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Series: Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Fallen World
Message: King Solomon's Advice About Sex

Transcribed Message
June 16, 2019
Proverbs 5:1-14

If you've been around Covenant for very long you probably at some point heard the word "expository". The word "expository" is usually followed by expository teaching or expository preaching. It is what we attempt to do every week when we come to study the Word of God together because simply put, expository teaching and expository preaching simply means the main point of the message is the main point of the passage. As we work through an outline on any given morning, when we do it in a way that is expounding that passage, we're drawing out of that passage the very points of the outline in terms of what it is that we're studying. That expository teaching and expository preaching – what you do when you do that and you go through a book, you come across topics and subjects that you might otherwise avoid or might otherwise skip over. But in expository teaching you take a book and you work your way through that book and you come to the passage that is before you week after week and we do that this morning when we come to a passage that sometimes we would perhaps rather skip over.

We look this morning at King Solomon's advice about sex. And while the church has maybe a history of fumbling around on this topic and maybe being kind of shy and not speaking as loudly and clearly and boldly and positively as we should, that certainly wasn't the case with Solomon. Solomon wrote a book of our Bible called the *Song of Solomon*. It's a book about marital intimacy. No matter what others do to try to say it's an analogy or it's symbolism, it is literally a description of marital intimacy that God has given to us in an entire book of the Bible. He does it here in Proverbs chapter 5. He's going to do it in Proverbs chapter 6 and he's going to do it in Proverbs chapter 7. So there you have already a look at what would we're going to doing for the next three Sundays.

This morning in chapter 5 we look at the first 14 verses and we see that sexual sin always promises more than it can deliver. Taking what is not yours will cause you to lose what is yours. So let me begin with just some initial observations of the subject that is before us for this morning and for a couple of weeks to come. One of the first questions we might ask is why in the world would we listen to Solomon about marriage about sex and about faithfulness? If there's anybody that we would probably not want to listen to, it might very well be this guy. The easiest answer to that is because God saw fit to give us what this man, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has written for us in the books that I have already mentioned. He was a very wise man, but he was also a man who did not follow his own counsel and his own advice. He gave us truth but he walked away from that truth and he really played the part of the fool.

He acknowledges as much when he says in Ecclesiastes, a book at the end of his life in which he reflects a look back, in the first verse of chapter 2: "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.' But behold, this was also vanity. I said of laughter, 'It is mad,' and of pleasure, 'What use is it?' I searched with my heart..." He goes on to describe what became his life when he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. At the end of all of that he says, you know, it really didn't fulfill in the way that it was promised. When you get to the ninth chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes, in an amazing statement of clarity he says men, enjoy the wife (singular) of your youth. He had learned a lesson, but he had learned through a lot of heartache and a lot of pain and a lot of discipline of the Lord in his life.

Secondly, Solomon's advice is just as relevant today as it was in his day. He might have written this thousands of years ago and as we get into these descriptions and as we read these verses, it's certainly going to sound in some respects foreign to the language that we use. We'll see that his world was different than ours. But the point is this. As you become a student of Scripture and a student of humanity, you realize that while they lived in a completely different time than we do, and they describe these very things in a very different way perhaps than we would, the reality is the human heart is unchanged. Human nature is unchanged. The motivations of the heart are unchanged. The physiology and the appeal of sexual immorality is still the same. It's apparent that as you look at this particular book and realize the things that Solomon bears witness to

and testifies about that those same realities are true in our day as well. Sexual sin has a long and sordid history. You don't even get past Genesis 3. We have the fall in Genesis 3. In Genesis 4, Lamech is boasting about the fact that he doesn't have one wife as God had designed. He's got two. We come to the giving of the law of the 10 Commandments and in the 7th commandment, God clearly says knowing the heart as He does thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thirdly Solomon's advice applies to both genders. We need to say this on the front end of these weeks that we study because it is both men and women who are in view, even though every passage can't give to us every angle and every detail. It is clear that this particular passage is the perspective of a father to his son. We've seen that repeatedly. We'll continue to see that. But it could just as easily be a father speaking to his daughter. It could just as easily be a mother speaking to her son, a mother speaking to her daughter. We already know from the first chapter and the eighth verse that Solomon says listen to the counsel of your father and listen to what your mother says. So he's encompassing both of them. How the immoral woman is described in this passage applies just as equally to an immoral man. What happens by way of the seduction that is involved with this immoral woman is the same path that a man would take. We don't want to miss that there is in this passage a perspective of a father to a son, but the broader picture includes all of these elements that we would think of for both genders.

