

# Proverbs

Wisdom and Sex

July 23, 2017

Bit of a warning as we get started. If you are parent of a younger child who is with you right now, our topic today is wisdom regarding sex. I don't know what sort of conversations or awkward silences you'd like to have on the way home. If your kid is 5th grade or younger they are welcomed in Kidtown. If they are older than that then we won't talk about anything today that isn't already constantly in their faces as American kids so they need to hear it.

One of the most comprehensive sections of scripture when it comes to the biblical vision for sex, for what it is, what its purpose is and what God intends for sex to accomplish, for how we are to think about it and handle it. It comes as counsel from Solomon as a father to his sons. So, the counsel is written from male to male but it's gender inclusive.

## Proverbs 5

My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation." Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. 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. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? 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 7

For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; 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 to him, "I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For 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." 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. And now, O sons, listen to me, and 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.

Notice some patterns here. Sexual sin has a path. It doesn't attack, it lures. All of these promises that end with brokenness.

I am aware that counsel and suggestions about avoiding sexual sin can initially come across as overly legalistic and weird and overprotective. All of the "avoid this", and, "stay away from that", starts to feel like you just want to say "dude calm down we're fine". Because of stuff like this I've even heard people say, "you Christians are obsessed with sex".

I don't want to try and defend all Christians and I don't even know what other people are saying out there. But I will tell you that this warning and counsel rings true to me. I have seen this play out time and time again.

Over the past 10 years that we've been a church I've watched people walk away from Jesus for a variety of different reasons. But no reason has caused more people to walk away from Jesus than issues of sex.

There is something very powerful about sex. It has the ability to capture people in such a way that it can set a course for their life. And with anything powerful, when used properly it can bring about much good. But when used improperly it can be devastating.

There's a pattern that I've picked up on. People will sin sexually, and it produces a sense of shame so they run from God instead of to God. This only makes the problem worse. All of our sin is a result of not being satisfied in God in the first place so running only makes everything worse. In their emptiness, they sin again and continue to grow colder and colder towards God. Then this is where science is catching up to the bible. Neuroscience has recently discovered that sex creates pathways in our brain. The release of certain chemicals in our brains during sex work similarly to an opiate. They create a form of bonding, addiction. And they create a path in our brains. It's the word Solomon uses. It's the word for a path that a wagon has worn ruts into. Trenches. And once those ruts are established it's incredibly difficult to get out of them. You begin to feel trapped. Stuck. It's engrained.

**Proverbs 5:22**

The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him and he is held fast in the cords.

Initially, sexual sin is seen as a choice. I perceive my power and ability to decide. But over time that fades and I begin to feel trapped.

When it comes to sexual sin for our church family, I tend to get brought in after the time has passed where people sense that they are in control of it. By the time I get to talk to people in our church about sexual sin, they are usually placing themselves as a victim. "We're in love. We're soul mates." People will break out the pseudoscience of "it's who I am. I can't stop. I can't help it. This is how my mom or dad was. It's how I am wired." All victim language.

And once you believe that lie the bottom tends to drop out. Now you are ready to dismiss any scripture that would otherwise have been helpful. You are ready to dismiss any friend who tries to speak into your life about this. In fact, I've watched people start to re-interpret the Bible because they've first believed this lie. And the thought process is, if I feel like I have no choice here but to do something I thought the Bible called sin, it must be that the Bible isn't actually saying it is sin after all. Because there is no way God would tell me I can't do something that feels so natural and true about me.

First of all, the Bible says, wherever you are, you are never so far gone as to be past the possibility of redemption. The Bible is full of promises to you about that. First Corinthians says there is no temptation that has seized you except what is common and God is faithful to always give us a way out. Peter says that we have everything we need for life and godliness. It is a lie to believe that you are in a situation in which your only option is to sin. If that is what you are currently believing then you have believed a lie.

So, when Solomon is pleading with his sons here and saying things like "don't go down the road. Don't even walk down the street or sexual sin will await you."

**Proverbs 5:8**

Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.

Always reminds me of Willie saying if you hang out around the barbershop you're going to get a haircut. And you know how it works. When you are not actually trying to put sin to death. You start to hang out around the beginning of the path. Your heart will want to look for more just a little more, whether it's taking things a little further with someone, or finding something a little more exciting to look at. TV, movies, novels. There's a lot of wisdom here and needed counsel. Protect yourself from being in a place where you can believe the lie that your only option is to sin.

I also love the picture Solomon paints for God's intentions for sex. If you don't understand God's purpose for sex, then none of the restrictions surrounding sex will make any sense to you.

**Proverbs 5:15-20**

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. 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. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

Intoxicated - that's a right translation. It means something that captures you so much that it leads you. Every other time that I could find its use in scripture, it's negative. To be so caught up in something that you are led astray. Here it is the same idea but it's positive. Be drunk with delight in your sexual relationship with your spouse.

Lose yourself in sexual pleasure. Lose your mind you are having so much fun. Be swept away.

