

Proverbs 7 – July 5, 2020 – John Morrison

Young men who hold tightly their father's warnings and teachings will grow in wisdom if they avoid the adulteress and the death accompanying her.

I. Introduction

7:1-5

A. Audience

"My son" – Just as since Proverbs 1, this is written to the king's son as a message of life-wisdom for young people. While it applies to us all, it is especially written for young men and women who are in the life-stage of determining whether to follow wisdom or foolishness as they pursue adult life. No longer under "forced control" as they were as young children, these youths must decide if they will heed correction and instruction or go the way of foolishness.

B. Advice

7:1-4

... **keep my words** and **treasure my commandments** within you. **Keep my commandments** and live, and my **teaching as the apple of your eye**. **Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart**. Say to **wisdom**, "**You are my sister**," and **call understanding your intimate friend**.

1. **Keep my words (in you).** Listen. Remember. Personalize. Heed.
All of Proverbs is predicated on the idea that those whom it addresses will make a choice whether they will listen. This is **not** a book of outward control. It is a book of wisdom and foolishness battling for the *inward* control of young people.
2. **Treasure my commands within you.** Make my commands precious to you.
This is part of the choice to listen. Will the listener "consider as precious" (high value) parents' commands, teachings and words (1:8)? Wise parents remember it is *in the listener* to decide to treasure these things. You can't do it for them – hardest thing for parents of Young Adults.
3. **Keep my commands and (with the result that you) live.** Obey these and reap life.
The listener is again enjoined (cf., 4:4) to remember and recall these things in their own heart, since parents will not be around as they make important decisions. One weakness on the part of youth is that they often fail to see cause-and-effect. They have a hard time seeing how seemingly small decisions now determine their future. This little promise ("and live") lets them know that wisdom → life but foolishness → death (see 7:24-27).
4. **(Keep) my teachings as the apple of your eye.** See these teachings as dear to you.
The verb "keep" is understood as included since this phrase is connected to the previous clause by "and." This restates "treasure" as an emphasis... It is "center of a thing."
5. **Bind them on your fingers** – maybe a ring; maybe tefillin, but it seems early for that.
Most likely a ring – like a promise ring that reminds you who you are bound to. This is the first of a pair of commands to remember these teachings metaphorically. Some commentators wonder if the author meant Jewish "tefillin" (phylacteries) that were tied on the arm and down onto the middle finger to remember commands. But there is little evidence that this practice in Jesus' day was present 900 years prior. Perhaps it's more like wearing a promise ring that reminds you to not stray from your eventual marriage partner by pursuing sexual relationships outside marriage.
6. **Write them on the tablet of your heart.** Memorize these commands.
This is a fairly common expression (cf., 3:3) meaning to memorize so that it becomes part of you, so that it is available to draw from when the temptation comes your way.

7. **Say to wisdom, “sister.”** *Consider wisdom someone to love and protect.*
The first of a two-part expression of personalizing the relationship between yourself and wisdom. When a relationship becomes dear to you, you are less likely to violate it. In this case, Solomon advises that the young man think of wisdom as a sister – someone he is to love, protect and hold in esteem. He is less likely to violate it.
8. **Call understanding, “intimate friend.”** *See understanding as someone you trust.*
In this second part of personalizing into a relationship wisdom/understanding, the listener is again enjoined to see understanding God’s commands and a father’s wisdom as if they were a life-saving good friend (which they are). Just as a person is less likely to go against a good friend, so the young man who sees understanding in this light is less likely to disregard it, but preserver and guard it.

C. Result

7:5

That they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words.

Wisdom and understanding have the power to rescue you from falling prey to readily available sexual sin that kills. Here a father’s teaching (cf., 3:1) produces wisdom and understanding, which guard a young man from falling prey to a seductive, flattering temptress (remember warnings in chapter 5). Verse 5 is a “net value” kind of statement, announcing the gain a young man can expect if he follows the advice of verses 1-4. If he listens, if he treasures, if he keeps, if he remembers, his father’s teachings (which reflect God’s teachings), if he regards wisdom and understanding as close and intimate friends to value and protect, he will be protected from the path of death frequented by those who pursue sexual immorality - especially that which entices a young man by its availability, ego stroke and ease.

D. Summary of verses 1-5

Wise sons will love, keep, treasure, and obey from their hearts their father’s commands and teachings, making wisdom and understanding their close friends. The result will be that they will live, part of which will include avoiding the adulteress who leads to death.

