

Good morning.

I'm going to be reading from Proverbs 5.

My son, pay attention to my wisdom.

Listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge.

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil.

But in the end, she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death.

Her steps lead straight to the grave.

She gives no thought to the way of life.

Her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.

Now then, my sons, listen to me.

Do not turn aside from what I say.

Keep a path far from her.

Do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man's house.

At the end of your life, you will groan when your flesh and body are spent.

You will say, how I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction,

I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors.

I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.

Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares,

Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

A loving doe, a graceful deer, may her breast satisfy you always.

May you ever be captivated by her love.

Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?

Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.

The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him.

The cords of his sin hold him fast.

He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

Let's pray one more time before we unpack this passage this morning.

I also just need to pray for myself this morning so that we can get focused on what God has for us from this passage today.

Heavenly Father, I do just ask that you would help me and all of us, but I'm feeling it right now, Lord, the grace to stay focused and quiet our minds and our hearts so that we can fix our eyes on you today.

Lord, we do want to, before we open your word, thank you for the ways that we've seen your hand at work, even in our congregation today and this past week.

Lord, we do thank you for showing Seth mercy and bringing him out of the coma that very few thought he would ever come out of.

Lord, we're grateful for your healing mercy in his life, even miraculous healing mercy in his life.

And Lord, we just ask that you would now do the miracle that only you can do in his heart of turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh and bringing him out of death and into life.

And so, Lord, we just ask for Chris that you give her the words to say.

Lord, that you'd bring others into his life.

path even this week to share the good news of the gospel with him, Lord, and we ask that he would respond to that.

Lord, we also lift up Steve O'Dell going in for brain surgery tomorrow morning.

Lord, we ask that you would guide the doctor's hands and that you would be merciful to him as they perform the surgery.

Lord, we pray for John and Stephanie and the rest of the family for just peace, knowing that Steve's ultimately in your hands and

that you're caring for him.

And Lord, we do ask for a successful and quick surgery.

Lord, we ask for surgery on our hearts today as we open up this passage.

Lord, I just feel the weight.

You've been hearing it read again this morning of the needs of your people.

Many of us, single, married, widowed, divorced, a lot of different needs.

being met out of this passage today, Lord.

And it's not me that's meeting them.

Lord, we know that you are meeting the needs of your people through the preaching of your word.

So we ask that you would do that, that you would take this five loaves and two fish and that you would feed your people with it.

And Lord, that you would do what you need to do to bring us into conformity to the image of your son.

Pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

There's a conflict, pretty much as old as time, that's driven a lot of great literature for thousands of years, and it's still fueling a lot of our music and streaming content these days.

It's this tension between form and freedom, or this tension between law and liberation, or structure and progressivism.

Another way to put it would be a tension between rules and fun.

And we all, with our different personalities and upbringings, tend to take a side in this tension or in this conflict that we see happening kind of around us and in us.

Conservatives tend to embrace form, structure, control, especially when it comes to sex.

Liberals tend to embrace freedom, openness, and choices, especially when it comes to sex.

I just want to say that I think this passage shows us today that both are on to something.

that both see part of the truth.

The gospel shows us the complete truth.

Sex is a gift from God that both focuses and unleashes our romantic joy.

This focusing and unleashing serves to intensify our romantic joy.

Human beings are meant to flourish in both form and freedom.

We're meant to live in both.

Ray Ortlund puts it this way, especially in regards to our chapter.

He says,

Sex is like fire.

In the fireplace, it keeps us warm.

Outside the fireplace, it burns the house down.

Proverbs 5 is saying, keep the fire in the marital fireplace and stoke that fire as hot as you can.

Or maybe a little less vividly this morning, by God's design, we are to passionately pursue sexual intimacy within marriage and run from sexual intimacy inside.

outside of marriage.

All right, so Solomon's basically telling his son to do three things, or he's encouraging his son to do three things this morning, to look close, to keep away, and to drink deep.

All right, first he wants his son to look close.

Look close and to see the adulteress for who she is.

Look at verses one to three of chapter five.

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

And her speech is smoother than oil.

So kind of the first character that Solomon's introducing us to in this address.

Remember, first nine chapters of Proverbs, nine addresses that are meant to entice us or motivate us to get wisdom.

This is address number five.

Five, yes, number five, because they get out of order.

And so this whole chapter is one address, and we're introduced to this adulterous woman that he's kind of alluded to before.

He's addressing his teenage son, his young adult son, again, and he's basically telling him to listen up.

It's kind of unclear, and you'll see why in chapter 7, whether or not this young son is married or single, or engaged, possibly engaged, anticipating engagement.

But what is clear is that this forbidden woman isn't necessarily forbidden because the son's married, but she's clearly married herself and therefore forbidden.

We'll see that again a little later in this chapter, but also in chapter 7.