I mentioned this earlier, but one of the things being found by research is the chemical release in our brains during sex is addictive. The pleasure and bonding chemicals in your brain - dopamine, oxytocin, and vasopressin are all involved in both creating a reward pathway that you want more of (this is an addictive loop) as well as emotional bond between you and another person. God invented sex to be a way for a man and woman, in marriage, to become addicted to each other.

However, a study done by two neurologists found that having sex with multiple partners actually rewires your brain in a way that makes genuine, lasting relationships more difficult.

Pornography is particularly powerful in the damage it causes. In fact, there have been Senate Committee meetings to discuss the new research being done on the damaging impact of porn. Mary Anne Layden, co-director of the Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Cognitive Therapy, called porn the "most concerning thing to psychological health that I know of existing today." She compares internet porn to crack cocaine.

All of this potency and power that sex holds, it's intended to be God's way of uniting a man and woman in marriage.

It's a way of communicating, "I belong completely and exclusively and permanently to you". Completely. All of me, good and bad. Exclusively. Just you and no one else. Permanently. I am not going anywhere. You will find if you remove any one of these three it no longer works. If I don't give myself completely, I hide bits of myself, then you don't know the real me. If it's not exclusive, I give myself to others, then you do not have all of me. And if it's not permanent, there is always the threat of you leaving then we are never safe

with each other and are always having to keep up appearances to keep each other around. You are never fully with your guard down.

You are uniquely you, with your story and gifts and personality and experiences. No one else is you. If you lose a hammer, you can find another one to replace it. No problem. A person cannot be replaced without a loss of some kind. Because no one else has the particular combinations of nature and nurture and decisions that make you who you are.

Sex is meant to be a celebration of all of those things being brought before another person, seen, and then this person physically demonstrating “I accept and cherish all of who you are. All that makes you, you. And I give you all of me. You are not going anywhere, I am not going anywhere. You do not have to pretend or keep your guard up with me.”

So, the physical union becomes a physical expression of a complete union. We are legally one. Emotionally one. Socially one. Only when you step into the covenant of marriage can you do that.

This is a high view of sex. A belief that sex is important and powerful and good. The Bible’s restrictions regarding sex are not because of a low view of sex. As though sex isn’t valuable and good. It’s actually the opposite. You put restrictions on things you value. You protect what you value more, not less. If you borrow my car, I won’t say much, just here’s the keys. Use it however you want and bring it back. You keep my kids, there are all sorts of instructions. Because I value my kids more than I value my car.

With that said, I know there are all sorts of objections.

Some people will argue with that, and say things like “well we aren’t married but we are in love.” Yeah but you aren’t committed permanently. If you were you would get married. You might really love each other, but if you aren’t married you are retaining the right to walk away in the future if you decide you want to.

“I just don’t think it’s realistic. This is unnatural and repressive to say you can only have sex with somebody you’re married to. It’s unnatural and repressive. We have natural sexual desires, to try and curb those makes no sense. it’s just natural.” I think that’s overly simplistic.

We don’t think like this with other internal, natural desires. It’s a lot like saying, “Don’t eat unhealthy foods.” I have a desire for funnel cake. It’s very powerful. And it comes from the inside. It’s a natural feeling. My parents didn’t teach me this. But on the other hand, I also have a natural desire to not get diabetes.

The Bible tells us that on the one hand we have sexual desire, we are sexual beings, we have a lot of desire for sex, but we also, created into us, have a desire for complete commitment, intimacy, trust. Therefore, it’s no more repressive to say, “sex is only for marriage,” then it is to say, “Curb your desire for funnel cake or it will destroy you,” because you’re not built to do what all your desires say. If you just take and eat everything you want to, you’ll destroy yourself. If you have sex everywhere you want to, you’ll destroy your nature, too, because you were built to have sex in an environment of total safety and complete commitment.

Those of you who were having sex with someone, and it wasn’t in the context of marriage, and then you broke up. Do you remember how weird it felt when that the person you’d just given yourself to was now available to other people? Maybe you chalked it up to jealousy. That’s the way God made you.

Sex is a way of committing yourself to somebody else. Sex is God’s way of softening you, of getting you to trust the person, of getting you to open to the person. For you to open to someone who has not made a promise to you of exclusive faithfulness and commitment leads to breakdown. Sex is a way of opening yourself to somebody, and if you use it outside of marriage you actually have to fight against the very thing that it was built to do.

You have to harden yourself against its softening influence. To use sex outside of marriage, therefore, actually trains you to not trust when actually the whole point of sex is to get you to completely trust. Sex is designed to celebrate a union that's there and to revitalize the union continually by continually softening you toward that person and getting you to trust more and more deeply and more and more deeply and more and more deeply. It's a way to renew your covenant vows.

If you don't use it in a place where you can trust that person, it works against you.

Resisting my urge for a steady diet of funnel cake isn't repressive. It's freedom. It's liberating. Freedom is the ability to do what's good for me even if it's not what I want to do.

Saying sex is reserved exclusively for a man and woman in marriage is like saying "you shouldn't try to breathe underwater." God made us to access oxygen out of the air, not out of the water. If you try to violate that truth it will lead to breakdown. Same with sex.

## 1.) Recognize the lies

### **Proverbs 5:3-5**

For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death...