Let's look at a lesson in purity and faithfulness. If you've been with us as we've gone through these studies already in Proverbs, you're not going to be surprised where Solomon, this father, turns right off the bat. We notice first of all he says be spiritually alert. In verses 1 and 2, when he is going to introduce to us this subject of how it is that he is giving us counsel with regard to this important area of our life, it's not surprising that he starts off and he says the first thing you need to do is you need to be spiritually alert. What do you need to do to be spiritually alert? That is given to us in verse 1. Make wisdom your priority. "My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding." You read that and you can almost bring to mind that everything else this dad has said to this point comes to this 1st verse of chapter 5. All of these admonitions, all of these appeals he brings yet again to this verse.

It takes me back to what we looked at last Sunday and in the 4th chapter and verse 23. Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it flow the issues of life. The very next topic that he is going to take up in a significant way is this one. It is almost everything that he has said to this point comes to this practical application of that truth in this most practical area of life. You can't be spiritually alert if you're not walking in wisdom. It just can't be done so. To be spiritually alert requires us to walk in this wisdom that this dad is continually urging upon his son. The best thing you can do for any area of your life is to be spiritually alert and walk in God's wisdom and walk in God's truth. The applications are numerous. You can't get there apart from the wisdom of God and apart from being spiritually alert. That's why the psalmist says in Psalm 119 verse 9 how is it that a young man or a young woman is going to keep their way pure? How are they? We just said in 4:23 guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life. Be spiritually alert. You can't walk in the wisdom of God without that truth coming into your life. So here it is right before us how it is that we're to do that.

The second thing he's going to say in verse 2 is be willing to stand alone. "...that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge." The very first word in verse 2 tips us off. He's got a purpose in mind here, and that purpose is son, daughter, you're going to have to stand alone in many respects with regard to this issue. He starts off by making a purpose statement. That is a purpose. You go back to chapter 1. Remember the words of warning right out of the gate. Hear, my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching. Verse 10. My son, if sinners entice you do not consent. Verse 15. My son, do not walk away with them; hold your foot back from their paths." All of this wisdom is converging at this point at which you are going to be making choices. You're going to be making choices daily in this regard and it is going to require that you often stand alone as you do that.

The word "discretion". You notice that in verse 2 – that you may keep discretion. It's an interesting word. It's a word that has a pretty wide meaning. Sometimes it speaks negatively of evil planning and someone trying to bring something harmful. In other contexts, it means something positive that is being planned. Clearly that's what's happening here. It's a positive thing that this father is bringing to mind. He says you need to have a plan in order to stay morally pure. It isn't going to just happen. You've

got a purpose. That's the point of verse 2. You have to want this. You have to plan for this. You have to prepare for this. Listen, my friends, if we lived in a world where everybody was honestly striving to walk in moral purity it would be a lot easier. It wouldn't be a slam dunk, but it would sure be a lot easier. But that's not the world we live in. We live in a world that in fact seems hell-bent on going against everything that God says about sexual purity. CS Lewis, who died almost 60 years ago, gave us all kinds of great stuff, right? He actually said chastity, purity is the most hated virtue of the Christian life by the world. Isn't that amazing? I guess his world was not much different than ours. He looked around and he said you know what? This idea of purity, this idea of chastity, this idea of the wisdom of God impacting this area of your life, the world looks at this and this is the most unpopular thing that Christians hold to from the vantage point of the world. Even in the church, there are so many different voices now about human sexuality. In the world, all you have to do is listen to music. All you have to do is turn on the television. All you have to do is go to a movie. All you have to do is visit the web. See what's going on in social media to know that the world literally appears to be hell-bent on taking us all on the path of the fool.

