

Proverbs 7
The Wiles of a Wayward Woman

Sunday, March 28, 2010

Introduction and Review

Chapter 7 deals with a theme that Solomon has already addressed twice before—once at some length in chapter 5, and then again, more briefly, at the end of chapter 6. The theme is the wisdom of avoiding the forbidden woman; or to put it in opposite terms, the *folly* of *not* avoiding the forbidden woman.

The forbidden woman, as we have mentioned before, is the woman who does not belong to you, but belongs to someone else. She is the wife of another man; nevertheless, she is on the prowl, looking to play the part of an adulteress. As Solomon says,

She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
now in the street, now in the market,
and at every corner she lies in wait (vv. 11-12)

For whatever reason, she is not content with her own husband, but is looking to step out on him. Solomon says, “Avoid her! Her ways lead only to death!”

In chapter 5 the emphasis was on the bitterness of the outcome. The relationship seems sweet at first. There’s a thrill; there’s excitement;

there's pleasure; "but in the end she is as bitter as wormwood" (5:4). That is, the consequences of being joined to her are very difficult to bear. And Solomon proceeds to give the remedy for falling prey to her temptations, namely, having a wife of your own to love.

Read **5:18-20**

Enjoy (be intoxicated with) the love of your own wife. Notice how he refers to her as "the wife of your youth". This is meant quite literally. People used to marry while still quite young.

The average age for one's first marriage in the U.S. today is 28 for men and 26 for women. If we figure that young people become biologically mature around the age of 13, we're talking about 15 years for men and 13 years for women of saying "no" to sexual temptation.

Furthermore, if we're allowing, or even encouraging boyfriend-girlfriend relationships in the early and mid-teen years, and especially if they are allowed to date in the traditional sense, without parental involvement and oversight and proper chaperoning, we are setting our children up for moral failure. It's a recipe for disaster.

This is true even for *good* kids, for sincere Christian young people. The fact of the matter is that God has made us for physical intimacy and we begin to desire it shortly after puberty;

and to suppose that a long, protracted period of singleness after reaching an age of biological maturity isn't going to be a serious problem is naïve.

In Biblical times, people generally looked to marry young. And young people were prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood at what we today regard as a very young age. A boy learned the importance of a stout work ethic by working daily with his father on the family farm or in the shop. Often the financial success of the family *depended* upon the boy working alongside his father. It wasn't just a nice little extra discretionary income that he earned; it was a part of the family's livelihood.

Young girls were taught at a very young age how to keep up a home—how to cook, how to sew, how to weave, how to raise children (since they often helped mom raise younger siblings). They learned to be industrious, productive.

Children, for the most part, didn't have a lot of idle time. They didn't typically spend all day playing. They had play times, to be sure. But they also had work to do that was *essential* for the family's well-being. *And nobody thought this was a bad thing.* In fact, they thought just the opposite. They thought this prepared their children to be self-reliant—to take responsibility, to prepare sons to become husbands and fathers, and to prepare daughters to be wives and mothers.

But what do we do in our day? We extend the period of childhood. We delay the time when we expect young people to grow up and assume the responsibilities of adulthood. We say we don't want them to grow up too fast, and in the end we hinder them from growing up at all.

And our very social structures with respect to education have a tendency to delay maturity. It used to be (prior to industrialization and urbanization) that children were constantly interacting with people of different ages—their parents, their siblings, their grandparents—and learning from people of different ages, benefiting from the wisdom of those who were older than they. But what do we do today? We segregate children by age so that they are interacting almost exclusively with other children. We cut off all opportunity for them to interact with people who are older and wiser. Let me ask you, which is more conducive to a child's maturity, intellectually and emotionally: regular interaction with mature minds, or regular interaction with other immature minds?

The modern educational system segregates students by age, not so much for the benefit of the student as for the benefit of the system, that is, for logistical reasons. It's easier. If you're a certain age, you go in a certain class, irrespective of a child's abilities and maturity level, effectively holding children back who are capable of greater achievement.

