

I suppose it is fitting – in a way – that we are going through Proverbs during a pandemic.

This is a time when we are most isolated –
and perhaps it is at this time that we most *need* the discipline of our Heavenly Father –
because we are more distant from each other.

The Father speaks to his Son and warns him of the temptations that will come when he is far from help.

In that moment it will be just you and temptation.
Our Lord Jesus was there – in the wilderness – tempted by the Devil.
Our Lord Jesus was there – as he hung on the cross –
where he could not experience the presence of his Father.

In those times when help is *not* to be found.
In those times when you find yourself alone with temptation –
what will you do?

Back in Prov 2:12-15 the Father spoke of how wisdom would deliver you from the evil men–
the men who offer easy money–
and Proverbs 6:1-19 expanded on that.

Prov 2:16-19 set forth how wisdom would deliver you from the forbidden woman–
the woman who offers easy sex–
and now Proverbs 6:20-35 expands on that.

Much of the same language is used.
2:11–discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you
6:21–parental teaching “will watch over you”

1. The Price of Adultery (6:20-35)

a. Opening Admonition: The Reproofs of Discipline Are the Way of Life (6:20-24)

*My son, keep your father's commandment,
and forsake not your mother's teaching.*

²¹ *Bind them on your heart always;
tie them around your neck.*

²² *When you walk, they^[d] will lead you;
when you lie down, they will watch over you;
and when you awake, they will talk with you.*

²³ *For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,*

²⁴ *to preserve you from the evil woman,^[e]
from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.^[f]*

But here it is not the plural “commandments” as elsewhere in Proverbs 1-9 (2:1; 3:1),
because here we have a single command:
beware of adultery.

After all, Proverbs 1-9 is directed to young men—
teenage boys, in particular.

But it applies equally to young women.

And this lesson is central to your future.
If you get caught up in the pursuit of easy sex,
then you will surely make a complete mess of your life.

Verses 20-21 exhort the son to keep this particular commandment (v20),
and the “teaching” of your mother.

But verse 21 is the only plural—“bind them” “fasten them”--
after that it returns to the singular:

When you walk, she will lead you; when you lie down, she will watch over you;
and when you awake, she 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.

The singular is important:
because if you are going to survive the temptation that is coming your way,
then you, my son, will need to be single minded.

And that single mind is to be fixed on wisdom.

When you walk, who will lead you?
when you lie down, who will watch over you?
when you awake, who will talk with you?

Wisdom?
Or the Adulteress (the foreign woman)

In other words,
the question is,
who will be your companion at night?
With whom will you spend your time?
Whom do you desire?

Because adultery starts in the heart – but it doesn’t stay there...
That’s at the heart of the father’s point in verses 25-35

b. Adultery Starts in the Heart – But It Doesn't Stay There... (6:25-35)

- ²⁵ *Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;*
²⁶ *for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread,^[g]
but a married woman^[h] hunts down a precious life.*
²⁷ *Can a man carry fire next to his chest
and his clothes not be burned?*
²⁸ *Or can one walk on hot coals
and his feet not be scorched?*
²⁹ *So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
none who touches her will go unpunished.*
³⁰ *People do not despise a thief if he steals
to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry,*
³¹ *but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold;
he will give all the goods of his house.*
³² *He who commits adultery lacks sense;
he who does it destroys himself.*
³³ *He will get wounds and dishonor,
and his disgrace will not be wiped away.*
³⁴ *For jealousy makes a man furious,
and he will not spare when he takes revenge.*
³⁵ *He will accept no compensation;
he will refuse though you multiply gifts.*

Do not desire her beauty in your heart.

The father identifies the root of the problem.

Long before the son commits adultery with the foreign woman,
he will have desired her in his heart.

When Jesus said, “whoever looks at a woman with lustful intent
has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28)

he was simply saying what Proverbs had been teaching for centuries.

“Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes

In other words, “do not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

The word “desire” is the same word translated “covet” in the Ten Commandments.

What does it mean to “desire her beauty”?

It means to *covet*.

It means to think about her beauty as if it was yours.

There is nothing wrong with *delighting* in beauty.

So long as you recognize – *it's not yours!*

Coveting is the opposite of delighting.

Coveting is where you selfishly desire to possess it for yourself.
Delighting is where you freely acknowledge that “it’s not for me”!

So – as the Father has said many times:

Guard your hearts.

When Jesus said “if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out,”

he didn’t mean “lust isn’t that bad, you can play with it for a while!”

If you can’t use your phone responsibly, cut it out.

If you can’t use the internet wisely, cut it off.

Do whatever it takes to flee from sin.

Coveting begins in the heart – but it always moves to the eyes.

The father warns, “do not let her capture you with her eyelashes.”

You are looking too intently at her.