II. The Naïve Fool

7:6-9

A. A Spiritually Unprepared Naïve Young Man

For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the naive, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness. (NAS)

- B. These four verses introduce the “victim,” the unprepared young man (naïve) from among many young men, who represents a young man who didn’t listen to his father’s warnings. He is naïve, young and lacking sense, devoid of understanding.
 1. As has already been introduced, there are different types and levels of fools. The naïve fool is one who is often uninstructed, and is not yet a committed fool. He has not chosen the path of wisdom, and is in a place he can go either of two ways. This story shows what happens when they go the “easy, unguarded” path. **At first**, he seems he could go either way.
 2. Also notice that it is at “twilight - evening,” then “middle of the night,” and “darkness.” These words both portray time passing (he is fumbling around looking for mischief from evening’s twilight to the darkest middle of the night) and also function as a theological literary device to characterize sin that overtakes us as often belonging to the realm of the night/dark and being progressive. This is in contrast to the one who “sees him out of the window, the lattice” of his house, symbolizing the protection of light, home and hearth – e.g., dad’s instructions.

- C. **We are learning by observing.** Rather than have to experience the results of foolishness, we can learn by seeing the decisions and results of others' lives. This fits into the concept throughout Proverbs that wisdom (1:20) calls aloud (i.e., is visible) in the streets.

III. Seductress

7:10-21

A. **Adultery, sexual sin is on the prowl, readily available**

7:10-20

And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home; she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner. So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face she says to him:

"I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows. Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, He has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home."

1. **She comes out to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart – 7:10**
Adultery or sexual sin is on the prowl, makes people feel special, and shows itself as available and loose. Those offering sexual sin often wield it in a clever way.
2. **Boisterous and Rebellious and her feet do not remain at home - 7:11**
Sexual sin is often (not always) made available in a context of the bon vivant, devil-may-care, partying, loud, bold manner. Adultery and sexual sin leave the home life, leave the place that we belong.
3. **Now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner - 7:12**
Adultery and sexual sin are available everywhere, looking for whom they can trap.
4. **She seizes and kisses him and with a brazen face, speaks: 7:13**
One thing that often (not always) characterizes adultery and sexual sin is the bold first move – a person may have themselves in a place where something could happen (as does this naïve young man), but they are often not the one who makes the aggressive first move that makes this go in the adulterous direction.
5. **I was due to offer peace offerings and have paid my vow 7:14**
She implies that she is a good person. After all, she is religious and “tipped her hat” to the Lord. She appears religious on the outside and lives like hell.
6. **Therefore I have come to meet you, seek you and have found you 7:15**
Again we see the desirability in which the adulterous holds him (feeding the ego and removing the fear of rejection) and her first move inviting the naïve into sin. , The magic of the relationship – *look, it's a perfect circumstance* – is a common thread in adultery. It is somehow superior to the old run-of-the-mill home life.
7. **I've spread my bed/couch with fine linens and a perfumed ambience 7:16-17**
This is part of the enticement. Like movies or advertisements showing sexual immorality, there is often a perfect ambience making sin even more desirable.
8. **Let us drink our fill of love and delight ourselves in caresses 7:18**
Here she pitches the close of the deal. She could have been playing the song, “*Let's get it on*” on the speaker on her car radio. In a marriage relationship, this would be fine and good. But in an immoral relationship, the offer is always that we will be filled up to overflowing with sexual release, intimacy and joy.
9. **My husband won't be back until the full moon. 7:19-20**
In case there is any hesitation, she wisely calculates it would be his fear of being caught. Here she assures him that sexual sin can be had without risk, without any cause for fear. It totally ignores God.

B. Conclusion **7:21**

With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him.

Adultery persuades, entices, flatters and successfully seduces him. She is personified as something like a fisherman who catches its fish. She **persuades**... sexual sin will seem *reasonable*. She **entices**... like the fruit in the garden, it will *appeal to the lusts* of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life. She **flatters**... *sexual sin makes people feel wanted and desirable*. She seduces (lead away from) him to abandon what he knows is best.

IV. Death **7:22-27**

A. Trapped **7:22-23**

Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, Until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.

1. Suddenly he is ensnared like an ox to slaughter or a fool in fetters (chains)
It happens without warning, when he doesn't see it coming. He is on his way to slaughter without knowing it, and he is unable to escape it.
2. This idea is like Proverbs 5:22 (*held with the cords of his own sin*).
3. Until he is pierced through in a vital organ or ensnared like a bird who does it to himself, he doesn't know the consequence of his activity will be death.
4. One of the peculiarities of those who fall into sexual sin is that in spite of the clarity of this warning, those who fall invariably know about these principles and walk headlong into it anyway.
5. Sexual sin invariably contains so many of these elements:
 - Easily available
 - Wander into it
 - Plays with their ego and makes them feel wanted