And another thing: who said that a child must be in school until the age of 18 and then go on to 4 years of college? Where is this written? Did this come down from on high? Is it engraved in stone? Did Moses come down with this from the holy mountain? I know he didn't, because it used to be the case that people who chose to go on to higher education were usually finished much earlier than they are today. You read about the Founding Fathers, for instance, and others of previous generations, and you learn that it was typical for them to be done with their university training by the age of 18 or 19. And this when a university education actually meant something! It was rigorous. It was challenging. The entrance requirements were higher than graduation standards today. Now, with some few rare exceptions, a college education simply shows that you know how to put in time and jump through hoops. But it used to be that a meaningful college education was completed by the age of 18, 19, or 20—this was not at all unusual—and a student was ready to get on with the rest of life. He was ready to get married and start a family.

Now, however, the average age for marriage is 28 for a man and 26 for a woman, eight to ten years later than what it used to be.

So when Solomon deals with the subject of the forbidden woman in chapter 5, the emphasis is on the remedy against the temptation, and that is to rejoice in the wife of your youth, the assumption being early marriage. Find yourself a good and godly

woman (and if she's beautiful too, all the better) and let yourself be intoxicated with her love.

In chapter 6 his emphasis was on the jealousy of the aggrieved husband and the revenge he would seek to take.

Read **6:32-35**

Solomon shows that there is an inevitability to it. Playing with another man's wife is playing with fire.

Read **6:27-29**

Now much of what he says in these passages applies not only to illicit relationships with married women, but with other women as well. There is a price to pay, for instance, for dallying with prostitutes, and it's not just her fee. There is a price to pay for it. There is a price to pay for illicit *premarital* relationships also.

Chapter Seven

Now we come to chapter seven where the emphasis is on the *wiles* of the wayward woman.

In Second Corinthians Paul tells us we should not be ignorant of Satan's devices [his schemes, his tactics, his tricks] (2 Cor. 2:11).

Here Solomon shows that he doesn't want his son to be ignorant of the ways of the forbidden woman. He very skillfully lays out how she will talk to him, how she will seek to persuade him, so that when his son encounters such a woman, he will say, "Oh, you know what? My father told me about women like you. That's exactly what he said you'd say!" And he'll be armed and ready to defend himself against her. When she makes her move on him, he won't be fooled. Instead, he will laugh at her and say, "You're wasting your time. I already know all about you."

We have to prepare *our* sons for this sort of thing, too. We have to say to our sons, "Watch out for the woman who dresses provocatively, suggestively, revealingly. Watch out for the woman who comes on to you. She's not the kind of woman you can respect. Nor is she the kind of woman you can trust. The very fact that she presents herself in that way shows that she is deeply flawed. When she exposes her body like that, she's also exposing the blackness of her own heart as well."

But you see men are stupid. They fall for pretty faces and beautiful figures and a little bit of skin every time. They go weak in the knees. Whatever rationality they possess goes right out the window. They're like an insect drawn to a bug lamp not knowing that it's going to cost them their life. "Oh, it's sooo beautiful..." ZAP! Dead bug!

Young men, listen to me. Whenever you see these whores that our culture presents as setting the standard of beauty, whenever you see, say, a Britney Spears or a Paris Hilton or an Angelina Jolie or Beyonce Knowles or Lady Gaga, whenever you see these women, or whenever

you see a movie with some scantily clad actress, or a model on the cover of a magazine as you go through the check-out line with that seductive, “Come hither” look, I want you to remember Proverbs 11:22,

Like a gold ring in pig’s snout
is a beautiful woman without discretion.

We have not really learned anything about Proverbs unless we have not only memorized individual proverbial sayings, but have also learned how to apply them in real life in appropriate situations. And I tell you, this is one proverb that we have abundant opportunity to use. “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.”

The point, of course, is that it’s not fitting to take something beautiful and valuable like a gold ring and attach it to something as disgusting and filthy as a pig wallowing in the mire. The ring is wasted on the pig. And in the same way, beauty is wasted on a woman who is without discretion—a woman without restraint; a woman who shows no modesty in speech, dress, or behavior. She may have a beautiful body, but she has an ugly soul.

We need to tell our sons these things.