Your eyes and your imagination are what you must guard.

And what the Father says to his son speaks to all of us.

Men and women both deal with lust.

The desire to be appreciated and affirmed

can lead a woman to imagine and desire another man.

The warning is the same:

guard your heart!

There are two arguments against adultery given in verses 26-33 and 34-35.

1) adultery’s inevitable penalty

the translation of verse 26 is difficult,

but it seems clear that there is a contrast between

the prostitute and the married woman.

A prostitute is cheap–

but adultery will cost you your life.

This is not an argument for prostitution,

but is simply stating a known fact:

Adultery seems cheap (it doesn’t cost anything),

but in reality, it will cost you everything.

Prostitution is bad,

but adultery is worse, “because it involves breaking the marriage vow,
wronging a spouse, destroying a home, and the debt is out of control.”

(Waltke, 355)

But not only is the penalty severe, it is inevitable:

After all, *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.

There are no exceptions.

If you play with fire, you will get burned.

If you think that you are the exception—that you can get away with it—
you won't!

But not only is the penalty severe and inevitable, it is also unending!

As the father contrasted prostitution with adultery in verse 26,
now he contrasts stealing with adultery in verse 30-31.

*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.*

You see this in times of crisis.

If, during a war, someone breaks into a deserted house looking for food,
no one would think badly of him.

But it is still stealing—and a policeman would still arrest him for breaking in.

The law required double compensation—so why does it say “sevenfold”?

The phrase “sevenfold” is rarely used literally (Lev 26:28; Gen 4:15),
it means “fully.”

We have sympathy, though, for a starving thief.

But he who *commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*

Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his disgrace will not be wiped away

In the Law, the penalty for adultery was death.

But it does not appear that every adulterer was actually put to death.

So Proverbs may be referring to the actual practice in Israel.

Certainly adulterers deserved death,

but it would appear that leniency was often extended.

But such leniency resulted in perpetual disgrace.

Forever the stigma of adultery would remain upon the adulterer—
like a Scarlet Letter that could not be removed.

The second argument (in verses 34-35) against adultery turns to the jealous husband.

After all, if you have committed adultery with a married woman,

there is going to be a very angry man that you will have to deal with.

And 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.

He will see to it that your life is ruined.

In many ways, our society doesn't seem to care about adultery.

But even so – the cost is still there.

If you get her pregnant, you will pay for it!

2. The Path of Adultery (7:1-27)

a. Opening Admonition: Stay Close to Wisdom! (7:1-5)

My son, keep my words

and treasure up my commandments with you;

² *keep my commandments and live;*

keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;

³ *bind them on your fingers;*

write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ *Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,”*

and call insight your intimate friend,

⁵ *to keep you from the forbidden^[a] woman,*

from the adulteress^[b] with her smooth words.

In chapter seven, the Father brings the warning against folly to its climax.

The challenge for the father is to help his son understand the temptation,
and yet make it repulsive.

This is hard!

We want our children to be well-prepared to deal with life—

so we need to give them an honest lesson in what they will face.

They need to understand that they *will* be tempted—

and yet we need to show them where the temptation leads:

Folly invariably leads to death.

Once again,

the father opens his lecture by addressing, “my son, keep my words,

and treasure up my commandments with you;

keep my commandments and live;

keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;

bind them on your fingers;

write them on the tablet of your heart.

The law was written on two tablets of stone.

The father understands that in order for us to live,

the law needs to be written on tablet of your heart.

This is the blessing of the new covenant, according to Jeremiah 31.

Jesus is the one whose heart was pure—who indeed kept the whole law,

and did as his Father commanded.

Therefore, in Jesus, the law is written on our hearts,

and we are more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

And once again,

the father says that the reason for his lecture

is to draw you to wisdom and keep you from folly.

Say to wisdom, ‘you are my sister,’ and call insight your intimate friend,

to keep you from the forbidden woman,

from the adulteress with her smooth words (v4-5).

What happens when you say “I do”?
What happens when you say “I take you to be my wife”?
By that speech, something happens.
They are merely words—and yet they accomplish something.
When the pastor says, “I pronounce you man and wife!”
there is something irreversible that happens.

When you say to wisdom, “you are my sister,”
something irreversible happens.
“Sister” was a term of endearment for one’s beloved.
Again, the idea is that you must committed to wisdom in order to avoid folly.

You cannot dance between the two.

b. The Story (7:6-27)

i) The Young Man Lacking Sense Passes Near Her Corner (v6-9)

⁶ *For at the window of my house*
I have looked out through my lattice,
⁷ *and I have seen among the simple,*
I have perceived among the youths,
a young man lacking sense,
⁸ *passing along the street near her corner,*
taking the road to her house
⁹ *in the twilight, in the evening,*
at the time of night and darkness.