B. Warned **7:24-27**

1. *Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.*

2. The chapter ends with the father pulling back out of the story of the young man, reminding him (as well as other young men – **sons**) that this is only a story – albeit an accurate one – and says on the basis of the reality that this is what happens,

- LISTEN – heed my words
 - PAY ATTENTION – take this seriously
 - DO NOT TURN ASIDE TO HER WAYS – don't pursue sexual sin
 - DO NOT STRAY INTO HER PATHS – don't wander carelessly into it either
3. The reason is that she (*adultery, sexual sin, foolishness in the sexual area*) ends the life of many young men. Her home is on the way to the place of the dead, like a battlefield strewn with bodies of those she has victimized.
- It is important for us to remember is that death doesn't always mean physical death. Sometimes you will wish it did. There are things worse than physical death – especially for a believer in Christ. "Death" as depicted here (slaughter, arrow piercing liver, Sheol) can mean literal spiritual death for an unbeliever who traffics in these things, but for the believer, it means that we can experience separation from the Lord, from ourselves, from those we love.

VI. Open Discussion

VII. Follow-Up Suggestions

- A. Do business with God if there is any existing sexual sin in your life
 - 1. Identify where you are in this story – leaving your house, looking around, walking towards possible sexual sin, offering it to someone else, going to the house where sexual sin occurs. Wherever you are, repent – change direction. Go back “home.” Confess where needed. Pursue the Lord and set up gaits to protect you from you.
 - 2. If you have been hurt by others who have participated in this story – guard against despair, bitterness, unforgiveness and self-righteousness, the most common sins when sinned against in this way. If you see one of those, go to the Lord. Determine with his help (He will provide it) where your sin lies, and repent. Confess where needed and renew your confidence in Him and in His holy purposes for you.
- B. Remind yourself of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus covering your guilt (Colossians 2:14) in the event that sexual sin of the past haunts you.
- C. Pursue sexual integrity – seek resources like PPP (*Pursuing Personal Purity*) that can help you live purely in the Lord in the sexual realm. By His hand, it is possible, and Christians who doubt that usually doubt it because they have taken their eye off His word and have seen so much sexual sin that it occupies their thoughts and focus rather than Christ.
- D. Read Appendix One
- E. Read Appendix Two if it applies.

APPENDIX ONE: The Bait of Temptation

By Steve Gallagher

http://www.purelifeministries.org/E-Newsletters/Exclusive_Articles/2005/Aug20_Bait_Of_Temptation.htm

Gladys Decker tried to remain calm but it was useless. She knew full well the high stakes involved. Facing the opportunity of a lifetime, she could lose the entire savings her late husband had left her if the plan backfired. On the other hand, the possibilities of such a lucrative return held her in a state of breathless and fixed exhilaration.

Charles Ponzi had told Gladys that a \$55,000 investment with his Securities Exchange Company would yield her a 50% return within 45 days—a quick profit of \$27,500! She could afford a brand new Model T Ford! Maybe she would even buy one of those grand houses on the north side of Boston! Gladys' growing feeling that she would miss such an opportunity quickly drowned out her nagging concerns. "I'll go to the bank today!" she announced to herself. Unfortunately, Gladys Decker would never see her life savings again. She, along with ten thousand other unwitting souls, had been taken in by what later became known as the Ponzi Scheme.^[1]

The success of Charles Ponzi's charade can be directly attributed to his genius at manipulating people. Exuding a quiet confidence, he understood that in order to get people to give him their money, he would have to deftly manage their conflicting emotions of fear and greed. Ponzi had a way of using words to throw such a false light on the subject that people would lose their ability to perceive the inherent dangers in the investment.

While soothing away their fears with his charm, he simultaneously fanned the flames of their insatiable lust for instant gain. He knew the best way to quiet a person's suspicions was to dangle the anticipated payoff before their eyes—the proverbial carrot. The hidden inner workings of greed would do the rest.

The story of Charles Ponzi is a very poignant illustration of how Satan coaxes people into sin; for with every temptation always come the same basic components.

First, there is the tempter. Gladys Decker, though clearly naïve, was in no danger of losing her savings until a slick conman named Charles Ponzi came along. The enemy of our souls is also quite adept at timing his temptation. His devils will often leave a man alone for a period of time. The man might even become confident in the belief that he has overcome sinful habits of the past. Then, when the enemy sees the opportunity, he will set his wicked plan into motion. No wonder the apostle Paul warned his readers to prepare themselves for such times. "Put on the full armor of God," he told the Ephesians, "so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." (6:11)

I believe we underestimate the enemy's vast knowledge of a person's inner life. For example, he knows when a married man's hormones are raging because he has not had relations with his wife for a period of time. He will often wait to spring his trap until the man becomes highly sensitized to sexual stimuli or perhaps when he is alone and vulnerable.