And Solomon describes her vividly.

He describes her almost as bitter honey.

She looks and sounds seductive.

She's really pleasing in the moment.

Her lips drip honey.

Her speech is smoother than oil.

But he also quickly follows that up with, her end is wormwood, which tastes bitter, and as sharp as a sword, which is deadly.

Her life-ruining deadliness is underscored in verses 5 and 6.

The point being here, though, sexual temptation, adultery in particular, is deceptive and not what it seems.

By nature, sexual sin and sexual temptation is not what it seems.

It seems sweet on the outside, but kills and is bitter on the inside.

The pleasure that she's offering in the moment is quickly replaced by bitterness and destruction.

I mean, we see this all the time, don't we?

We don't need Solomon to tell us this.

Well, we might need him to tell us this this morning, but we've observed it.

We've even observed it this past couple weeks at a Coldplay concert with the Astronomer's CEO calling on Kiss Cam.

And now he's facing a \$50 million divorce, family's falling apart.

I mean, his net worth is a fraction of what it was before, all in a couple weeks, right?

All in a couple weeks.

We see the destruction.

We know it's real.

And yet...

we still see affairs happening again and again and again, which is why Solomon tells his son to keep away, right?

Not just look close, not just see it for what it is, but keep away.

He literally says in verse eight, keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house.

Verse eight, there's no direct command in this chapter.

You'll notice if you read it carefully.

There's no direct command to not commit adultery.

That is elsewhere in scripture, by the way, 10 commandments, in case you need a refresher.

But there's no command here in this chapter specifically to not commit adultery.

Rather, the command that he's giving his son is to keep away.

Don't get anywhere near it.

Don't go near the forbidden woman or ladies, the forbidden men.

Again, this is particularly addressed to sons, but we've talked at the beginning of Proverbs that these principles for life apply everywhere.

to men and women, which means literally, and just a big interpretive work for you this morning.

When Solomon says, keep your way far from her, he literally means stay away.

Like literally, it's not metaphorical.

It's not poetry here that's meant to be interpreted some different way in your life.

Literally, don't go near them.

Don't spend time with them.

Keep your emotional distance.

If you have to work with them, it might be time for a new job.

It's that serious.

How do you know though?

All right, so how do I know if it's that serious, right?

And I gotta run away and I gotta maybe make some radical cuts in my life.

How do I know like which person I need to keep that kind of distance from?

Like, are we supposed to go running away like Joseph from Potiphar's wife, from everybody that we find attractive?

I don't think that's what Solomon's talking about here, but here's a few diagnostic questions.

Are you looking forward to seeing that person again?

Do you find yourself anticipating, looking forward to seeing them again?

Are you sharing things with this person that you wouldn't share with most other people?

Are there things that you have talked about or done with this person that you wouldn't want to tell your spouse or their spouse?

If you've answered yes to any of those questions,

It's time to put some distance between you and them.

And I would get godly counsel as to exactly how much distance you need to put between you and them because your heart is going to deceive you.

Your heart's going to tell you one or two steps is okay when really you need to be running the opposite direction.

And if running sounds radical, Solomon tells us what is guaranteed to happen if we don't run.

He says your honor, your strength, your wealth,

will be dispersed.

Look at verses 9 to 10.

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.

This is just practical wisdom.

Adultery often ends in divorce.

alimony payments, child support, years of your strength and your attention being divided between two parties and their loved ones and their families, by the way, whom you've wronged and are not in the mood to treat you with mercy and compassion.

Solomon says, mark my words, if you don't believe, if you don't believe me, you will one day confess yourself in public,

that you only have yourself to blame.

Look at verses 11 to 14.

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'm at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.

Adultery always comes to light publicly.

You will not get away with it, especially if you continue in it, and there's always public consequences.

So listen up.

Don't sleep with someone who's not your spouse.

It's not worth it.

It's fool's gold.

Now, does that mean that if we follow God, we're doomed to a boring, frustrated life?

No, thank you, Kirk, for a number of reasons.

One of them being...

One of them being that there's a second command in this passage.

And the second command is to drink deep, right?

To drink deep.

Look at verses 15 to 18.

This drink deep command comes within the context of a metaphor of a well and fountain.

Look at verses 15 to 18.

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.

The basic message here for those of us that are Neanderthals, we just need to hear it simplified, right?

Sex is good.

Have sex with your spouse.

Basic command here.

Basic instructions.

But Solomon communicates that with some vivid imagery, doesn't he?

First, he likens our desire for sex with our desire for water.

Now, we know it's not the same.

You die without water, you don't die without sex.

However...

Both our desire for water and our desire for sex are satisfied with physical things.

He's saying the place to satisfy your desire for sex is within the bounds of marriage, the commitment of marriage.

But again, that's a tame way to put it.

Solomon's imagery is much more intense than that.

