

FOOLPROOF: The Wisdom of Proverbs

Immorality is Stupid

Proverbs 5-7

Mark Vroegop

My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation" (Proverbs 5:1–14).

I want you to think with me about your favorite Public Service Announcement (PSA). Do you know what I mean? A PSA is an advertisement that is meant to change the behavior of our society and culture. The idea emerged after the attacks on Pearl Harbor. One of the early campaigns was entitled "Loose Lips Might Sink Ships."

After World War II, Public Service Announcements continued. Here are a few that I remember as a kid:

- Smokey the Bear: "Only you can prevent forest fires."
- McGruff the Crime Dog: "Take a bite out of crime."
- Nancy Reagan: "Just say no to drugs"
- Vince and Larry (crash test dummies): "You could learn a lot from a dummy. Buckle your safety belt."
- "Friends don't let friends drive drunk."

These ads were designed to remind people about things that should have been self-evident. Preventing forest fires, lowering crime rates, avoiding drug use, buckling your seat belt, and not driving while intoxicated are pretty obvious behaviors that are beneficial and right.

The aim of these ads wasn't to convince people that these truths are good. That was obvious. The goal was to remind people about things that they know are either good or bad, but don't take seriously enough. The Ad Council knew that the problem for most of us is not information, it's consistent application. Human beings know a lot more than we apply. We tend to view ourselves as the exception to the rule.

Sometimes we need a good reminder of what we know.

And that's what the book of Proverbs is all about. It's a book filled with nuggets of wisdom which are the application of truth to life. The thirty-one chapters of this book are filled with helpful, pithy statements that leave us nodding our heads – perhaps saying, “Oh, that's good.”

We are in week three of a nine-week study of this helpful book. In week one we looked at the essential nature of wisdom, and last week Brad helped us understand the costly nature of foolishness. This week we are going to cover chapters 5-7 and the subject of immorality. My title is simple: “Immorality is Stupid.”

I realize that the ills of immorality aren't on the top of minds or breaking news right now. Every week we need wisdom in a ton of areas. From re-opening plans and the spread of COVID-19 to racial injustice, the church's role in racial reconciliation, the cancel culture, and how believers get along with each other; the need for wisdom is expansive and exhausting. I get that. And I feel that.

I also realize that today is Father's Day. I didn't intentionally plan this message for today. It just happened to land on this weekend. But I don't believe in coincidences. And, I'm sure I don't need to convince you that sexual immorality is something important for the church to continually address. Chapters 5-7 are some of the most specific and helpful chapters in the whole Bible when it comes to this topic.

Immorality is stupid. You know that. Everyone knows that. Who likes a “cheater”? But these chapters help to diagnose the nature of sexual temptation and provide a helpful warning. Today we'll examine: (1) The Appeal, (2) The Temptation, (3) The Consequences, and (4) The Strategy.

1. The Appeal (5:1-2; 6:20-23; 7:1-4)

I've organized sections of the three chapters into four themes, and the first one is the appeal. Before the book of Proverbs digs into the details about immorality, it begins with a plea for the son to listen. If you remember from our first message, this book was written and edited by Solomon. Proverbs is a collection of wisdom handed down from parents to a son (see 1:8, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1).

In chapters 5-7 we see the same pattern. The parents appeal to their son to heed and listen to them about the dangers of immorality. Part of the reason for this is the nature of foolishness or simplicity of the son. The other reason is because of the nature of sexual temptation (more on this next). And, also, because of what you see in this domain as you grow older. Parents have seen the effect of immorality.

I have vivid memories of the look on my dad's face when he came home after confronting a friend and appealing to his friend to go back to his wife and kids. There have been multiple occasions when I've warned my kids, especially my sons, about the dangers of immorality after walking through the effects that I've witnessed. I've said, “Guys, I really want you to listen to me in light of my day today...” That's the kind of tone that Solomon has here.

Solomon appeals for his son to have a disposition that listens and inclines his ear toward understanding (5:1). But, the purpose is not merely to hear, but to respond. This is the essence of wisdom. In 5:2, he desires for his son to “keep discretion” and that his lips would “guard knowledge.” He longs for these truths to get into his son’s mind and heart.

