible insists that adultery is first a matter of the heart.

If you are looking at a woman with lustful intent—
in other words, if you are desiring her,
then you have already committed adultery with her in your heart.

Jesus has some pretty strong words for you.

“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.
For it is better than you lose one of your members
than that your whole body be thrown into hell.” (5:29)

Now, some people have taken this too literally.

It appears that Origen may have actually castrated himself
in his desire to obey Christ in this matter. (Something he later regretted)

Why should we take this figuratively?

Just because it is too extreme?

No.

Rather, because physical self-mutilation does not get at the heart.
I’ve torn out both my eyes and yet still I lust!

The problem is in my heart!

So what does it mean to tear out your eye and throw it away?

It means exactly the same thing that Paul means when he says
That “those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh
with its passions and desires.” (Gal 5:24)

This is not a literal statement either.

I have never been physically crucified.

Rather it means that in your union with Christ,
your old self was crucified.

So if your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.

The statement is designed to cause you to despair in yourself,
flee to Christ and look to him.

So what are you looking at?

For many years unwittingly I was looking for a wife to be my savior.

I believed that if only I could find a good wife,
then some of my problems would go away.

And, certainly, I thought, being married would resolve my problem with lust!

It didn’t.

Those of you who are married already know that.

Those of you who are single need to know that.

The reason why marriage does not solve the lust problem
is because marriage was not designed to solve the lust problem.
Marriage was designed for Adam and Eve—
two sinless persons.
Marriage is not God's "answer" for lust.
Lust is man's perversion of marriage.
So how is marriage going to "solve" the problem of sin?

The solution to lust is not sex.
The solution to lust is humility –
it is to lay down your life.

This is where the monastery was correct!
You will never satisfy a sinful appetite by feeding it.
You can never turn lust into love.
You must put to death the lusts of the flesh,
and that happens through humbling yourself,
taking up your cross, and following Jesus.

The problem of lust is solved the same way as any other sin.
The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The final solution to lust is nothing else than gazing upon Christ.
When you are tempted to look in the wrong direction,
seek the face of God.
For he will not hide his face from you.
And he will teach you the way in which you should go.

108. Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is cursed by God. We must therefore detest it from the heart and live chaste and disciplined lives, both within and outside of holy marriage.

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