

Pearls from Proverbs

Living in a Sexual World

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The more powerful the creation, the more powerful the effort by Satan to misdirect it. Herbs and chemical products given to us by God to heal and sooth, Satan misdirects to produce mind-altering, future-destroying drugs. Religion meant to tie us closely to God and His people has been abused to cause division and distortion of God's Word. Sex with the purpose of increasing the bond between a husband and a wife, of unifying and enhancing that singular bond, is abused into instant and destructive self-gratification through promiscuity, homosexuality and pornography. The internet which allows us to connect, learn and create a "smaller planet" is cluttered with addictive pornography. That which the Lord means for powerful good, Satan will try to twist for his evil, deceptive ends.

In a sex-saturated world, you see things on public billboards that would have caused your grandparents to blush and then start a protest! Most secular magazines you pick up will have articles about sex or pictures designed to pull your thoughts toward sexual things. Listen to the radio and you know those words that are "bleeped out" and why. An evening of any network television is filled with sexual innuendo, sexual situations and, well, sex. No doubt, we do live in a sexual world. In fact, the one place we don't talk about sex is the place where we should be learning the most about it—church! Yes, church! One single asked what to do about his sexual temptations. I

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replied, "Have you tried talking to God about it?" "To God? You can't talk to God about stuff like *that!*" he blurted.

But not talking to God about sex would be like not talking to Bill Gates about computers. Who knows more about **sexuality** than its Creator? If we do not talk about it, the silence forces us to look elsewhere for answers and support. Jenell Williams Paris wrote in *Christianity Today*, "When Christians are silent and TV is loud, it's obvious which message will be heard."

The world is screaming sex at us in almost every portal that comes into our lives. And we know that the stuff it's screaming is lie after lie. Illicit sex does not satisfy, it makes us crave more. Pre-marital sex does not fulfill, it leads to stolen dreams, broken emotions, premature/unprepared for "adulthood," aborted relationships and killed infants. Affairs, while promising escape, only entrap. Porn, whether soft core or hard core, degrades and embarrasses all involved. And the homosexual life has been proven unfulfilling and dangerous on numerous fronts.

The truth is that God, the Expert on sex, inspired His writers with truth. "Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex" (Heb. 13:4, The Message). And perhaps the only direct statement made in all three Bible dispensations and by all three members of the godhead instructs that a man and woman are to be joined as one for life! Interestingly enough, every creditable study of human sexuality done in modern times has revealed that those who are most fulfilled and satisfied sexually are those who are monogamous (committed to only one sexual partner), and one sociological study that caused "tremors" among liberals brought into beautiful

light the fact that the people with the greatest and most fulfilled sex lives in America, percentage wise, are "Christians"! (Excuse me, but...Ain't truth great!) *The New York Times* headlined the news this way on October 7, 1994: "Faithfulness In Marriage Thrives After All."

We've got good and solid truth, much needed in a perverse world, but I'll bet you've never heard your preacher get up and say, "I've got a 12-week series starting next Sunday on Song of Solomon." You don't hear that because we have allowed the world to pervert the word *sex*. By not talking about sex to our kids and not honoring it the way we should in marriage, everybody ends up paying. The average marriage today lasts seven years. Somebody needs to be telling the church and the world the truths about sex. And church people want to know. A survey done by John LaRue in *Your Church* magazine revealed that 63% of churchgoers said their preacher only mentions sex once a year in sermons. Less than 1% said they wished the preacher would deal with the subject less than he presently does.

Solomon, with wisdom to spare and inspiration guiding him, was not afraid to tackle the tough subject head-on (Prov. 5-7; 2:16-17; 22:14; 23:27; 30:20). There is so much we can say, so many texts we could deal with, but I want us to focus on these from Proverbs and see what lessons for modern guys and girls we could learn by simply listening to the Wise Man's words here. Some of it will be obvious and some overlapping, but because it's inspired and you're a Christian, even the lessons you might have learned from other sources will be more significant coming from Scripture. Before we dive in, let me remind you of the nature of proverbial materials. We would do well to remember that even the title lets us in on one of the secrets of understanding proverbs. They are

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wise sayings – sayings that are almost always true. There are times when such sayings will not always follow. If the title was not enough, notice the first few verses:

The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people. Let those who are wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. And let those who understand receive guidance by exploring the depth of meaning in these proverbs, parables, wise sayings, and riddles (1:2-6, NLT).