And so the father then tells a story:

I have looked out through my window and seen among the simple,
I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense.
Unlike you, my son, he had no one to teach him wisdom—
or, perhaps, he refused to listen!
But either way, he lacked sense.
He had never given himself to wisdom.

And he walked down the street near *her* corner.
This was his fatal flaw—
he is simple, he is gullible—
he did not think about where he was!
You see, my son, he was not a fool.
He was not looking for trouble.
But he was not wise.

After all, he approached her house at dusk—
as darkness was falling.

My son,

be especially careful at night.

It is easy to stumble and fall when darkness covers your steps.

You may think that darkness is a cloak that will hide evil deeds,

but the eyes of the LORD pierce every veil that we cast around our steps!

ii) The Enticement (v10-20)

¹⁰ *And behold, the woman meets him,*

dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.^[c]

¹¹ *She is loud and wayward;*

her feet do not stay at home;

¹² *now in the street, now in the market,*

and at every corner she lies in wait.

¹³ *She seizes him and kisses him,*

and with bold face she says to him,

¹⁴ *“I had to offer sacrifices,^[d]*

and today I have paid my vows;

¹⁵ *so now I have come out to meet you,*

to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.

¹⁶ *I have spread my couch with coverings,*

colored linens from Egyptian linen;

¹⁷ *I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,*

aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸ *Come, let us take our fill of love till morning;*

let us delight ourselves with love.

¹⁹ *For my husband is not at home;*

he has gone on a long journey;

²⁰ *he took a bag of money with him;*

at full moon he will come home.”

And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.

She hides her true identity in order to entice you.

If he had known at first that she was married, perhaps he would have avoided her,

but she seduced him with her smooth talk.

She looks attractive.

She looks like fun!

And she is everywhere!

Now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.

She seizes him and kisses him,

and with bold face she says,

“I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows!”
In other words, I have meat at home—
I have the best food!
Come, and share it with me!

Father, is this a sacrifice from the temple? Or a pagan sacrifice?

My son, you are missing the point!
She is using the language of piety in order to ensnare you!

I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.
(Literally, I came out to face you and seek diligently your face.)
In other words, you good-looking hunk, come with me!

And she draws him in with promises of a plush bed, and aphrodisiacs:
myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

“Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.”

After all,
my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey;
he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home.

You have nothing to fear!

The seed of the serpent offers the same promise the serpent had in the garden:
“You will not die!”
There will be no consequences for your actions.
She does not try to say that adultery is right,
“only that they can get away with it because her husband is not at home.”

At this point the wise son will notice something:
she claims that her husband will not be home for 2 weeks (new moon to full moon);
but why should you trust the word of a woman who would commit adultery?

iii) The End Is Death (v21-27)

²¹ *With much seductive speech she persuades him;*
with her smooth talk she compels him.

²² *All at once he follows her,*
as an ox goes to the slaughter,
or as a stag is caught fast^e

²³ *till an arrow pierces its liver;*
as a bird rushes into a snare;

he does not know that it will cost him his life.
²⁴ *And now, O sons, listen to me,
and be attentive to the words of my mouth.*
²⁵ *Let not your heart turn aside to her ways;
do not stray into her paths,*
²⁶ *for many a victim has she laid low,
and all her slain are a mighty throng.*
²⁷ *Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of death.*

But the gullible—the simple—cannot resist the snares of the adulteress.

*With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.
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.*

The last line might better be translated, “he does not know that he acts against his own life.”
Just as unwitting animals do not see any connection between traps and death,
even so, morally stupid people do not see any relation between their sin and death.

They keep rushing forward – oblivious to the results of their folly.

The wages of sin is death.

The path of folly is nothing more and nothing less than the road to hell.

The father has given his sons an earful.

He has let them hear the very words of the adulteress—
with her syrupy sweet siren song.
Now he calls them back:

And now, O sons, listen to me.

Remember, boys, remember what we are talking about here:
be attentive to the words of my mouth.

*Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,
for many a victim has she laid low,
and all her slain are a mighty throng.*

Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

Her bedroom is a battlefield where corpses lie.

Her bedroom is the gate to hell.

Brothers and sisters,

guard your hearts.

Remember Jesus, who is for us wisdom from God

and sanctification, righteousness, and redemption.

There is no better way to destroy your life,
 than to listen to the voice of the adulteress.
Wisdom calls out “listen to me!”
 “O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense!”

Hold fast to wisdom
Hold fast to Jesus

Let us be a community where wisdom prevails.
 Do not be afraid to ask for help.
 Lust is a powerful foe.
 But Christ is more powerful yet!

In this time when we are apart from one another –
 we need all the more to draw near to God (*and one another*)
 or else we will find ourselves drawn away.