Just this last week, I read a report of an upcoming HBO series targeting teenagers. It's got the name that fits exactly what we're saying this morning. Sexual sin will promise you way more than it will ever deliver. It is called "Euphoria". It's in the planning and preparation stages. This is the description. It is going to push the envelope as never before. The storyline is teenagers who navigate love and friendship in a world of drugs, sex, trauma and social media. It's filled evidently with nudity. Now, my friend, we aren't going to be able to keep the world from being the world. We're supposed to be light in the world but the world, after all, is the world. They're going to pursue the things of the world. At some point, the Christian community has to stop and say we're not going to invite this stuff into our life, into our home, into the lives of our children, into the lives of our teenagers, into the lives of our college students. At some point, the Christian community is going to have to rise up and say we don't need HBO because you've got nothing on there that has any redeeming value. And yet here we are as the people of God, seemingly indistinguishable in so many ways from the world around us in these

very specific practical ways. Here he says you need to start off and you need to be spiritually alert.

Notice secondly, he says sexual sin is tantalizing. Verse 3. "For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil." This word here for woman, and remember we could just as easily be thinking of a man, in the English Standard Version this is translated as the word "forbidden". Forbidden woman. If you look in your notes at the bottom of your page or the side of your page if you have the ESV it says that the word can also be translated strange. So she's a strange woman. She is a foreign woman. She's a forbidden woman. Not strange in the sense of unusual, but strange in the sense of being a foreigner. He's not speaking specifically against somebody who was not an Israelite, but he is speaking against and he's talking about and he's describing somebody who is outside of the covenant community. Israel is the covenant community. Israel is a group of people that are called to be the people of God. They are to live under the laws of God. So he's describing here a woman who is a foreigner. She is a stranger to the ways of God. She is a foreigner and she's a stranger to the laws of God and the principles that are to direct the people of God in this time period. It reminds us of the very thing that Paul will say in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that we are not to find ourselves bound together, yoked together, married to an unbeliever. We are to want to find ourselves in a relationship with those who will likewise share our worldview and understanding of the laws of God and the things of God. Here she is described in this way as one who does not have regard for the spiritually alert path and the walk of wisdom that God has called us to walk in.

Notice secondly her speech and her appearance. Chapter 5 verse 3 says: "For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil." The idea of her lips here has clearly got a double meaning. Not only is he saying physically, yes, she's doing all that she can to appear physically in a way that is going to be appealing and attractive, but he's also talking symbolically about her speech. Her lips representing the things that she says. It's sweet, smooth flattery and praise. Who doesn't enjoy when somebody is offering flattery and words of praise? That's a very easy path into somebody's life when you start saying things to them about how wonderful they are. You can't believe how well they take care of themselves and all of

these great things that they do. What you don't know is when you offer those kinds of comments, as this woman is offering to this man, you don't know what world you're speaking into. When you speak words like that into the life of someone who lives in a praise-less world, and you hear those words of flattery coming to you, and you live in a world where there is no appreciation for who you are and how you look and what you do and all of the rest, you can see that this is an immediate path into the life and heart of that person that he is warning about here.

In fact, if you look back to chapter 2 and verse 10 just note again how these things tie together. "For wisdom will call into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you." You're hearing these things and they always sound so good. You hear you're the most beautiful woman I've ever met. You're the man that I've dreamt of all my life. I can't believe all the things that you can do and accomplish and all the rest. What he's just saying is you better have your heart guarded for the lips of this foreign woman, this strange woman who's making these appeals to you.

There are probably several benefits to the #Me Too Movement. One of the benefits has been it has enabled women to speak to issues that have been pushed out of sight for years. Clearly one of the benefits is this idea that for so long a man could basically act and speak in any way he wanted to women in the workplace or women in their circles of influence and just do so with impunity. That's the very thing he's talking about here. When those kinds of things are said, and in some cases when someone is subjected to those things, they're unwelcome and they're unwanted. He is saying then you need to be mindful of the need to be aware.

