

# Proverbs 6:20-35 - Shall We Provoke Him to Jealousy?

To Read:

1. Ezekiel 16
2. I Corinthians 10

## I. Introduction

- A. This morning, we are going to start a month in Proverbs and we'll start where we left off last November in Proverbs 6**
1. So our text this morning is going to be Proverbs 6:20-35
  2. Proverbs 6:20-35 is the middle of the three long warning passages in Proverbs against adultery
  3. The first, which we looked at last year, was in Proverbs 5 and the last, which we'll study next week, will be in Proverbs 7
- B. As we delve into another one of the warnings against adultery in Proverbs, before we study the passage I want to take a broader view at all three passages set next to each other to try to understand why this warning is given three full passages in Proverbs - why does Proverbs repeat this three times at length?**
1. The simplest answer to that question is that this teaching is important, this is an easy path of sin to follow but also a very dangerous one, so Proverbs warns us clearly about the dangers and the foolishness of adultery
    - a. And this is why all three passages start with a clear call to heed the wisdom of the warning
  2. But I think there is another reason there are three different warnings set right next to each other - I believe each of these three passages has a unique perspective in the warning against adultery
    - a. So, we can go back to Proverbs 5 holds up the virtue of faithfulness
      - i. So we see in Proverbs 5:18-19 - *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth... be intoxicated always in her love.*
    - b. In contrast, Proverbs 6 holds up the danger of jealousy
      - i. So we see in Proverbs 6:34 - *For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.*
    - c. Proverbs 7 holds up the value of self-control
      - i. So we see in Proverbs 7:24-25 - *And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,*
    - d. All three of these passages have the same purpose - to warn against adultery - but each of them holds up a different facet of why we shouldn't participate in adultery
  3. So, this morning, I don't want to merely give a sermon declaring that adultery is wrong and dangerous, we all know that, but I want to think particularly about the unique perspective given in Proverbs 6 and meditate on what it teaches us about marriage and ultimately what it teaches us about Christ
- C. In fact, my message this morning is going to fit into the theme that I've, more-or-less, accidentally followed this year**
1. Perhaps it's just my personal bent, or maybe I'm just seeing more and more of what Scripture says
  2. But it seems that every message I've given this year has centered on God's demand of wholehearted devotion
  3. This constantly came up in Exodus - the book of God's glory calls us to completely devote ourselves to His glory
  4. This came up in Psalm 17 - David called us only to be satisfied in God, not to devote ourselves to other joys
  5. And it will be our theme again this morning - Proverbs 6 ultimately calls us to devote ourselves completely to God
- D. Read Proverbs 6:20-35**
- E. Proposition and Outline**
1. Proposition: Jealousy, in the right context, is a great good and a powerful motivator to remain faithful in covenant.
  2. Outline: What, Why, How
    - a. What (does the passage warn us against)? Looking at Scripture.
    - b. Why (does the passage warn us against this)? Looking at Christ.
    - c. How (do we live out the warning of this passage)? Looking at Us.

## II. What (does the passage warn us against)? Looking at Scripture.

As we start this morning, I want to look at the passage and we'll see three things: and encouragement, a warning and reasons.

### A. First, an encouragement: listen to and remember your parents' teaching

1. Proverbs 6:20-23 - *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,*
2. As with many of the discourses in Proverbs, this warning starts with a call to heed a father's instruction
  - a. Each of the adultery passages begin this way because these warnings are wisdom
  - b. So, parents teaching their children is extremely valuable because they are the older generation, those who have experienced and understood the world and can pass down their observations to the next generation
3. And we see across Scripture that fathers have the primary responsibility to train their children, to pass this wisdom down to the next generation - but here we specifically see that a mother's instruction is valuable as well
  - a. In fact, the parallel nature of Proverbs 6 makes the instruction from the father and the mother of equal value
  - b. And we can see why this is true - father's may have a unique responsibility to train their children, but mothers have a unique placement from which to train their children - mothers, you get to spend nearly every waking moment with your children as they grow up and have a unique ability to teach and to train them
  - c. Proverbs may be written primarily from the perspective of a father to a son, but at important points it reminds us that mother's should be teaching their children as well and that her instruction is extremely valuable
4. And it ends with a promise - if you listen and follow your parents' wise instruction it will lead you in the way of life
  - a. But there is a context to this promise - it assumes that parents are teaching according to the Scriptures - *For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,*
  - b. A parent's teaching must be according to the Word of God - ultimately the Word of God leads to the way to life, but as parents faithfully teach the Word of God, the path of life is illuminated for another generation