And we need to talk to our daughters in a similar fashion. We need to warn them about the kind of men to watch out for; the kind of men

who are no good—the kind of things they will say and how they will try to win their affections with less than honorable intentions.

Now, like so many of the other admonitions we have found so far in Proverbs, this one is introduced by Solomon urging his son to place a high value on his instruction.

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.
Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
 and call insight your intimate friend (vv. 1-4)

Here we find a number of themes we have already encountered more than once, and will encounter again and again, including the importance not only of remembering but of *treasuring* his father's teaching, and calling to mind that keeping God's law leads to life. "Keep my commandments and live." (Jn. 10:10)

He uses a beautiful figure here when he says, "Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye". The apple of the eye is a reference to the pupil, which is perhaps the most sensitive part of the body. We instinctively, reflexively protect our eyes. What do we do when we suddenly catch sight of something moving quickly toward the eye? We shut our eyes tight. We turn our head; and we throw up our hands to stop it. We do

all this without thinking. We do it instinctively and reflexively. Solomon tells his son, "Keep [guard] my teaching like that."

"My teaching," he says,

"will keep you from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with *her smooth words* (v. 5)

Compare this with what he had said earlier in 5:3,

The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil.

What she says sounds so good! It's so alluring, so seductive! And she's so convincing, too, in her arguments. As we get into the chapter we will see that she pulls out all the stops in seeking to persuade him to yield to her offer. She anticipates and overcomes each of his objections. She knows *exactly* what she is doing...and *how* to do it.

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

He says, "I have seen this played out before. I have seen foolish young men fall to the wiles of wayward women, only to be led like an

ox to the slaughter. Let me tell you how it happens.” It happens to a young man who lacks sense. He’s out and about “in the evening, at the time of night and darkness” (v. 9).

Now let me say a word or two about this. The Scriptures often use nighttime and darkness as a metaphor for evildoing. Why is this? Because this is when a good deal of evildoing is done. This is the time of day when moral inhibitions are most easily overcome.

For you are all children of light, children of the day. *We are not of the night or of the darkness.* So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and *those who get drunk, are drunk at night* (1 Thes. 5:5-7).

This is one of the reasons why, young people, your parents have a curfew for you. This is a time when many temptations abound. This is a time when those who are *intent* on doing evil are most active, and when those who are simply naïve are more likely to come in with them and have their natural moral inhibitions overcome.

Of course, *parents* must decide what’s best for their own children in this, but it seems to me that nothing good ever happens after midnight. To be at home and in bed by midnight will save many a young person trouble from many a temptation. There is a lot of wisdom in the old adage, early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise. And while this is not actually in the book of Proverbs (at least not in this form), it is certainly consistent with what Proverbs teaches.

So the young man lacking sense is out about at night, passing along the street near the house of the forbidden woman, with the heart of an adulteress.

And behold, the woman meets him,
dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart (v. 10)

Dressed, in other words, in a provocative, seductive manner. This should have been a warning sign. It should have been a clue. There should have been red flags going up in his mind. Immodesty in dress and behavior is an indication of immodesty in heart and mind. Now this is not always the case, but often it is. Sometimes a young woman doesn't know any better. She is just naïve. She doesn't know what she's doing. She doesn't know that her clothing, in terms of what it covers and what it reveals, and how it fits, draws attention to the sexual features of her body. Perhaps she's just thinking, "It's comfortable", or that "It looks nice", not knowing that how *she* looks at her outfit is quite different from how a man looks at it.

Some women, I say, are just naïve about these things, and they don't know what they are doing. Others, however, know *exactly* what they are doing; and they do it on purpose.

Let me ask you, young ladies, how much thought do you give to the issue of modesty in your appearance, both when you are buying clothes, as well as when you stand before a mirror and fix yourself up before going out. Do you give much thought to it at all? Do you

consider whether or not how you present yourself, not only in terms of your clothing, but in speech and conduct too—do you consider whether how you present yourself is pleasing to the Lord? Or are you only thinking in terms of how attractive you think it makes you look? Do you ever consider your motives for dressing the way you do?

