

## **Proverbs 5** **Avoid the Forbidden Woman**

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Sunday, March 7, 2010

This is the first of three extended exhortations which Solomon gives his son concerning the folly of being led into an unlawful union with a woman who does not belong to him. He refers to such a woman as "a forbidden woman" (vv. 3, 20). He also refers to her as "an adulteress" (v. 20). He speaks in this chapter not so much about the *sinfulness* of the thing, but about the *foolishness* of it. He speaks about the foolishness of it in terms of the price to be paid for it (i.e., the consequences). Remember how we said that wisdom of a course of action is determined by its long term results. And when we do things God's way the long term consequences are always *good*. Sometimes in the short term doing things God's way involves us in unpleasant, even painful things.

Wisdom says that I should deny myself the pleasure of giving full vent to my anger when someone has offended me. There *is* a pleasure to be had in anger. There is a euphoric sense of power in unrestrained anger. But wisdom says, "Don't give in to it." So short term wisdom denies me pleasure. Long term it provides a foundation for reconciliation because it teaches me to reign in my emotions.

Wisdom says that we should apologize for wrongs we have done to others. But it's embarrassing to admit that we have been wrong. It's humbling. And this causes us pain. *But it's the right thing to do*, and long term it strengthens the relationship.

Solomon is urging the same sort of thing here. Deny yourself the pleasure of being with a forbidden woman. She looks good to you. She arouses your passions. But in the end you'll find that the price you pay for being with her will be more than you want to pay and you will say, "What a fool I have been. If only I had listened to wisdom."

So again, he is emphasizing not so much the sinfulness of the thing, but its foolishness. He mentions its sinfulness, but he's stressing its folly.

Now, we find similar warnings in 6:20-35 (read **6:20-24**) and 7:1-27 (read **7:1-5**).

In these passages Solomon is speaking to his son in very frank terms about one of the most common of all besetting sins for young men.

Now we should be clear that when Solomon speaks of "the forbidden woman" and "the adulteress", he is not speaking as though women *per se* are the problem—that men are all light and virtue and women are evil. He doesn't say, "Avoid all women;

they're nothing but trouble." No. He's talking about avoiding a particular *kind* of woman. Later in Proverbs he says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." Have you found a good wife? There's exhibit A that God loves you, that you enjoy his favor. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." In this chapter he tells his son, "rejoice in the wife of your youth" (v. 18). Hold fast to her, he says. "Be intoxicated always in her love" (v. 19). But as for the woman who *doesn't belong to you*, but belongs to another man, avoid her—even if she should have a pretty face and a fine figure; even if she should talk sweetly and seductively. Don't desire her beauty. Don't listen to her. Don't go anywhere near her house, no matter how attractive and seductive she is. Doing so will lead only to ruin.

Now, we understand (I hope) that this works both ways. In the same way that men who are pursuing wisdom and godliness and happiness should be on their guard against immoral women, so women should be on their guard against immoral men. God has no double standard. It's just that in Proverbs Solomon is addressing his son. This is why the admonition takes the form of a warning against immoral women. It's not because women are more prone to immorality, or that when a man commits immorality it's the woman's fault. It's that Solomon is addressing his son. If he were addressing his daughter, then there would be the appropriate wording.

Though there are other temptations, the temptation to sexual immorality is a very powerful one. And the personal as well as the social harm that results from it is incalculable. This is why warnings against sins of a sensual nature appear so frequently in the NT, often at the head of the list in a catalogue of vices.

Galatians 5:19 (top three; and four out of fifteen)

2 Corinthians 12:21

Ephesians 5:3-6

Colossians 3:5-8

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Now to preach about such things as these in our day and age will seem to some to be hopelessly naïve because our whole culture mocks the very idea of sexual purity. It is simply assumed that young people are going to be sexually active—that they will have lost their virginity long before they are married, and that they will have had multiple partners before marriage. To expect otherwise of young people is said to be unreasonable.

Furthermore, it's assumed that married couples will not remain faithful to each other, and that those who say they have

remained faithful, if they've been married for more than 10 years, are simply *lying*.

Joy Behar of "The View" recently called monogamy "a life sentence."

Article from the NYT...

### *Appearances v Reality*

(v. 3) "The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey." It's all sweetness. "And her speech is smoother than oil." Her seductive talk and her flattery are very convincing...*to a fool*. What she says sounds good. It sounds persuasive. Not because it's reasonable; not because it's wise; but because it's consistent with your own lusts. "The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil" BUT

Read vv. 4-15

The example of Joseph (**Gen. 39:1-18**)

*The Remedy for the Wiles of the Forbidden Woman*

The desire for the pleasures of intimacy is not an illicit desire. The Bible has a high view of sexual relations between a husband and wife. In fact, it encourages such relations. And this is one of the ways in which Solomon encourages his son.

Read vv. 15-19

And then he says, why do otherwise?

Read vv. 20-23

It used to be the case that our culture was aware of and morally sensitive to these things and went to great lengths to guard against the temptations herein warned against. Not just personal moral standards, but cultural moral standards

We should overestimate our strength to resist temptation.