### B. Second, a warning of parental wisdom from the path of life: do not desire the adulterous

1. Proverbs 6:24-25 - *to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;*
2. The warning is simple: do not participate in adultery, in fact do not even desire it
  - a. Each of the warning passages in Proverbs agrees that adultery can seem pleasant, even desirable at times
  - b. But the warning is clear - regardless of your desire, the path of adultery is the path of foolishness and death
3. And so a parent's wisdom counsels us not only to keep ourselves from adultery, but not even to desire it in our heart, not to toy with the idea, not to take a second glance, not to imagine the possibility
  - a. A parent's wisdom says that the fight against adultery doesn't start when given an opportunity for adultery, the fight against adultery starts long before that - the fight against adultery starts with your desires
  - b. We must guard our desires so that we win the fight against adultery before an opportunity ever presents itself - if we would *desire her beauty in your heart*, we open ourselves to be *captured by her eyelashes*

### C. The rest of Proverbs 6 gives three reasons that adultery is dangerous, three reasons we should heed parental wisdom:

1. Verses 26-29 - *for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.*
  - a. Parental wisdom tells us that though adultery may seem pleasant at the time, it will cause intense damage
  - b. It says, adultery will kill you, it will be like burning yourself with fire - just to be clear these are really bad things
  - c. Adultery may seem pleasant, the adulterous may seem alluring, but adultery will lead to disaster, although what disaster that is isn't stated yet - nonetheless, we should heed the warning, adultery leads to disaster
2. Verses 30-33 - *People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.*
  - a. Parental wisdom tells us that though adultery may seem pleasant at the time, it will cause intense shame
  - b. In fact, this section compares adultery unfavorably to thieving (actually, the section above does this as well with prostitution, but we'll come back to that in a moment)
  - c. Parental wisdom tells us that society will punish a thief, but they may understand why he did it - adultery, thought, is worse, not only will he get wounds but also dishonor, his disgrace will not cease
  - d. Adultery may seem pleasant, the adulterous may seem alluring, but adultery will lead to disgrace

3. Verses 34-35 - *For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.*
  - a. Though we generalize the warning passages in Proverbs to address all adultery, Proverbs 6 primarily talks about transgressing on someone else's marriage - it speaks of desiring and having a married woman
  - b. Parental wisdom looks at the world and says, if you take a married woman, you will make her husband angry, you will make him jealous and he will want to destroy you
  - c. We can generalize this to all forms of adultery, when you transgress on the marriage covenant, whether yours or someone else's, you provoke jealousy - you belong to your wife and that woman belongs to another man
  - d. And jealousy, when provoked, will lead to wrath - it will make a man furious, he will take revenge and hate you
  - e. And this is actually the lynchpin of the first two warnings
    - i. The first warning said that adultery would end in disaster, though it didn't specify what - but now we can see that, beside any other disasters that might come, it will provoke the spouse to wrath and fury
    - ii. The second warning said that adultery would end in disgrace, though it didn't specify how - but now we can see that, beside any other disgrace that might come, it will provoke the spouse to despise you
  - f. So adultery may seem pleasant, the adulterous may seem alluring, but adultery will lead to disaster and disgrace because adultery will provoke the jealousy of a faithful partner