1 Timothy 2:8-10

1 Peter 3:1-6

Modesty is pleasing to the Lord. Perhaps you think you have to compromise modesty in order to gain the attention of a man. But if you think you have to dress suggestively, provocatively, seductively, in order to catch the attention of a man you are interested in, do you really think he's the kind of man whose attention you should desire? You don't want a man who wants a woman like that. If he is the kind of man who is drawn to you because of your suggestive style of clothing or behavior, what do you think is going to happen when some other immodestly-dressed woman passes by? You're being foolish if you think that if you catch a man by dressing suggestively, you can keep him from other women who will push the envelope further than you do. No, you want a man who man is attracted to you for all the right reasons.

Remember this: the kind of fish you catch is determined by the kind of bait you use. If you use stink bait, you're going to catch a bottom-feeder. That's not the man for you.

I'm not saying don't dress nicely, don't dress fashionably or beautifully. By all means do! But wear clothing that is designed to *conceal*, not *reveal*. Dress modestly. That doesn't mean dress in a burlap sack. It doesn't mean you have to wear a burqa; but it does mean that more of your body should be covered than uncovered and that you should avoid wearing clothing that draws undue attention to the parts of your body that are distinctly feminine.

And let me say to our men young men: If that young woman who catches your eye, catches it because of her seductive ways, she's probably catching the eye of a lot of other men, too. And if she's wanting that kind of attention, you're being foolish if you think she'll be content with the attention of just one man—of just you. You can't trust her. And because you can't trust her, you cannot *love* her. She may say she finds you hot. She may say she loves you. She may say she's been waiting a long time to find someone like you. But you're not the first person she's said this to, and you're not going to be the last either. Don't believe her. She's lying to you. The way she dresses gives the game away. It reveals what kind of woman she is.

So this woman comes out to meet this young man lacking sense; and she's dressed like a prostitute. She's seductive and alluring.

She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
now in the street, now in the market,
and at every corner she lies in wait (vv. 11-12)

She's looking for a simpleton, and any reasonably good-looking one will do.

She seizes him and kisses him,
and with bold face she says to him,
"I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows" (vv. 13-14)

Listen to this! She's talking religion! She's just come back from worshipping the Lord. She has offered sacrifices. She's paid some vow she made earlier. She can talk the religious talk. And it disarms him.

So now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you (v. 15)

She makes it sound like she was searching *specifically* for him. She makes it sound like she thinks he's special. But in reality, she's just looking for man. Any man will do; and right now he's the most available prospect. But she knows what to say to make it sound like she thinks *he's the one, he's special*. And if it's been a while since his wife has made him feel that way, he listens to her.

I have spread my couch with coverings,
colored linens from Egyptian linen;
I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon (vv. 16-17)

She is really on her game, now. She's appealing to all his senses. She has appealed to his sense of sight with her attractive, seductive appearance. She has appealed to his tactile sense as she embraces

him and kisses him. She has appealed to his sense of smell. All of his senses are being aroused. And she promises more of the same, if only he will come with her.

Come, let us take our fill of love till morning;
let us delight ourselves with love (v. 18)

Notice the brazenness of it all. *She* approached him. *She* seized him. *She* kissed him. She openly seduces and entices, and invites him to her bed. She is the initiator. If there were no red flags that went up before, there should be a great big one going up right now. This is a reversal of the proper order. God designed men to initiate the relationship. This is what it means, in part, when it says that she is loud and wayward (as opposed to quite and gentle, 1 Pet. 3:4). It's not talking so much about the volume of her voice, as it is about the lack of propriety in what she says. She has no discretion in either her speech or behavior.

And if the young man is concerned about the woman's husband, well she has an answer for that. In fact, she anticipates this concern and addresses it in verses 19-20.

For 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 (vv. 19-20)

She's removing every obstacle standing in the way of what she wants.

With much seductive speech she persuades him;
with her smooth talk she compels him (v. 21)

He is blinded by the passion that she has enflamed within him. He can think of nothing else now but satisfying his lust. It is like he is caught in a trap.

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

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,
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 (vv. 24-27)