Demons are also proficient at preparing people for susceptibility to temptation. For instance, a demon might bring discouraging circumstances into a man's life, knowing this will weaken his resolve to withstand temptation. The enemy will also use sexual influences to prepare a victim for temptation. He might even arrange an elaborate array of situations—an explicit scene on television, a scantily dressed girl next door, etc.—to weaken a man morally before introducing the real temptation.

Although devils are masters at luring people into sin, they must first have something desirable to offer. In order to get a person to take their bait, they must offer something he already wants. Ponzi masterfully played on Gladys' own greed to entice her to give him money.

The enemy understands that different people are prone to different temptations. James said, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his *own lust*.” (James 1:14) Every human being has a unique fallen nature with its “own lust.” Each person’s flesh is drawn to different types of sin. A man may have no attraction to cocaine but be overwhelmingly fascinated by sexual things. A woman may have no desire for immorality but be easily led into envy or gossip. The enemy knows his prey and sets before him just the right piece of bait.

Lastly, falsehood and deceit always accompany the bait. Charles Ponzi knew that dangling the carrot in front of Gladys would not, in itself, be enough to coax her to action. He also had to present a plausible scenario of profit—all done with “smoke and mirrors,” of course. In my book, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*, I described the deceptive presentation of sin:

“Solomon said, ‘For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and smoother than oil is her speech,’ (Proverbs 5:3). This phrase describes how the devil presents temptation. Honey represents promised fulfillment. The temptation seems irresistible because it is laced with the deception that the act of sin will bring about tremendous pleasure and satisfaction. The tantalizing thought is presented, all is forgotten and the act of sexual sin looks absolutely intoxicating and therefore irresistible. The smooth oil represents the craftiness of the enemy... Fully camouflaged and extremely calculating, they launch the perfect illusion, timing each consecutive attack ‘to steal, and kill, and destroy’ God’s property.”

Every temptation will undoubtedly have these same three components: the tempter, the bait and the accompanying lies. Believers can prepare themselves to successfully face the enemy’s allurements toward sin by watching out for this wicked trio. When they show up at your doorstep together, you should know you are about to be tested. I conclude this article with the following words from Alexander MacLaren:

“So, dear friend, these two stand before you. On one side the Sorceress with a smile on her lips, a lie on her tongue, and a knife in her sleeve. Do not go into her house. ‘The dead are there; and her guests are in the depths of Hell.’ On the other side stands Jesus Christ who has died to ‘redeem our souls from’ her ‘deceit and violence’; and trusting in whom we may all say: ‘My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and I am escaped.’”

A Helpful Path for Moving from Lust to Holiness

John Morrison

Choose one of these steps each day and use the verses mentioned as a source of study and devotional reflections between you and the Lord. Realize this is not an “eight day plan to sexual freedom.” It is rather something you may have to keep doing for a while until God breaks the bond of inappropriate sexual urge – then keep vigilant. Be encouraged: it is possible to live free of sexual sin and to not miss it!

Step One - Admission

Acknowledge to myself and to God that I am unsuccessful on my own in overpowering my urges towards lust and see them for what they are. They are an affront to God, to my wife or future wife, to my children, to the object of my lust and to her family members. See it as sin and do not minimize it (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Hebrews 13:4). Accept where you are. (Romans 7:15-21). This is not accept as in, “Oh well, here I go again” or “boys will be boys” but as in a mourning recognition that you really need God to work in your life (2 Corinthians 7:8-11, Matthew 5:4). It is a step of repentance. Realize that if you are able even to do this, God is to be thanked and given credit for working in you. Why? Even the conviction “this is wrong” and the ability to respond with a repentant heart is itself a gift of God (John 16:8-11, 2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Step Two - Avoidance

Take steps of “making no provision for the flesh” and “fleeing youthful lusts.” Choose to turn from the places and times you are likely to have opportunity. Many times, the first look is quite intentional – we were looking for trouble (Proverbs 7:6-9). But many other times, the first look happens “innocently.” Make a choice then to turn away from *the second look*. This especially includes times when you are alone, times when you can see part of a woman unclad (2 Samuel 11:1-5), when you can see the girl’s eyes (Proverbs 6:25), and when she has the opportunity to flatter you or use her words with you (Proverbs 5:3-6). It includes building a friendship with a woman that includes flirting or sharing confidences about your life. It includes staying away from what can amount to soft porn like the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Issue (ask them not to send it; they will comply) or newspaper Inserts with lingerie ads. And don’t you buy her lingerie.