But remember that because these are inspired they take on an even clearer voice of authority as the next verse states clearly: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (1:7, NKJV). So remember, we are dealing with proverbs, but also remember that they are not just homespun wisdom, they are inspired proverbs. And, remember one more important thing, it is wisdom that the writer assumes you want. If you don’t want wisdom, well, these words aren’t for you (in fact, the writer would say you’re a fool), but if you do want wisdom—even about sex, even in a sex-crazed world—this is where to go.

“Wisdom...will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God, For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life” (Prov. 2:12a, 16-19,

NIV). Many a man looking for instant gratification would do well to hear this proverb. I see three significant lessons:

1. The words of sexual sin are seductive. It is this very seductive nature of sexual temptation that makes it so destructive. Satan plays by no fair rules and he has just the temptation recipe to get you to bite. Notice she has “ignored the covenant she made before God.” Man is made to worship and when a society loses faith in God, lesser powers arise to take God’s place. “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God,” said G. K. Chesterton. In America we select our “sexiest” individuals and accord them the status of gods and goddesses, fawning over the smallest details of their lives, surrounding them with *paparazzi*, rewarding them with money and status. Sex becomes a god of its own, a substitution for the sacred, even to the point that otherwise “spiritual” people will rejoice that “Jennifer” is in a new relationship, ignoring the fact that it was and is adulterous. And, point that out, even in a crowd of professing Christians, and you might get your head on a platter (though perhaps not literally, like when John the forerunner of Christ pointed out the sin of the rich and famous of his day).
2. Her house leads down to death. It just doesn’t happen that a person who goes after an adulterous relationship stays in it. Think about it, the relationship is built on deception and dishonesty. How could the man or the woman ever trust this person?

3. No one who goes that way will return to life. I can't remember the person who went after an adulterous affair who returned to the Lord (it might happen, remember these are proverbs), but it will rarely happen.

Proverbs 5:3-23 states:

³The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. ⁴But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. ⁶For she does not care about the path to life. She staggers down a crooked trail and doesn't even realize where it leads.

⁷So now, my sons, listen to me. Never stray from what I am about to say: ⁸Run from her! Don't go near the door of her house! ⁹If you do, you will lose your honor and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life. ¹⁰Strangers will obtain your wealth, and someone else will enjoy the fruit of your labor. ¹¹Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body, ¹²and you will say, "How I hated discipline! If only I had not demanded my own way! ¹³Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to those who gave me instruction? ¹⁴I have come to the brink of utter ruin, and now I must face public disgrace."

¹⁵Drink water from your own well—share your love only with your wife. ¹⁶Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? ¹⁷You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers.

¹⁸Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹She is a

loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. ²⁰Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?

²¹For the Lord sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes. ²²An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him. ²³He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his incredible folly (NLT).

It is hard to know where to start with this rich and pointed passage.

1. (vs. 3) Again, the proverb emphasizes the seductive nature of sexual sin, but this time he adds, quite frankly what we need to really see—it is attractive. Her lips are sweet as honey and her mouth is smoother than oil. If you are a man and still have a pulse, you'd agree with me that they don't get physically unattractive women to serve as models for Victoria's Secret. I think that might be how the Proverbs writer would say it today. They get the girls that will make us look and we are human enough to do it. To make it a little plainer, let me ask you: Can a lipstick commercial be sexual? What we must learn is that physical beauty doesn't ensure a satisfying relationship.
2. (vss. 4-5) The end of adulterous relationships is always bitter. It always leads to more misery. People think it will help them escape frustrations, but it only increases misery.
3. (vs. 6) The obvious but often overlooked fact is that a woman who would have a sexual relationship with a married man has no direction in her life. She does not care about the path of her life. She

will drop you as quickly for the next person as she picked you up. This sort of relationship does not lead to a healthy life.