One of the lies is that sexual temptation is only a physical issue. You have physical longings and that's why sexual sin carries power. Well that's not at all the whole truth. Sex isn't powerful simply because of its physical realities, therefore sexual sin isn't tempting exclusively because of physical desire. It's not less than that, but it is more than that.

If you think about how the woman draws the young man in in Proverbs 7, it is not just physical desire that is alluring. It's more than that. She expresses that she has been looking for him in particular.

Sex is a way of saying, "You are wanted. You are known. You are loved. You are accepted. I see you and I want you." Almost always our sexual temptation includes a longing for intimacy and closeness and acceptance. A way of being known, being empowered and strong, being free to be yourself. Think about the different reasons people are drawn to porn. "My life is hard. Porn is easy, it's a relief. My life is uncomfortable. Porn is comforting. My life is powerless. Porn makes me feel powerful. My life is unmanaged. Porn lets me be in control. I feel unwanted, overlooked, ignored, neglected... But porn makes me feel wanted." Obviously, none of these things are delivered in any sort of real way.

Sexual temptation making promises that it can't deliver on.

### **Drake**

There was a point where I felt like I needed to keep the company of a different woman every night. I was trying to fill a void. But in the 15 or so seconds after sex, I'd know it wasn't working. That 15 or 20 seconds is the realest moment a man will ever have in his life...the next day I'd convince myself to do it again. But during that time, I knew it wasn't working.

## 2) Guard your path

You have to know what inputs and circumstances and situations make it more difficult for you to respond to God faithfully when it comes to sex. Know where you start to be tempted. Know when your dominos start to fall. Put up some warnings and obstacles at the beginning of the path for you. This will be different for all of us.

There may be certain things you do not need to watch because they promote lust in your life.

There might be certain places you do not need to go because being there lights you up with body insecurity, where you feel horrible about your physical appearance and are unable to be comfortable in the body that God gave you.

There might be apps you need to delete.

If you are dating and you do not have clear, established boundaries about what places and times you don't need to be together, you have set yourself up to fail. For the first almost year that **Courtney and I dated**, I asked her if it would be ok if we didn't kiss. Not because I am holy but because I know I'm not. And I didn't want to establish a relationship where when we ran out of things to talk about we just started making out. And to be perfectly honest with you, kissing is a means to an end for me. I don't want to just kiss.

Be your spouse's ally. 1 Corinthians 7 says to serve your spouse. Ask how they are doing and how you can help. Ask "how is our sexual relationship? Are we delighting in it appropriately?"

For those who are married, whatever hindrances there are to you delighting in your sexual relationship, those are worth the effort to deal with. If you aren't, as Solomon says, "intoxicated" with your sexual relationship, that's something to work on. Now, there would be exceptions for physical issues, to be sure. And if there has been previously sin between the two of you, then your path to delight will be different.

Way too many married people have sex on birthdays and anniversaries and that's it. It starts with one spouse just not being all that into it, so they look to avoid sex for as long as possible and that builds and stretches over time to where basically all the stars have to align. Oftentimes, the spouse who isn't having as much sex as they want feels frustrated and rejected and bitterness takes root. Potentially they start looking to sex outside of the marriage or porn as a coping for their frustration and an outlet.

This stuff proves to me we are sinners. That our sin nature just wants to rebel against God.

Single people cannot keep their hands off of each other but then they get married and then they aren't all that interested in sex. Best proof our sin nature just does not want what God wants. It doesn't matter what He tells us to do, we rebel against it. "Don't have sex." Sex is all I can think about! "Have lots of sex with your spouse and lose your mind with delight." I don't know, I'm pretty tired.

### **3) Run to God, not from Him.**

A few years ago, I heard it said like this...

**Tim Keller**

Until you're metaphorically naked and unashamed before God you'll find being physically naked with a human being either all consuming or disgusting.

I think for some of you, your inability to sit still and be alone with God is actually driving your sexual sin problems. Your refusal to withdraw and be known and loved by God is a root cause of sexual sin in your life. Since you are not enjoying the acceptance you have in Him, you are left to look for it elsewhere. And you are more susceptible to the lies that sexual sin tells you.

My guess is that one of the most revolutionary things I could say to you is that it is possible to live a full, joy-filled, purposeful life and never have sex. In fact, we worship a man who did exactly that. Have you ever thought about the fact that when you pray, you are praying to a 33-year-old virgin?

Or, for those of us who are married, maybe it's not all consuming, maybe it goes the other direction. If you aren't resting in God's acceptance of you, you are unable to receive the acceptance that sex is supposed to bring inside of your marriage. You just cannot be comfortable and lose yourself in the moment because you are so self-conscious.

This instruction is from a father to sons. As sons and daughter, my assumption is that none of us have obeyed. But there is another son who perfectly obeyed His father's wisdom, including sexual wisdom. Jesus lived the perfectly wise life, including sex. Jesus never sinned sexually. And His righteousness is available to each of us by faith. Jesus died, not for His sin but for mine. To accomplish our forgiveness and our cleansing. To purchase our ability to run to God with our sin and not from God. I don't know exactly where everyone is with all this. But don't make your problems worse by running from God. Run to Him.