In 6:20, Solomon appeals for his son to keep and not forsake their teaching. This wisdom is something so important that it’s pictured as clothing (6:21), and it is invaluable. Their teaching will lead him when he walks, watch over him when he lies down, and give counsel (v. 22). Their teaching is a lamp, a light, and a way of life (v 23).

If we look over to chapter seven, we see the same kind of appeal. Once again, we see the command to “keep” and to “treasure” their teaching (v. 1). This kind of wisdom is incredibly valuable. It holds the promise of life (v. 2). It should be bound on your fingers, written on the heart, considered like family or a close friend (vv. 3-4).

There’s a level of urgency here. Solomon is appealing for his son to heed his instructions. He has seen the effect of immorality. I’m sure he knew what happens. And, he may have been speaking from personal experience.

Some people know about the dangers of immorality because it’s part of their story. And let me encourage you if this is part of your background: Sexual sin can be forgiven, and you can caution and exhort others. So, don’t make the mistake of thinking that God is done with you. Proverbs are true in every arena of life, even when you’ve not been perfect.

These sections of Scripture are important because they remind us about the importance of instruction and teaching on a biblical view of sexuality. Everyone receives an education about sexuality. The issue relates to who’s your teacher. This text pushes us back to the primacy of parents instructing their children in this arena. Dads, it’s particularly critical for your voice and example to lead the way in this area.

Some of you wish you had that kind of instruction but your parents were either silent, unhelpful, or maybe part of the problem. I’d like to encourage you to be the first wise person in your family when it comes to the topic of sexuality.

Can I appeal to you pastorally? Ministry puts you on the front lines when it comes to redemption. But you also see the effects of sexual sin. Listen carefully that what this text is saying.

Solomon begins by appealing to his son to listen to him.

2. Temptation (5:3, 6:24, 7:5-21)

The next section lays out the nature of the temptation. In 5:3 it refers to a “forbidden woman.” In 6:24 we find an “evil woman” and the “adulteress.” In 7:5 we find her called “forbidden” and, again, the “adulteress.” I trust you realize that this text can be applied to all kinds of sexual temptation.

All of these sections provide a stark contrast between what seems attractive or alluring but turns dangerous and deadly. Duane Garrett, an Old Testament scholar says:

The Bible does not hide from or obscure the power of the temptation to illicit sex. In language that is refreshingly clear and direct without itself indulging in titillation, the text warns the reader of the debacle that awaits him should he succumb in this area...¹

In 5:3 we see a reference to the allurement of her words. Lips drip with honey. Her speech is smoother than oil. We see the same thing in 6:24 – “...the smooth tongue of the adulteress.” “Her smooth words...” are also referenced in 7:5.

Yet, there’s more here. It’s important to note that sexual temptation is not just about sex. It’s about desirability, ego, and greed. It’s about being wanted, desired, and pursued. Sex is just the expression of desire, ego, or greed. Again, Duane Garrett says: “The man is drawn to her because she inflates his ego with hollow praise...”² The attraction is never merely sexual. There’s always more.

Look at chapter seven for a clear example of this. Notice all the language connected to desirability and pursuit as Solomon provides an illustration.

Solomon imagines looking out his widow and seeing a young man lacking sense (vv. 6-7). He travels near the home of the adulteress at a time when she’s likely to be around (vv. 8-9). He lacks sense because his curiosity is about to put him in a place of temptation. Remember that. Sometimes we lack wisdom by putting ourselves in situations where temptations are likely. We’ll talk more about this in the last point. For now, just take note of it here.

Chapter seven continues with a description of the traps associated with this temptation:

- Her appearance is immodest with a heart set on evil intentions (v. 10)
- She seeks attention and is very active (vv. 11-12)
- Her actions are aggressive and bold (v. 13)
- The adulteress talks about a party/festival along with seeking him out (vv. 14-15)
- She allures him with suggestive and assuring words (vv. 16-20)

The result is clearly stated: “...with much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him” (v. 21). This is the nature of sexual temptation. This list is eerily familiar to some. The enemy tempts us with what seems interesting, attractive, and fun.

¹ Duane A. Garrett, [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 90.

² Duane A. Garrett, [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 91.

John Piper, in his book *Future Grace*, says, “The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier. No one sins out of a sense of duty. We embrace sin because it promises that, at least in the short run, things will be more pleasant.”³

Behind every temptation, but especially the temptation toward immorality, is a promise. The illicit image, the suggestive conversation, or the too-close-relationship all offer us what we think we want. Solomon doesn’t deny the initial attractiveness. Rather, he helps us see immorality for what it is. He peels back the appeal and shows us the stupidity of immorality.