He uses these images of well and cistern.

A cistern was like a pear-shaped hole in the ground where they kept water.

And well and sister are typically used to describe female sexuality, while the fountain is typically used to describe male sexuality.

Solomon's painting a not-so-subtle picture here of the marital bed.

This is passionate language, right?

It's intense language meant to push us towards full satisfaction within marriage.

This passion and intensity is exclusive because exclusivity means

is essential to great sex.

Look at verses 16 and 17.

Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you.

There's some debate over what Solomon means here by your springs.

Some would argue that it's kids or that it's like wives.

I think if you just stop, sometimes you can lose the forest for the trees.

I think if you just take a step back and look at the whole of what he's saying,

that springs here is kind of your sexual vitality, your sexual passion, that connection that you have with somebody who you're intimately involved with sexually.

Don't spread that around.

Why should that be spread in the streets, as you said?

Why would you want to spread your desire, your passion around?

Keep it focused in the marriage bed.

Also, verse 17 is communicating the psychological and the spiritual reality that there's a union that happens, a uniting that happens when you're sleeping around.

And those people whom you slept with are sharing a part of your sexuality.

They're sharing a part of you as you give that to your spouse or other person.

So bottom line, keep it exclusive.

like keep it exclusive with your spouse.

Exclusivity provides safety and security, and safety and security make room for trust and freedom emotionally and physically, which is why when our relationships are working right, God expects great sex within our marriages.

Look at verses 18 and 19.

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

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

Now, verse 18, rejoice in the wife of your youth, doesn't mean that you have to have a young woman as your wife for these verses to apply, right?

He's saying, remember the good things.

Remember the history that you have together.

When there's a committed relationship, especially over time, there's history there.

There's a built-up connection.

Lydia and I have over 16 years of history together.

We've been married for 16 years.

She pointed out when I was kind of talking about this with her that we have more history because we were dating beforehand, but 16 years, that's what I'm going with.

Over 16 years, right?

There's a knowingness and a depth to our intimacy that you'll never have sleeping around.

And it's not boring, right, for a number of reasons.

One of them being, though, that Lydia and I are different people now than we were 16 years ago.

You know, I think one of the knocks on marriage is like, oh, what, are you going to sleep with the same woman for the next 30, 40 years of your life?

No, she's not the same woman that she was 16 years ago.

We're very different, right?

But there's also continuity because she kind of is the same woman, right?

There's that continuity of a shared life together, all the things that God has blessed us with through our marriage that unite those differences.

Our romance is different now than it was 16 years ago.

And I would say for the better.

We're not cars.

We're not cars that are as good as they'll ever be when you drive them off the lot.

So when you're bored with one, the worn out one, you just kick it to the street and trade it in for a new one.

Rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Now, how does he say to rejoice in the wife of your youth?

Like I said, we preach expositionally here.

I got to take all the lines.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight.

Let me just point out a few things.

One, fill you.

Let her breasts fill you with delight.

God expects and desires quality, satisfying sex for your marriage at all times.

God expects and desires a high quantity of physical delight

and sex within your marriage, for your marriage.

And then with delight.

God is not instructing married couples here to have sex for the purpose of procreation.

Not here.

Kids are a happy result of sex, but that's not the purpose of sex in this passage.

Sex is for our joy and the good of our relationships, and when marital sex is working properly, we glorify God.

You know, the Puritans have a reputation for being prudes because they took adultery and lust and sexual immorality very seriously.

But nobody seems to talk about how a Puritan woman in Massachusetts brought her husband before the elders for neglecting his conjugal responsibilities.

He was eventually excommunicated.

I would love to be a fly on the wall for some of those meetings, just especially in Puritan culture, Old English.

Love to be a part of those meetings.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7, 4, and 5, what I'm driving at here is that this is a command, drink deep, right?

These are instructions that Solomon is giving to a married couple.

The wife does not have authority, Paul says, over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Do not deprive one another.

This doesn't mean that you can't tell your husband you're tired or not feeling well.

We need to also factor in Ephesians 5 where husbands are told to sacrificially love their wives and give up their own desires for her good.

Also, the authority is going both ways, right?

So the husband has authority over his wife's body, but the wife has authority over her husband's body.

So there is an expected communication here.

It's not saying that you can just demand things without communication and the relationship involved.

What it does mean, though, is that sex isn't a bargaining chip in the relationship.

Sex is not a tool for manipulation to get what you want in the relationship.

That cheapens it and ruins it.

Also, if there's a lack of freedom sexually within the relationship, that's an indicator, kind of like a canary in the coal mine,

that something's up within the relationship and that needs to be explored and cared for, right?

So if our physical relationship is lacking, there may be a physical explanation for it, but there also might be a spiritual or an emotional explanation for it that needs to be explored and cared for.