**D. And so, we can see that the ultimate emphasis of this passage is jealousy**

1. Jealousy is behind the first and second warnings and is the third warning - the whole passage is about jealousy
  - a. We can go back and see this clearly in verse 26 - *for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.*
  - b. It says that prostitution only costs a little money (a loaf of bread) but adultery is much worse, it will cost your life - but why would Proverbs 6 view adultery as worse than prostitution?
  - c. Now, to be clear, it's not saying that prostitution is good (other passages clearly describe it as bad), but prostitution does not provoke jealousy in the way that adultery does (assuming they are not married)
  - d. Proverbs 6 is saying: prostitution is simply a bad idea and sin as well as a waste of money, but adultery is worse because it will provoke a husband to jealousy and cost you your life
2. Since jealousy is at the center of our passage this morning, we might want to take a moment and define jealousy
  - a. Jealousy is an attitude that is possessive of something else - you want it for yourself, and you don't want anyone else to have it - and this is often looked on negatively in Scripture
  - b. For example, James 3:16 - *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* - James doesn't view jealousy well, to put it in Paul's terms - Jealousy is the root of all kinds of evil
  - c. But sometimes jealousy is viewed as a good thing, even God is described as jealous, for example, Exodus 34:14 - *for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*
  - d. So, there must be a good way and a bad way to exhibit jealousy - and marriage is the capstone example of what good jealousy should look like
  - e. In marriage, a husband belongs to his wife and a wife belongs to her husband (think about I Corinthians 7), they have a right to each other and therefore have a right to be jealous over each other's devotion and affection - marital devotion and affection should not be expressed outside of the covenant of marriage
  - f. So a marriage should be marked by jealousy - a desire to have your wife or your husband as your own, not to share him or her with others - in fact, we recognize this in the traditional vows, "forsaking all others"
  - g. That is the definition of jealousy that we are working with this morning, an intense desire for your spouse to be yours alone, to show affection and devotion to you and only you
3. And this jealousy should be expressed in a marriage
  - a. The easiest way to see jealousy expressed is in wrath when a possession is taken away - we see this in Proverbs 6:34 - *For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.*
  - b. A breaking of a marriage covenant should provoke jealousy to wrath because the spouses rightful demand of loyalty, devotion and affection has been given to someone else
  - c. But jealousy is not only expressed during faithlessness, it is also expressed in love during faithfulness
  - d. We see this in Song of Solomon 8:6 - *Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD.*
  - e. Jealousy in marriage should be expressed as an intense desire and passion for your spouse, an earnest love toward your spouse - only when the covenant is broken does jealousy produce wrath, otherwise jealousy produces passion and love
4. And it is this jealousy that Proverbs 6 warns us about - adultery is dangerous because jealousy is a powerful motivator - a wronged husband will despise and destroy you, remember that!

### III. Why (does the passage warn us against this)? Looking at Christ.

As we go on this morning, I want to pause and ask why - why does the Bible view adultery so poorly and why does it teach on it so much. And then, to bring us back to the passage, why would Scripture call us to look at jealousy as a hindrance to adultery?

#### A. Why does Proverbs (and all of Scripture) look at adultery so poorly?

1. As I mentioned in the introduction, there are three long passages in Proverbs, almost in a row, that sternly warn us against the dangers of adultery, along with numerous other shorter warnings - why would this be?
  - a. And I think this is an important question to ask - a lot of teaching on these passages would end with adultery is wrong, don't do - and that is 100% true
  - b. But that is simply moralism - many non-believers would agree with that statement even if they reject Christ
  - c. So we need to think about why Proverbs and all of Scripture is so anti-adultery? Why are sexual ethics so important and what makes them important to a Christian? What does adultery have to do with Christ?
2. And the answer is actually very easy - adultery is an abomination in the Bible because it is an affront to marriage, a breaking of the marriage covenant, and ultimately marriage is a picture of Jesus' relationship to the church
  - a. Ephesians 5:31-32 - *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.
  - b. Marriage is meant to teach us about Christ, the real yet mysterious union of a husband and a wife, the pleasure and enjoyment that a husband and wife have with each other, the leaving the world and clinging to each other of marriage, the sacrificial and affection love between a husband and a wife shows us how Christ relates to the church and how the church should relate to Christ
  - c. So adultery is ultimately a denial of the truths about Christ - adultery is a breaking of the marriage covenant, a despising of the joys and the bonds of marriage in favor of seeking personal self-fulfillment
  - d. Adultery clouds the vision that marriage gives us about Christ and so Scripture hates adultery and sternly warns us against it over and over again - adultery is forbidden to the Christian because ultimately adultery is a denial of Christ - a denial of who He is and what He has done for us

