

PROVERBS – THE PATH TO WISDOM

The Book of Proverbs – The Father’s 8th Speech

INTRODUCTION

In our Church we believe it is profitable to conduct marriage preparation. But the Church is not to replace good parenting. In the Proverbs that we are looking at today, the father is preparing his son for marriage. You could entitle this Proverb: Marital Faithfulness.

There is a frankness and an openness to this Proverb. I would think that a wise preacher would tailor his sermon as to the degree of explicitness depending on his audience. Today, you can expect generalizations from me. I will stick carefully to what the Bible itself is saying. I will neither dramatize it nor will I dismiss it. This Proverb could be divided into 3 main headings and that is what you will hear today:

1. Son, Don’t Touch. (5:1-14)
2. Son, Touch. (5:15-20)
3. Son, Be Warned. (5:21-23)

Now let me prepare you for some applications.

First, the Proverb is an account of a father to a son. That is the reality of the historical context.

But you would be in error not to think that a daughter should have the same instruction.

Adultery is not a male-only-sin.

Secondly, if you have never committed the act of adultery, you shouldn’t be smug. Jesus said, *“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* (Matthew 5:28, ESV).

Thirdly, if you by any reason are unmarried, you must surely know that moral purity is just as important to you. In some way we are all captured by the intent and the spirit of this text. But to be clear, the main exhortation is to marital faithfulness.

The point is that marital unfaithfulness is destructive and marital faithfulness is delightful.

Just one other thought before we start. There will be many of us today that hear this message and it will drive us to regret and a feeling of guilt. You don’t have to know me; and I don’t have to know you – the statistics alone bear witness to the reality that many people, even here today, are guilty of sexual sin of

some nature. I want you to be reminded of the Gospel. Paul reminds us that “*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*” (1 Timothy 1:15, ESV) There is forgiveness for those who repent and forsake their sin. As we consider this Proverb, let us not lose sight of the Cross.

Let’s pray.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: PROVERBS 5:1-23 (ESV)

EXPOSITION

Pastors that hold to the convictions that I hold to believe that the best way to grow a congregation to maturity is through expositional preaching. We also believe that God has not randomly provided a Bible to us of random stories and a multitude of verses. The Bible is a Book containing Books. Therefore, the reading and teaching of the Bible is best served by dealing with books from beginning to the end. This practice in Latin is called *lectio continua*, meaning the study of Scripture from beginning to end over a period of time.

Without the benefit of *lectio continua*, a pastor would rarely choose to talk about the topic we’re dealing with today. The continuous preaching of the Scripture forces the Church to examine difficult and sometimes awkward topics. As Ray Ortlund writes, “The Bible is not shy about sex, and its message is clear: sexual folly destroys, sexual wisdom satisfies, and Christ is better than the best sex.”¹

So, let’s look at the first heading:

1. Son, Don’t Touch. (5:1-14)

In vv1 and 2, the father reminds his son about hearing and heeding his instruction. And then the dad uses 2 words to describe the temptation of adultery: *sweetness and bitterness*. Note that in vv3 and 4. Adultery can appear sweet as honey, delicious and inviting but in the end, it is a bitterness that leads to death. Adultery is honey with poison in it.

Debra and I listened to Alistair Begg deal with the same topic last Monday on his radio broadcast. He describes how easy it is when men and women start to innocently warm up together. A friendly conversation and mutual interest turns into sharing of feelings and innermost thoughts. A conversation in a hallway moves to a lunch or coffee rendezvous. She understands. He seems to really care. It’s all sweetness and honey. But

¹ Ortlund, R. C., Jr. (2012). [*Preaching the Word: Proverbs—Wisdom that Works*](#). (R. K. Hughes, Ed.) (p. 89). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

What's the dad's counsel: *"Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,"* (Proverbs 5:8, ESV). In today's world this is laughed at. When Mike Pence (the former Vice-President of the USA) quoted the so-called "Billy Graham rule", he was mocked and derided. That rule states that we will not spend time alone with women (or men) to whom they are not married. One of the men that was formative for me in my early years was John Maxwell. He travelled all over the world speaking. He always travelled with a ministry male colleague when his wife wasn't with him. He called his wife every night. His colleague would enter a hotel room and immediately disconnect the TV. Why? "He was keeping far from her."

It's good advice: Never be alone with a person of the opposite sex if your spouse is not present. It is our firm conviction in our counseling ministry at EPBC for a pastor not to be alone with a woman unless another woman is present. "Keep far from her."

The dad gives some good reasons in this Proverb:

- a. Verses 9-10, refers to giving your best to those whom it does not belong. Think of this: adultery is stealing from your spouse and giving it to another.
- b. Verse 11. Sexual sin will harm your body and notice this: it also brings shame to the corporate body (v14). (Notice how the NIV translates that verse: *"And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God's people."*) (Proverbs 5:14, NIV)
- c. Sexual sin brings shame, regret and despair.

And all this is because the son has disregarded his father's instruction and failed to discipline his life. But the father doesn't stop there.

2. Son, Touch. (5:15-20)

The father then turns his attention to the positive. In a sense he says, "Son, invest yourself in enjoying your wife." The author uses metaphors such a water and garden pointing to the marriage relationship, which is to be a source of delight, refreshment, children, and the happiness of life. In sum, the father appeals to the son to be faithful to his wife.

The language is frankly frank. It's akin to the Song of Solomon. For the married, it stresses the importance of seeing intimacy as a delight; more than just a contractual agreement and a means of producing children.²

3. Son, Be Warned (5:21-23)

² Kidner, D. (1964). [*Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*](#) (Vol. 17, p. 67). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The last 3 verses warn the son. *“For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.”* (Proverbs 5:21–23, ESV)

To paraphrase what the dad is saying, “Son, God sees everything, what you’re thinking and what you’re doing. To rebel against God’s commands will bring you into bondage. Your destruction will be because of your lack of discipline and your foolishness.”

Notice where the dad places the responsibility. He didn’t say, “I know it’s the fault of the lady. Look at how she dressed.” He didn’t place the responsibility on the son’s wife. How many times have we heard it said, “Well I wouldn’t have fallen into sin if my husband was nicer; my wife was more loving; etc.”? No, the person who commits adultery has only one person to blame and that’s themselves.

APPLICATION

Listen to these important words by Kathleen Neilson: “God set up marriage in the very beginning in order to tell us human beings something about himself ... something that grows clearer and clearer through the whole biblical story ... something about the relationship he has with his people, and will have forever, through the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus his Son.”³

Adultery tarnishes this story. Adultery distorts the Gospel. It is true about marital adultery and it is also true about spiritual adultery. Just as it is impossible to imagine a godly marriage where one partner seeks intimacy outside of marriage, it is impossible to imagine being wedded to Christ and seeking intimacy with the world. James writes, *“You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* (James 4:4, ESV)

God has intended that we find our satisfaction and greatest pleasure in relationship with Him. To seek it elsewhere is to lead to bondage and judgment.

CONCLUSION

Today you may sense tremendous guilt regarding marital adultery. Perhaps your spouse doesn’t even know. Maybe they do. But God knows. Or maybe in this message you sense that you have wandered far from Christ and have spent His resources on the affections of this world. God knows that also. But there is always a way home. There is always a Father waiting for the son to appear. There is a robe and a ring. There is a fatted calf and a celebration waiting for those who repent, turn from their sin and follow Christ.

³ Nielson, K. (2020). [Proverbs for You](#). (C. Laferton, Ed.) (pp. 63–64). The Good Book Company.