3. Consequences (5:4-14, 6:27-35, 7:22-23)

These three chapters seek to show us the consequences of sexual immorality. The application of wisdom here is for the son to realize what is behind the temptation and where it leads. Sexual temptation offers us something attractive and seems enjoyable. But Proverbs warns us: “It’s a trap!”

All three chapters have substantial warnings. In 5:4-14 we see:

- “What seems delicious is disgusting; what seems soothing is deadly”⁴ (v. 4)
- Her path leads to destruction (vv. 4-6)
- Immorality leads to regret, exhaustion, and pain (vv. 9-12)
- A failure to listen leads to ruin (vv. 13-14)

In chapter 6 we see more consequences:

- Inevitability of negative effects (vv. 27-29)
- Brings destruction upon himself and others (vv. 30-35)

In chapter 7 we have the summary:

All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life (Prov. 7:22–23).

This is a heavy and sobering text. It’s designed to be that way. Solomon wants to show his son what immorality leads to so that he’ll see through the attraction. Sometimes we need a sober reminder, even a wake-up call, to help us see where things are headed.

A friend of mine, Daniel Henderson, has a book entitled *Think Before You Look*. He details the consequences of sexual sin as a means of empowering caution and freedom. That’s what Solomon is saying in our text.

³ John Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 334.

⁴ Derek Kidner, [Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 17, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 66.

With this heavy tone, I also want to offer some hope. Solomon's aim is to prevent immorality by demonstrating its consequences. Some of you know this list because you've lived it. And, I just want to remind you that Jesus died to redeem us from every sin, including sexual sin. There are many stories of redemption, grace, and restoration. There's a path to grace and mercy. No question about it.

But Solomon's goal here is to prevent you from going down that path. Therefore, he highlights the consequences clearly. And, in a culture where immorality is pictured as thrilling and cost-free, this warning is helpful.

4. Strategy (5:7-8, 15-20, 21-23, 6:25-26, 7:24-27)

Solomon doesn't merely communicate all the dangers and pitfalls of immorality; he also provides some helpful strategies for winning the battle against immorality:

- 1. Avoidance (5:7-8)** – We talked about this before, but immorality needs to be something you are concerned about such that you stay away from things, people, or situations that are needlessly tempting. Second Timothy 2:22 tells us that you don't beat lust with an argument; you beat it with speed.
- 2. Affirmation (5:15-23)** – A solid, fulfilling marriage provides both a refuge from and an expression for sexuality. Solomon holds up the value of marriage as a strategy against sexual temptation.
- 3. Affection (6:25-26)** – Set your heart on the right things. Don't desire her beauty in your heart (6:25).
- 4. Awareness (7:24-27)** – A realization that many have fallen and a deep commitment to apply God's grace to your life so that you'll not be named among them.

Solomon knows the path of immorality. And he desperately wants his son to not be a fool when it comes to this area of life.

You may be listening to this message and you are not yet a Christian. Perhaps your track record in this area has left you feeling empty, used, and searching. Maybe you thought a relationship with a person was going to meet your deepest need. Three hundred years after Christ walked this earth, there was a man who struggled with immorality, but he found Christ and famously said: "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

Some of you are in the process of recovery from sinful actions in your past. Maybe you are a single person trying to figure out how to live consistently and righteously. Maybe you are a married couple trying to rebuild trust. Keep going. Don't quit.

Maybe you are a Christian who's trapped in sexual sin. Can I encourage you to turn from it today? You know it's wrong. It's not giving you what you really want. We have plenty of people in our church who have found practical freedom. Reach out to one of our pastors or elders, we'd love to help you.

Finally, a word to dads. Your role in life is critical at many levels. Your kids need your attention, your affection, and your leadership. But they also need your purity. They need you to help them know how to

fight against temptation, how to build solid, Christ-exalting marriages, and to set an example of how to live as a godly man in a sexualized world.

I'm thankful for the army of men who value this and are living this way. I just want more of you to join the ranks. On this Father's Day, I'm calling you to follow Jesus wisely and faithfully when it comes to the issue of immorality.

Finish faithful.

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