Look at chapter 6. We'll get to that one later but he says in chapter 6 verse 25 "Do not desire her beauty in your heart; do not let her capture you with her eyelashes." So it's more than just words. It's how she's dressed. It's how she's drawing attention to herself. Chapter 7 verse 10: "And behold the woman meets him dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart." You don't have to think of some woman who is walking the street corner somewhere dressed in a way that we might think of. This is just a woman who's dressing in a way and her appearance is very provocative. She's drawing attention to herself in very specific ways and very seductive ways. All of these things are very

common to a woman who's not walking in a path of wisdom, who's walking in a path of foolishness. Solomon offers this warning to his sons and his daughters. It doesn't mean that a Christian has to look dowdy or unfashionable or dumpy. We can be fashionable but we can do so in a way that still honors God and is modest as Peter reminds us in 1 Peter.

I'm going to step away from expository teaching for a moment and say two things. One, guys, stop telling us how hot your wife is. Sadly, I have heard from too many pulpits young preachers, because I'm an old preacher, but young preachers wanting to impress I guess or whatever. But they'll draw attention in the context of maybe talking about marriage or life or whatever and they'll make reference to how hot their wife is. Think about that for a minute. How foolish is that for a man to draw attention to his wife in a way that is clearly designed to speak in some manner of sexual overtones. Are all the other men supposed to look and notice and agree that that is in fact the case? How foolish is that? You tell her that. You don't need to tell us that.

I think the second thing that goes with that is, and I hate to get on the guys again but I will anyway. Never tell your wife to dress in a way that is inappropriate. Never tell your wife to wear something that does the very thing that walking in wisdom says she shouldn't do. Thankfully, it's not very often, but it's too often that in a conversation with a wife, and it is almost always in the context of a marriage that is in trouble, she will share that her husband makes these requests of her that when they go out in public that she wear something provocative and pushes the envelope. Why? To cause other men to look at his wife in an appropriate way? Again, how foolish that is. For a man who professes to be a Christ follower to desire by that means to cause another brother to stumble so that his ego can be boosted in some regard. It makes no sense. It is not walking in wisdom.

Notice then thirdly, sexual sin will destroy you. Sexual symbol will destroy you. We aren't going to have to go into a lot of detail here because we're going to come back to this in a couple weeks, but we'll work through these verses beginning at verse 4 and we'll see it never turns out the way you think. Look at verse 4: "...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.” That word again at the beginning of verse 4. But. An adversative. He's drawing attention and just talking about all of this appeal that this woman, this man is offering you. All of these flattering words, trying to pull you in to a setting that the man and the woman of wisdom is not to walk in. Then he starts off verse 4 with “but” ... and it just stops right there. You take that praise. You take that honey and it's not as sweet as was promised. It becomes wormwood. Wormwood was one of the most bitter things that they could've referenced in that time. And so here it's not any longer honey. Now it's poison. It's wormwood. The sword is double-edged, which is just to say it's cutting on both sides as it goes in and when it comes out.

Someone said love is blind but lust blinds. The Bible is incredibly honest, my friends, because it doesn't say that there is no pleasure in these things. Solomon will tell us that in that season, yeah, there was some pleasure. Of course there was. But just as Moses testified to in Hebrews, there's pleasure in sin for a season. There's pleasure in sin for a season but it overpromises. It never delivers what it says. It leads ultimately to death on so many different levels.

Secondly, you can't handle it. Look at verses 7 and 8. You can't handle it. “And now, O sons, listen to me.” Again you can just hear in this dad's voice, you can hear this mom speaking to her daughter, to her son the appeal of their heart. Listen to me. Do not depart from the words of my mouth. All the things that I've said, store them up. “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.” How many people have thought “I can handle this” as they have inched towards this situation that they know they should be avoiding? I know where the line is and I know when to stop. I know when too far is and when I'd get to that point. Solomon says no, you don't know. You don't. You just think you do, but you don't. You see this playing out, this appeal of the father. If you think of it in this way, it's this vertical conversation between the father and the son, of the father and the daughter, the mother and the daughter, the mother and son. There's this vertical conversation going on within the family. They're wanting that to win the day as opposed to this horizontal conversation that could go on with this strange woman, this strange man, this one who wants to take them away from the ways of wisdom.