#### B. But, then we could come back to the passage and ask, why does Proverbs 6 warn against provoking jealousy?

1. If marriage is about Christ and adultery is a denial of Christ, then Proverbs' teaching on jealousy must teach us something about Christ as well
  - a. This isn't merely a cause and effect passage - the Bible may correctly and productively share with us causes and effects in the world (and it is wisdom to listen to these), like adultery will provoke jealousy that will destroy you, but this isn't the Bible's overarching purpose
  - b. The Bible's overarching purpose is to point us to Christ, so there must be a deeper truth here in the principle of jealousy that shows us something about Christ, and seeing this truth starts by asking 'who is God?'
2. And we could answer that many ways, but in a very primary way we can say that God is Jealous, He is a jealous God, jealous over His people's affections
  - a. We see this in the covenant made at Sinai in Exodus 20:4-5 - *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God,*
  - b. Again, in the renewal, God proclaims that not only is He characterized by jealousy, it is so central to His character that it could be called His name, Exodus 34:13-14 - *You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),*
  - c. And in the exposition of the covenant in Deuteronomy 4:23-24, God's jealousy is a consuming fire, ready to devour those who transgress His covenant - *Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*
3. So, jealousy in marriage is a picture of God's jealousy, and like in marriage, God's jealousy is expressed in wrath against those who transgress and forsake His covenant
  - a. We see this, again, in the covenant at Sinai, Exodus 20:5-6 - *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*
  - b. Or again, in the exposition in Deuteronomy 6:15 - *for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God---lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.*
  - c. God's jealousy will destroy those who are not completely devoted to Him - He will act in wrath against those who seek after other gods and other pleasures, He demands His people's love and affection for Himself

4. But, like in marriage, God's jealousy is also expressed in love for those who belong to Him
  - a. We can see this clearly when many of the prophetic promises to Israel are founded on God's jealousy, for example Zechariah 1:14-17 - *So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'*"
  - b. Or again, in Zechariah 8:2-3 - *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain.*
  - c. God's jealousy for His people is expressed in love leading to salvation and restoration
5. So God's jealousy is beautifully expressed in Exodus 20, where it upholds both the love and the wrath of God's jealousy - Exodus 20:5-6 - *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
  - a. God's jealousy is expressed in wrath to those who will not devote themselves to Him - *He will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*
  - b. But God's jealousy is expressed in love to those who love Him, who are completely devoted to Him - *but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commands*

**C. So why is adultery such a problem for a Christian? Because God's jealousy is ultimately expressed in Christ.**

1. If God is a jealous God, infinitely jealous over His people's affection and devotion, then can we say less of Christ's jealousy for the church? We see throughout the New Testament that God's jealousy is perfectly expressed in Christ.
2. First, we see that God's jealousy over His people has not lessened in the advent of a New Covenant
  - a. James 4:4-5 - *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?*
  - b. God still jealously desires His people's love and therefore demands that His people refuse to love other things, refuse to love the things of this world - one cannot belong to God and be a friend of the world at the same time
3. And we see that God's marital jealousy is expressed in a better marriage in the New Covenant
  - a. II Corinthians 11:2-3 - *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*
  - b. Paul feels a jealousy because the church has been betrothed to Christ and Paul is merely reflecting Christ's jealousy for His bride - Christ demands sincere and pure devotion from His bride, His bride must forsake all others and cling only to Him
4. So Paul gives a stern warning to the Corinthians not to provoke Christ's jealousy over His people
  - a. I Corinthians 10:21-22 - *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*
  - b. Paul's ultimate and final reason for refusing even to dabble in idolatry of any sort is that it is ultimately cosmic adultery - it is a breaking of our marriage covenant with Christ, it is giving our affection and our devotion to something other than Christ, and thus it will provoke Christ to jealousy
  - c. Ultimately the warning of Proverbs 6 applies to the church's relationship with Christ - beware of the incredible passion of jealousy and be faithful to your bridegroom lest Christ turn and destroy you in wrath

**D. So, why does the Bible teach us this? To teach us something about Christ and to enable us to testify to Christ well.**

1. We should refuse to transgress our marriage covenants because we know that Christ is a jealous God, jealous over His people's affection and devotion - we should act this way in our marriages and towards other's marriages because doing so (or failing to do so) says something about Christ
2. Living chastely in marriage and with honor towards other's marriages says that Christ is jealous over His people, failing to honor marriage, whether our own or others, denies that Christ is jealous over His people

#### IV. How (do we live out the warnings of this passage)? Looking at Us.

As we close this morning, I want to make three applications of this passage. These applications are going to be simple, but let's think about how we should react to this passage. Being in Proverbs, I want to make three "wisdom is..." statements