4. (vss. 7-8) The only thing to do is run! How much clearer can he be? I've heard people who, in their half-repentance or total delusion, think they can stay friends with the person they had an affair with, that they can continue to work with that person. I don't know that you should even stay in the same city! RUN! Get away!
5. (vs. 9) How many people of honor and respect lost it all because of an affair? Even in our promiscuous society, people, even people who aren't Christians, know that in business a person who will cheat on their spouse is not trustworthy in other areas of their life.
6. (vs. 10) "Strangers will obtain your wealth." Can anyone say, "Lawyers' fees"? Frankly, an affair is going to cost you financially. Whether it be in what is lost in a divorce, payment to keep someone from talking, keeping up another woman or some other turn, it will cost!
7. (vs. 11) I don't have all the names of all the sickening diseases that come the way of those who engage in promiscuous lifestyles. If AIDS were the only one, it would be enough, but there are many others. And the word "groan" is entirely appropriate for these diseases.
8. (vss. 12-13) "If only"—the sad, long lament of anyone who has thrown away God's way for immediate pleasure when they knew better. You will not find the person who has seriously considered it who would answer otherwise.

9. (vss. 15-20) This reads more like the Song of Solomon than the Proverbs of Solomon, but for any happily satisfied married man, they ring with a refreshing and pleasurable truth. The writer is emphasizing the importance of maintaining a hearty sex life with your spouse. Every couple should learn these words early in marriage. You see, I can have a healthy relationship with another person in any other way, but it is sex that sets, more than anything else, the relationship with one's spouse apart from and above that of any other aspect. He is rather explicit here—notice “drink deeply,” “delight,” “be captivated.” Sex in God's eyes is neither dirty nor Victorian.

An actor was being interviewed on late-night television. “Tell me,” said David Letterman, “You're a sex symbol who plays all sorts of exciting roles with gorgeous women. How does that compare to your real life, off-screen?” The actor reminded Letterman that he had been happily married for 20 years. Then he said, “Here's the difference in a nutshell. In the movies, life is mostly about sex and occasionally about children. Married life is mostly about children and occasionally about sex.”

Sex is such a powerful force that a young person may have trouble understanding how anything else could ever eclipse it. Most married people, like the actor, will tell you that sex within marriage is neither as easy nor as important as they had imagined before marriage. It expresses intimacy, yes, and provides pleasure. But much of marriage consists in making day-to-day decisions, managing complex careers and schedules, rearing

children, working through differences, figuring out finances, and all the other effort involved in keeping a home running.

Marriage strips away the illusions about sex pounded into us daily by the entertainment media. Few of us live with supermodels. We live with ordinary people, men and women who get bad breath, carry a few extra pounds, have unruly hair, have bad moods, sometimes embarrass us in public, and sometimes pay more attention to our children's needs than our own. We live with people who require tolerance, understanding and an endless supply of forgiveness. So do our partners. Such is the ironic power of sex: It lures us into a relationship that offers to teach us what we need far more – sacrificial love.

10. (vss. 21-23) A healthy reminder to close with – this is not just practical advice (though it is that), it is God's Will. Break God's Law and it will break you! You can't live anyway you want and get by with it!

³²But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. ³³Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased. ³⁴For the woman's husband will be furious in his jealousy, and he will have no mercy in his day of vengeance. ³⁵There is no compensation or bribe that will satisfy him (Prov. 6:32-35, NLT).

I was in Paris recently and saw a large advertisement for cigarettes. In letters as large as the name of the brand in a red box were these words: "Smoking Will Kill You!" The warning in this text is that sort of blunt, clear and forceful warning. The man who is guilty of adultery is an utter fool, he destroys his soul, he has

wounds, he has disgrace, his shame will not dissipate, the spurned husband will be furious and without mercy, and there is no compensation that will make it better. In a day where truth spoken plainly will get you tossed out of polite society, the writer of this text would be booed off the stage. Inspiration rips the façade off what stage and screen make look so fun, so attractive, so intriguing. Men, why not write this one on a 3x5 card and post it on your mirror, on your computer monitor, and keep it handy in your wallet. It doesn't matter how attractive and seductive adultery might seem, it will ruin you in every way!!