Step Three - Accountability

Tell your wife (if married) and get a guy you can confide in. With your wife, confess it to her as sin and admit that you would like her help and support. In time, ask her to pray and think about your sexual relationship and what can be done by both of you to let it be a joy for her and both of your only sexual fulfillment. Together study Ed Wheat’s or Doug Rosenau’s books. With the guy you confide in, tell him about your struggle with lust, including specific areas of temptation and failure. Ask him to pray for you and hold you accountable. Areas of accountability may include Internet use, road trips, TV watching and relationships with the opposite sex.

Internet Recommendations: Subscribe to *Covenant Eyes*®, use it in a public room without doors and avoid using it after your wife goes to bed if this has been a struggle.

Road Trip Recommendations: Ask your friend to talk with you after every road trip – expect his probing. (1) Did you go anywhere or watch anything your wife would have found offensive or that you would have been embarrassed for a guys’ Bible study group to do together? (2) Did you read anything or look over any magazines that would have been inappropriate for a twelve or thirteen-year-old son to look at? (3) Did you have any conversations with anyone that could constitute flirting, inappropriate levels of confidences or may have been sexual in nature?

TV Watching: Minimize TV watching, especially w/o your wife, and especially after 10 pm. If you do sometimes watch TV without your wife and are married, avoid channel surfing and R rated movies. Tell your wife the next morning everything you watched.

Relationships: Realize first of all that it is possible to have friendships with women that are godly and appropriate and that do not have to constitute a threat. In these relationships, your wife knows the full extent of the relationship and is comfortable with it and you do not tell the woman things your wife doesn't know about or doesn't know you tell her. Problems with your wife or a man in her life are off-limits, as are sexual topics or jokes and conversations. Time alone is minimal, always in public and with your wife and her husband's full knowledge and acceptance.

Single Man Additional Recommendations: In addition to everything above, pray for God to raise up a wife for you if He would like you to be married. (1 Cor. 7:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 25-28, 32-34) Make a point to stay away from relational opportunities which can go in the direction of sexual activities before marriage (Proverbs 5:1-14, Prov 7). Be warned (Prov. 6:27-28).

Step Four - Acceptance

Sexual satisfaction is a good thing to look for and pursue - within marriage. Don't be ashamed of wanting that. See that "satisfying your wife and yourself" sexually is pleasing in God's sight within the context of marriage. For many guys, knowing that sexual desires are not themselves sin is freeing. So many guys have been satisfying sexual feelings with sinful thoughts and actions for so long, they associate sex with sin. *Breaking that connection is essential to true sexual freedom.* See Proverbs 5:15-19, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Song of Solomon. In fact, the best antidote to sexual sin and being controlled by lust after steps 1-3 is the development of a solid sex life with you wife. Pursue that, while being certain to also pursue getting to love her well. Realize there is a temptation for many guys to move from sexual sin to "getting his wife to satisfy him" but he hasn't actually appraised what kind of husband he has been to her. Would she say he "lives with her in an understanding way", spending time talking and listening with me? Would she say, "He treats me in a protecting way since I am a woman"? Would she say, "He honors me as his equal", valuing my opinions and feelings?

Warnings and Recommendations

Do not force or pressure your wife in the area of sexual relations. Some men read First Corinthians 7:4a and think they have biblical right to force their wives. That is the opposite of 1 Peter 3:7, Eph. 5:25-26. (See also 1 Cor. 7:4b and 13:4-8)

Learn patient love. When women have been pressured in the past, such as date pressure for sexual activities as a younger woman, or even from you as a husband, and when they have even been more than pressured (e.g., date rape, sexual molestation, rape), sex often produces fear, shame and anger. To avoid such emotions, women often "shut down emotionally." When a woman shuts down emotionally, it shows up sexually. They either do not participate fully or they avoid sex. Sexual response is designed to be a natural trait and can often be re-acquired through patient, enduring love of a spouse and through learning to trust God again.

Take time to learn to care for her in ways beyond sex. The sexualization of our society in which women are generally portrayed as objects for men (and, increasingly, men as objects for women) has degraded sex in its design. Instead of a trusting, vulnerable, caring and intimate relationship in a committed, monogamous marriage, sexual relationships are represented as "fun," selfish and light. Though early sexual activity and touch initially produces closeness mistaken for love, it eventually produces more ultimate distance, reduces intimacy, and results in people searching for connection they don't know how to find in marriage. Wherever you have seen yourself as part of that mind-set (e.g., with pre-marital sex), repent to God. Apologize to your wife. Turn from activities which increase that way of living, such as sexual movies, songs and jokes.