##### A. Wisdom is ... passing the truth of Scripture down through the generations

1. As we go through this passage, we shouldn't skip over the first few verses
  - a. At least for me, that would be easy to do because Proverbs says that over and over again, and these verses aren't really the main point of the passage
  - b. But the very fact that Proverbs says this over and over again should call us to listen - parents passing down their wisdom to their children is very important
2. So, parents, listen to this passage and devote yourselves to teaching your children the truths of Christ in Scripture
  - a. Carefully and continually teach your children the truths of the gospel - what has Christ done for us?
  - b. Carefully and continually teach your children how to live out the gospel - what does Scripture command of us
  - c. And especially, carefully and continually teach your children why they should live in a manner worthy of the gospel - why should they obey the rules and guidelines Scripture has set out for us? What do these 'rules' have to do with the gospel?
  - d. When we do this, we are used by God to light the way of life for the next generation - it's an obvious truth, but one we should keep reminding ourselves of - this is a really important task
3. And children, listen to this passage and devote yourselves to listening and following the wisdom of your parents
  - a. I really can't say it better than the passage does: *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.*
  - b. Listen to the verbs in these verses:
    - i. KEEP your father's commands - wisdom is listening to and OBEYING your parents because they are setting rules to lead you to Christ and to help you follow Him better
    - ii. FORSAKE NOT your mother's teaching - wisdom is not FORGETTING what your parents taught, but treasuring and abiding in their wisdom
    - iii. BIND them on your heart, TIE them around your neck - wisdom is the opposite of forgetting, it is working hard to REMEMBER and RELY ON your parent's wisdom, to make it as though you tied their reminders around your neck so you could think about them all of the time
  - c. Children - these are acts of wisdom that even the youngest child who wants to follow Jesus can do - listening, remembering and obeying your parents teaching will lead you in the path of life

##### B. Wisdom is ... guarding yourself against adultery

1. This is obviously the main application of this passage warning against the dangers of adultery: don't do it
  - a. And we shouldn't skip this obvious application either - we should be extremely careful and intentional about guarding ourselves against adultery - to be living according to the sexual ethics of Scripture
  - b. And our study of this passage teaches us at least three things about ourselves against adultery
2. First, we should guard ourselves against adultery because it is ultimately saying something about Christ
  - a. Like I said, any number of people, Christian or not, could tell you that adultery is a bad thing - but this is the ultimate thing I want to leave you with, adultery isn't just bad because it's bad, it's bad because it is a denial of who Christ is and how He relates to us
  - b. Remember - marriage is a picture of Christ, so being faithful in marriage is a beautiful picture of what Christ does for the church, but adultery is a marring of that picture, a mis-testimony of Christ
  - c. So, we guard ourselves against adultery by loving Christ well, by wanting to see and to display His glory and working hard to make our lives conform to His image
  - d. When we love Christ well, we will not be tempted toward adultery, when we love Christ well, we will be guarded against the dangers of adultery - we don't commit adultery because we love Christ, we don't commit adultery because we want to testify to each other and to the world rightly about who Christ is
  - e. This is what makes us not just moralistic - we aren't doing this to be good people, we do this in love for Christ
3. Second, we should guard ourselves against adultery because it is a terribly dangerous thing
  - a. As I said earlier, the ultimate purpose of Scripture isn't merely to give us a list of cause and effects, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't listen to the cause and effects that Scripture teaches to us - ultimately these point us to Christ, but they are still completely true in this world
  - b. So another thing that should guard us against adultery is remembering that no matter how desirable it might look, it actually is very dangerous and destructive - it isn't going to bring the pleasure you think it might

4. Third, we should guard ourselves against adultery by guarding our desires, to stop adultery long before it happens
  - a. I think one of the most useful verses in Proverbs 6 is verse 25 - *Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes*
  - b. As I said before, parental wisdom teaches us that guarding ourselves against adultery starts in the heart before the opportunity ever arise - guarding ourselves against adultery starts by guarding our hearts
  - c. And this is where we can get a little bit practical this morning - we should act intentionally in our lives to guard our hearts from things that might tempt us toward even thinking about adultery - we should be willing to remove things from our lives that might help us take a step toward faithlessness in marriage
  - d. In fact, this is a common refrain of the wisdom literature because this is an act of wisdom - protecting ourselves from even contemplating the path of adultery
    - i. So Job says that he will guard his eyes so that he is not tempted toward adultery, Job 31:1 - *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?"*
    - ii. And David says that he will not set worthless things before His eyes, Psalm 101:3 - *I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.*
    - iii. Instead, the Psalmist says that he will fix his gaze on the Word of God so that his eyes are not tempted, Psalm 119:37 - *Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*
  - e. Like them, we should be intentionally shaping our lives to guard our heart against even the desire of adultery
    - i. And ultimately this is again following the words of Christ, Matthew 5:27-30 - *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.*