Proverbs 7:6-27 states:

⁶At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice. ⁷I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment. ⁸He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house ⁹at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. ¹⁰Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. ¹¹(She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home;

¹²now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.) ¹³She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: ¹⁴"I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. ¹⁵So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you! ¹⁶I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. ¹⁷I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love! ¹⁹My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey.

²⁰He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon." ²¹With

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persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. ²²All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose ²³ till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.

²⁴Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. ²⁵Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. ²⁶Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. ²⁷Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

There is much more of the same needed graphic warnings that are contained in this section but a couple of things might be worth pointing out.

1. First of all, we are impressed with the high pursuit with which evil will pursue us.
2. In verse 14 there is a possible new twist. This woman, we find, uses God to issue her call. Satan will stop at nothing to get you to fall sexually. How many ministries have been brought down by the fall of a spiritual leader sexually? You and I both have seen life after life crumble from its potential as this sin has crept in and overtaken strong men, strong families, strong ministers. We are but dust and God knows that (Psa. 117), so He gave us ample warnings, examples and protection to overcome the flesh (1 Thess. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:9, 18; 7:2-3; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3-5).
3. I cannot count the number of times I've heard people try to justify their adulterous relationship by saying something like: "God

put us together,” or “It feels so right, it can’t be wrong,” or “He/She is my soul mate.” Each of these is a tailor-made fabrication from Satan. After all, if God did “bring them together,” who are any of us to question Him? But God does not bring people into sin, so it is NEVER God that leads one into a sinful relationship. It just seems somebody ought to point that out.

4. There is a popular concept that what one does in the privacy of their own bedroom is their business. The seductress in this passage is betting heavily that her “prey” will buy into that concept. The idea that nobody will find out is seldom true, and even when it is, guilt of anyone trying to live for God is a haunting thing.
5. We might do well here to remember that our society is also one that is laden with pornography. This battle with the pornographic monster is a growing problem across the entire societal grid. The “shelf life” of statistics surrounding porn and its abuse are so short and the numbers so staggering that we will only mention a sampling of a few quite disturbing ones here: 35% of all internet usage is pornographic, and as many as 50% of men have serious struggles in this area. Over 40 millions adults in the U.S. regularly visit porn websites. The porn industry in the U.S. generates 12 billion dollars a year (more than the NFL, NBA, MLB combined). World-wide, this lust driven empire accounts for over 57 billion dollars a year. To put this in perspective, according to *Family Safe Media*,

Microsoft, who sells the operating system used on most of the computers in the world (in addition to other software), reported sales of 36.8 billion in 2004. According to the Justice Department, in 1998, there were 28,000 adult websites. In roughly 3 years that number increased to 280,000. An MSNBC survey in 2000 revealed that about 60% of all web pages are devoted to pornographic materials. Apart from the internet, *Los Angeles Times Magazine* reports that Hollywood currently releases 11,000 adult movies per year—more than 20 times the mainstream movie production. 39 million homes receive the adult channels in scrambled form. One-in-four American adults surveyed in 2002 admitted to seeing an x-rated movie in the last year. 50% of hotel in-room movie rentals are porn movies. The average time a porn movie is watched in a hotel room is 12 minutes. Barna Research says 38% of adults believe it is “morally acceptable” to look at pictures of nudity or explicit sexual behavior. This is a sin that does not just affect those viewing the sexually explicit images but those near them; 41% of surveyed adults admitted they felt less attractive due to their partner’s pornography use. CBS News quoted Luke Ford as saying: “Most girls who enter the porn industry do one video and quit. The experience is so painful, horrifying, embarrassing, humiliating for them that they never do it again.” It’s a problem of growing proportions among those professing Christ. In December of 2000, the National Coalition to Protect Children

and Families surveyed five Christian Campuses to see how the next generation of believers was doing with sexual purity. 48% of males admitted to current porn use. 68% of males said they intentionally viewed a sexually explicit site at the school.