Sex here is to be freely given and enjoyed.

That's the point of the passage.

One last note on verse 19.

It says, "'Be intoxicated always in her love.'"

This is pretty much the only time in the book of Proverbs that intoxicated or led astray is another way to interpret this, is used to refer to something good.

It's almost always referring to something bad.

One commentator says that there's something almost naughty about the way it's being used here.

The point is, the point I think of that phrase is lose the script, right?

Let yourself go.

It's okay, it's even expected here to be crazy in love.

And guys, this is me not God speaking.

You know how Paul says, this is me, not the Lord.

This is me, not the Lord.

But guys, if you want your wife to lose the script in bed, maybe you should lose the script beforehand.

Maybe instead of plopping down on the TV, or turning it down on the TV, but on the couch and turning it on the TV.

Maybe you should put a record on the old turntable and give your wife a little dance around the living room.

My wife's always asking me for this, so I need to preach it to myself here, right?

Or when was the last time you wrote her a love letter and brought her some flowers for no reason?

With the history and the familiarity, sometimes we get into a rut, we get into a routine, we've got a script of these things that we just do for one another.

Lose the script, right?

Stay...

crazy in love with one another.

The point is, within the structure of marriage, let it go.

Be free.

There should be nothing holding you back.

We do have this form, but there's great freedom within the form.

Now, there should be nothing holding us back, but too often there is.

Statistics say that some of us in this room are caught up in adulterous relationships right now.

And if you are, I just want to leave you with Solomon's final warning here in the chapter.

Look at verses 21 to 23.

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.

Marital fidelity isn't just practical and a great and enjoyable thing

though Solomon goes to great pains to lay out how it is.

But the Lord will judge infidelity.

And listen, I can't promise that if you confess and repent that your marriage will survive, though I'm sure it's not doing well right now with your secret.

I can't promise that this won't dramatically upend your life.

But God promises that if we confess our sins,

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He promises that you'll live, right?

That you'll live eternally.

You are not promised that if you willfully continue in sin and hide the truth.

So I'm pleading with you today to reach out.

We will help you repent and turn back to the Lord.

Your soul is at stake.

Maybe you haven't committed adultery, but past sexual sin is haunting you, robbing your joy and freedom.

All of us, all of us, and hear this, because I don't want anyone feeling like they're on the outskirts today looking in, especially if you have repented and confessed your sin.

All of us are broken sexually.

We're broken sexually because of our own sin, and sometimes because of the sin of others against us.

We all have disordered sexual desires and need the Lord to transform our sexuality.

This is an ideal, right?

This is an ideal.

And I know for a lot of us that the end of chapter five here is like the furthest thing from our mind in our marriage is that we really struggle with physical intimacy

because of sins that have been committed against us or because of our own past sin history.

I get that.

But this can be you through the gospel, right?

There can be great freedom and restoration and redemption for you in all areas of your life through the gospel.

Because in the gospel, the good news is that Christ died for his bride, the church, to wash her and cleanse her

and to present her spotless before the Lord.

Martin Luther puts it this way, Faith unites the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her bridegroom.

From such a marriage, as St.

Paul says, it follows that Christ and the soul hold things in common, meaning they share things, whether for better or worse.

This means that what Christ possesses belongs to the believing soul, and what the soul possesses belongs to Christ.

Thus Christ possesses all good things and holiness.

These now belong to the soul.

The soul possesses lots of vices and sin.

These now belong to Christ.

Now is not this a happy business?

Christ, the rich and noble and holy bridegroom, takes in marriage this poor, contemptible, and sinful little prostitute.

Takes away all her evil and bestows all his goodness upon her.

It is no longer possible for sin to overwhelm her, for she is now found in Christ.

And as we come to the table this morning,

It's very fitting to come to the table even after this message.

We need to thank the Lord that all of the shame and the guilt and the bad memories that condemn us before God and hinder our freedom and our marriages is shared with Christ.

He bears it.

He knows it.

I want to encourage you as you take communion this morning to just lay them at his feet.

to lay them at his feet as you take the bread in the cup and you commune with him, knowing that all of his joy and his freedom and his spotlessness is shared with you and is yours today.

I'm going to ask the men to come forward as I close this in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we first thank you

for the gift of sex and the intimacy that we experience and know through your good gift.

Lord, we're thankful that the love that we have in Christ as our bridegroom is far greater than any sexual experience we'll ever have.

Lord, we're thankful for the intimacy that we can have with our maker through Jesus.

And Lord, we're especially grateful for the way that you made for us to enter into that relationship.

And we're thankful for the sacrifice that your son made to cleanse us and wash us and to present us holy and blameless before you as his bride.

So Lord, as we remember that today, would you stir our hearts to love and trust you more

Would you stir our hearts to a deeper love for our spouses and for one another?

And would you be glorified?

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.