



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Win the Day!

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Message Title: God's Wisdom on Sex pt. 1

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It's pretty hard to imagine a subject in our culture where we are more confused than the subject of God's purpose and intent for our sexuality. The enemy has flooded our culture with lies and deception, and the devastation to people's lives has been tremendous.

That's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Proverbs, Chapter 5. This is a big part of the discussion in Proverbs 5 and 6 and 7. We pick it up in chapter 5, verse 1:

**My son, give attention to my wisdom,
Incline your ear to my understanding;
That you may observe discretion,
And your lips may reserve knowledge. (*NASB, Proverbs 5:1-2)**

That's kind of a typical introduction to the next discussion. He's imploring his son to listen to what he has to say. Verse 3 then gets into the topic at hand:

**For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,
And smoother than oil is her speech.**

I want to spend a little bit of time around that word **adulteress**. I don't really care for that translation. The original Hebrew word carries much more the idea of an *alien*; some translations have *a strange woman*. So, what does that mean? The text basically is referring to any sexual behavior outside of God's intent—in other words, one man, one woman in a lifelong one-flesh relationship God defines as marriage.

The idea of *strange* or *alien*—some people think it's a reference to like a foreigner. But if you track this term through the book of Proverbs, that's clearly not the intent. It does carry the intent that this is *strange*; this is alien to God's intent. It's outside the boundary of what God intended. This is really important to understand that just as there are natural laws within the world that God has made, it is equally true that there are moral laws. Neither can be broken without consequence. God's moral laws are just as binding as natural laws.

So, let's take the law of gravity. You can believe whatever you want about gravity. But if you go up on the top of the building and you jump off, at the end of the day, reality wins. Regardless of what you believe to be true, reality wins because that's the law that God has put in place. It is equally true that God has put in place moral laws, and you break them with great consequence. They're not just rules that you can arbitrarily change and somehow get away with it. They're just as true; they're just as binding as the natural laws. At the end of the day, you bump into reality. That's the idea of *strange* or *alien*—that which is outside of God's purpose and intent.

I want to read you a couple of things to just kind of process a little bit this idea of God's moral laws and how they're binding; and when we operate outside of those, there will be consequences. Neither of these resources is written from a Christian perspective, but rather they are coming from research and psychologists who are simply analyzing the effect on our culture as a result of strange behavior—sex outside of God's boundaries.

This first book is called *The End of Sex*. (author: Donna Freitas) The subtitle is: *How Hookup Culture is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfilled, and Confused About Intimacy*. This is how the book begins:

"It was while teaching an undergraduate course at a small college that I first heard students talk extensively about "hooking up". Hookup culture was clearly dominant on campus, and my students were more than willing to discuss the sexual encounters occurring at parties and in the residence halls on the weekends. At first, no one complained about this culture. They accepted it as the norm and seemed perfectly happy living within it. Then about halfway through the term, something changed. It took only one student to admit that hookup culture wasn't all she'd been told it was; and what was more, that it had made her miserable. Suddenly the students who had been speaking about hooking up in the most spirited of terms reversed themselves entirely. They confessed that they had been lying to one another about their real feelings."

That moment launched for the author a multi-year national research campaign to investigate the consequences of what she refers to as *The Hookup Culture*, and the consequences have been absolutely devastating. In one paragraph that really caught my attention, the writer says:

"The relationships between drinking and the party scene and between alcohol and the hookup culture were impossible to miss. There was a pervasive perception among students, not only that everyone was drinking but that everyone was drinking hard, that is, drinking in order to get wasted—[now listen to this]—and that the getting wasted part had its purpose to ease a person into the mood necessary for another hookup."

Now think about how strange this has become—that people actually have to become intoxicated in order to enter in and experience God's most precious and wonderful gift of sexuality. At the end of the book she says:

"The great irony of the hookup culture, whether pre, during, or post-college, is that it's ultimately a culture of repression. If the Victorian era represents the repression of sexual desire, then the era of the hookup is about the repression of romantic feeling, love and sexual desire in favor of greater access to sex—sex for the sake of sex. Women and men both learn to shove their desires deep down into a dark place to be revealed to no one. They learn to be ashamed if they long for love, and embarrassed if they fail to uphold the social contract of a hookup culture and do not happen to enjoy no-strings-attached sex that much."

In another pamphlet dealing specifically with the issue of pornography—again, this is not written from a Christian perspective (this pamphlet, by no means, is from a Christian perspective)—but the researcher says:

"I would argue that we live in a pornified culture, and our current social sexual climate is in fact a sexually toxic environment, one in which many harmful, sexual activities and attitudes are made to appear appealing, arousing, and culturally accepted. For the public, for parents, for questioning teens and younger children, discerning what is healthy versus harmful or pornographic is complicated when sexual harm has become normalized in American culture."

Normalization happens when a problematic or harmful behavior becomes an accepted part of society. The more normalized a behavior, the more it is viewed as beneficial or preferential. As normalization becomes entrenched, it's viewed as beyond question. And when such a behavior or practice is then questioned, the questioner begins to be treated as the problem."