6. Solomon did well in telling us what happened to the young man. Adultery has brought down many a strong person. We need mature, loving people to warn us of the wrong and show us the way to repentance. Let me interject a few thoughts about that here for every young preacher:

- a. First, remember that Satan has a temptation with your name on it! He could rejoice no more than in destroying your influence, taking down lives you've influenced as you fall. He will stop at nothing, he will stoop to any deception, he will allow you any justification, he will provide you opportunity and access to feed the flesh! He has been casting his spell of deception for thousands of years—a cavalier attitude makes for fertile ground (1 Cor. 10:12). As mighty a warrior as David was and as wise a man as Solomon was, both gave into these sins of passion. Guard your heart (Prov. 4:23), set a sentry before your eyes (Psa. 101:3), and if you are married delight in sex with your wife. Protect yourself. Job wrote, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1,

- NIV). Be smart—install good protection software on your office and personal computer, set your computers up in public place, have your wife put a code on any “R” rated or above TV stations. Do what it takes!
- b. Second, remember God is rich in mercy wherewith He loves you. Some of you who read this will fall; some of you have already given in to sexual sin, internet porn and works of the flesh. The Bible is clear—flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18). God already knows your sin (Psa. 90:8) and if you continue you will be caught (Num. 32:23; Luke 8:17). But the good news here is that God will forgive, regardless of how far you have sunk or how dirty and unredeemable you feel. Listen to your own preaching and teaching on the grace of God—He can redeem and restore you to Himself. And you will be eternally grateful.
- c. Third, confess your sin (Jas. 5:16):
- i. If you are married, confess to your wife. The road will be rocky when you do, but if you do not it will drive a wedge between you. I know that it is quite possible that you have turned to this sin because your spouse has unknowingly “defrauded” you. Now, God will not give you a mulligan here. Your sin is not justifiable,

but often young ladies are not taught how powerful the sex drive is in most men. Sadly, this is especially true among Christian girls who grew up being guarded so intensely against sexual sins that they may not understand that God created sex for married people to embrace and enjoy. The sooner you are finally honest and open with your wife, the sooner your life, your marriage and yes, even your sex life, will be better. The frankness of 1 Corinthians 7:2-6 rendered by Peterson in The Message might be especially helpful here:

It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to 'stand up for your rights.' Marriage is a decision to

serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence — only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.

Amen!

- ii. Confess to your elders. There's a risk here, they may fire you, but honestly, you don't need to be at a place that won't forgive sin. Do you? A place that would not want to help you grow in your own spiritual struggles. Be cautious here, but be honest—dishonesty will keep that which is done in the dark, continuing to be done in the dark! Perfect love will cast out your fear—if you are not loved, the problem is not only your sin but the sin of those leaders (1 John 4:18).

We'll close simply by citing three briefer but nonetheless powerful warnings embedded in this book of blessings, warnings and wisdom: "The mouth of an

immoral woman is a deep pit; He who is abhorred by the Lord will fall there" (22:14, NKJV). "For a harlot is a deep pit, And a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, And increases the unfaithful among men" (23:27-28, NKJV). "This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, 'I have done no wickedness'" (30:20, NKJV).

And that is the way of our society. Live as they will and don't let anyone dare judge them or question them. They, in their mind, have done no wickedness. Don't be a fool and fall for them in their lifestyle. You as a Christian have the responsibility to listen to God's Wisdom on sex and not be deceived by society and Satan. Paul says that God's grace has appeared and it has taught us to live different than the world (Tit. 2:11-13). Let us live in the Light (1 Thess. 5:8; Rom. 13:12; Col. 1:12; 1 John 1:7).

You are not alone in the struggle, either personally or with those you are trying to help mature (Matt. 28:20). God will not allow you to face more than you can handle (1 Cor. 10:13). I thank God for you and your service to Him. May God bless you.

You and you alone can know your private life. Don't be a fool, protect it.

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