Then notice thirdly, the cost is high. Verse 9: "...lest you give your honor to others in your ears 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." There is so much that we could say here. We're going to get into more of this when we get into these later chapters, but let me just make a couple of comments. What he's describing here is loss. A loss on so many levels. Loss of this man's honor, this woman's honor. Loss of their reputation. Social impact that that this is going to ultimately have. The spiritual loss. The financial loss. Think of how much money gets spent when people wander from this path of wisdom and begin to go down this path of foolishness. We all know that single moms oftentimes bear the brunt of the financial impact of these kinds of foolish decisions, made either by their husband, or in some cases, by themselves. We know that there is a physical cost that is apparent all around us as you know statistics on these things. Again someone said, "Satan offers the bait but he never shows the hook". That hook, he says, is pain, heartache, anxiety, turmoil and loss.

Notice finally, there's a change of mind beginning in verse 12. "...and you say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voices of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation'." He finally begins to face what happened in his life and he realizes the foolish choices that he has made. He acknowledges it as such. He owns it. He is turning away from it even though the consequences are all about him. He acknowledges that that was a foolish thing, a foolish choice, a foolish decision. It's like the prodigal son who finally awakens that one morning and decides what the world am I doing eating this stuff with the pigs. I can go back to my dad and be a servant. And he goes back and what he finds is that he finds a loving father who welcomes him home even after he had chased after the things of the world that promised them so much and delivered him so little. Sexual sin, my friends, always promises more than it can deliver. Taking what is not yours will cause you to lose what is yours.

What do we take away? It's a word of warning, isn't it? It's a word of admonition. It's a word to awaken us that no one, however chosen, however used of God, however gifted and talented is immune from failure in this area. The overwhelming counsel of

Scripture always in these situations is to flee, to run from sexual temptation. Listen to what one commentator said: "When unexpected sexual temptations catch you off guard, don't take time to analyze, theorize, rationalize, or compromise. Just get out immediately. The way to maintain sexual purity is to flee. Paul's advice to those believers living in the moral cesspool called Corinth was flee from sexual immorality. Just over a decade later, he gave the same advice to his young disciple Timothy. Flee the evil desires of youth." That is still the wisdom of God today. You flee. You run.

The best place, my friend, to run to is to the Word of God, to the truth of God. It is to the gospel. It is to the cross. It is to Christ. It's always that way, but in this regard certainly so. I like in verse 14 that he talks about the assembled congregation. The assembled congregation. The connection that all of us have in the body of Christ to each other. This is the place to which we run. This is a place of safety and security, a place of healing and forgiveness. This is the place where the gospel gets lifted up and we realize that God is gracious and forgiving to us no matter. So it is to Him that we run. We trust that each one of us will take that to heart this morning.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we do thank You this morning for the way that You very openly, frankly remind us, warn us, cause us to be aware of the nature of the world that we live in. The wisdom of Your Word and the truth of Your Word is unchanging. It is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It was as true in Solomon's day, Father, as it is in our day. We pray this morning that Your Holy Spirit will speak that truth into each of our hearts. Lord, continue to protect us in the midst of a dark and perverted generation of which we are to shine as light. Lord, I pray this morning if there is someone here who needs to come to You and run to You for forgiveness that Your Spirit would encourage them and prompt them to do that, knowing that You never will turn anyone away. Lord, if there is someone here this morning that does not know the truth and the wonder of the gospel, I pray that they will realize that what Jesus did on the cross He did for each one of us and if we will but trust and believe that that was all that was necessary, You promise to forgive all of our sins and cleanse all of our unrighteousness. We thank You for this amazing and gracious gospel. We thank You for Jesus in whose name we pray, amen.