### C. Wisdom is ... being completely devoted to Christ

1. Keeping ourselves may be the obvious application of this passage, but I don't think it is the ultimate application
  - a. Since marriage is ultimately about the relationship between Christ and the church, then our passage on adultery should ultimately be about the church's relationship with Christ
  - b. So if we can say that faithfulness in marriage is extremely important (and it is!), then how much more important is faithfulness in our relationship to Christ?
  - c. Christ demands his people's devotion to be to Him and only to Him - He is a good bridegroom who is rightfully jealous over His bride, and we should be a good bride who returns complete affection and devotion
2. So our passage this morning should put teeth in the verse that we considered earlier about Christ:
  - a. I Corinthians 10:14-22 - *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*
  - b. Idolatry, finding pleasure in and giving devotion to something other than Christ, is cosmic adultery - it is acting faithlessly in our relationship toward Christ - which is why I titled the message this morning, "Shall we provoke Him to jealousy?"
  - c. So, think about how terrible you think adultery is and how carefully you are going to guard yourself against it - your attitude toward Christ should be even more intense! You should hate anything that would call you into relationship with something besides Christ! You should carefully guard yourself against the smallest idolatry!
  - d. Christ demands and deserves all of your affections! Christ demands and deserves all of your devotion! We should be a loving bride and earnestly give Him our affection and devotion - otherwise we may provoke Him to jealousy and call His anger and His wrath down on us.
  - e. We may not like to think about this, but Scripture is actually very clear - Christ hates those who are faithless to Him, He will destroy those who are faithless to Him - and this is a good thing! If He didn't act this way, He would not be the perfect bridegroom, He would not be worthy of the church's complete devotion.
  - f. And we should take this as a warning - we should see His jealousy and respect it and refuse to give our affections to anything else, instead we should bask in His glory and take infinite pleasure and passion in Him

3. But I don't want to end on this dour warning - it is what I want to take away from the message this morning, but I want you to hear this warning against the backdrop of the gospel
  - a. If we stopped here we could get the impression that Christ is a mean bridegroom - jealous in all of the wrong ways - and this is not at all what I want to leave you with
  - b. So, we need to hear this warning against the backdrop of the gospel - this warning is for those who have embraced Christ through the gospel and is a call to continue embracing Christ through the gospel
  - c. The gospel teaches us that Christ is infinitely loving and merciful and will eagerly welcome to Himself all who repent of their sin and turn to embrace Him - He has already paid the price for all of our adultery against Him
  - d. And our warning against jealousy is reminding us to continue in the gospel - to continue repenting of idolatry and turning to embrace Christ - to value and honor the price that He has paid for us
  - e. So this isn't a declaration that we will never falter or fail, but a call to see that if we find ourselves tempted toward idolatry instead of continuing in idolatry, we should continually be repenting of idolatry and re-devoting ourselves to Christ
  - f. If we continue in idolatry, in adultery against Christ, Christ will hate us and will deny us before His Father, but this truth does not conquer the gospel and He is still willing to forgive and embrace those who desire to turn away from idolatry
  - g. So, let us hear this warning against the backdrop of the gospel - provoking Christ to jealousy would be an infinitely disastrous thing, something that we should earnestly guard ourselves against, but we guard ourselves against this by continually embracing the gospel - to embrace who Christ is for us
  
4. So this morning we can affirm that Christ is a perfect bridegroom - infinitely loving and merciful, and infinitely jealous - and His jealousy over us is not mean or merely possessive, but is for our good
  - a. He wants us to find our complete joy and satisfaction in Him, He wants us to find the pleasure of embracing Him in the gospel in all of its passion, He wants us to experience the joys, the passions and the pleasures of marriage to Him
  - b. And we respond by relishing and reveling in all that Christ is - we respond by loving Christ so much that the things of this world, the idols that could tempt us to adultery, have no pleasure for us