(From *The Impact of Pornography On Children, Youth, and Culture* by Cordelia Anderson)

A simple way to make this point is: If you lack the discretion to understand that whether we're referring to the book or the movie— that if you lack the discretion to understand *Fifty Shades of Gray* is deeply offensive to God and a trashing of God's most precious gift of our sexuality, you have become normalized. You now think what is so offensive to God is normal. That's what the writer is saying. We live in a sexually toxic culture.

We live in a sexually toxic culture. That's exactly what the writer of Proverbs is talking about when he's referring to the *strange woman*: any sexual behavior, whether it's a sexual relationship, whether it's pornography—whatever it is—that is outside of God's design and intent for sexuality.

Verse 3 is saying that the world makes it look very appealing...**for the lips of the adulteress** (the appeal of this behavior outside of God's boundaries) **drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech.**

But...verse 4:

**But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.**

I would suggest to you that wisdom—skillful living—is not assessed in the moment. It is rightly assessed *after* the moment passes. You can get caught up in the moment and convince yourself of anything. But skillful-living wisdom is determined by how you process that moment once the moment is gone. Shame, guilt, emptiness, loneliness, dismay—those are all symptoms of a moment that wasn't skillfully lived.

Verse 5:

**Her feet go down to death,
Her steps take hold of Sheol.
She does not ponder the path of life;
Her ways are unstable, she does not know *it*. (Vs. 5-6)**

This perfectly describes our culture. It's the idea that we no longer see the right path; we no longer see the long term; we no longer see the sense of commitment and reality and what really matters to us. But people just live in the moment, and they go from moment to moment to moment to such a degree, there is so much confusion that people can't even figure out what's right and wrong anymore in the midst of a sexually confused and pornographic culture.

Verse 7:

**Now then, *my* 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. (Vs. 7-8)**

I mentioned this last week from chapter 4, verse 14—the idea of staying away from the entrance to the path of destruction, or the *wicked path*. This is the same idea—that you don’t go hang around her house; you don’t go hanging around her neighborhood. It’s basically the idea that you don’t flirt with these things. I mentioned the danger of trying to draw a line to see if I can get as close to the world as possible without somehow crossing over that line—just flirting with disaster. As I said last week, temptation, by and large, is relatively easy to deal with if we don’t start down the path. But once we start down the path, it becomes a part of us. It gets in our system. And some people will go far enough down the path that it will be a very difficult battle for the rest of their lives.

The idea, then, of the proverb is that you just *stay away*. I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with someone who is weeping in my office and who says to me, “I don’t know how this happened. It started with a little flirting. It started with a little texting that became sexting, and somehow things got out of control, and now I’ve made a disaster of my life.” I’ll tell you how it happens—one little step at a time!

He goes on then in verse 9:

**Or you will give your vigor to others,
And your years to the cruel one;
And strangers will be filled with your strength,
And your hard-earned goods *will go* to the house of an alien;
And you groan at your final end,
When your flesh and your body are consumed;** (Vs. 9-11)

Eventually it takes over. It consumes your life. It’s what you think about. It’s lies; it’s deceit. It becomes all the energy you have to manage the lies and the deception and the stories, and pretty soon your life is given away to something that will ultimately destroy you. Again, the sobering reality is that you get one shot at this life, and you're going to give it away for something that, at the end of the day will only destroy you.21:40

At the end of verse 11 he talks about **your flesh and your body**. I mentioned last week that I think the proverb is saying that what you put into your heart actually has a more dramatic effect even on your physical health than what you put in your mouth. One of the things that I think we’ve understood intuitively, but in the last ten years or so has become much more scientific, is the understanding that we are actually hardwired by God for intimacy—that one man, one woman together for life in a one-flesh relationship is consistent with the way you're actually wired up—and it’s very powerful for good. But when you step outside of that boundary, it begins to have a destructive effect on your body. Specifically, what we’re learning more and more about is the effect on your brain. There’s more and more science that is looking into the effect of pornography on your brain. Someone who is addicted to pornography—their brain makeup, the brain chemistry—is almost identical to someone who is hooked on meth. It is doing significant damage to your brain.

One of the big discussions right now has to do with a generation who now has been raised in a technological generation and has fed on pornography at such a young age that their brains are actually not developed. And the real question is: What is going to happen to their brains when they have caused so much damage to their brains, before their brain was fully developed? There is a lot of concern that those young brains will actually never develop normally, and nobody knows—it’s a guessing game—as to what that will look like when they're 40-years-old, when they're 50-years-old, when they're 60-years-old. But almost everyone is predicting it will not be good.

This isn't just some sort of a rule, and we can go outside the rule—no harm, no foul. You're actually changing your brain chemistry that could dramatically affect your ability to function when you're 30, 40, 50, 60-years old. The consequences are very, very severe.

Well, welcome to Proverbs chapter 5. We've talked before about this idea of understanding there are natural laws like gravity, but there are also social laws and moral laws and they're equally binding. And this chapter reminds us of the seriousness of sexual sin and the effect it can have on our lives.

So one of the things about the Proverbs is, as a preacher, I feel like the message needs to reflect the tone of the text. And one of the things that defines Proverbs is they're clear and they're kind of in your face. And so, this has that kind of a message to it. And the reality is I talk to people all the time who ended up in a mess in their lives and they sit in my office and they weep. And the question they ask is, "How does this happen?" "How did this happen to me?" And the proverb says, is it happens one step at a time. It doesn't just happen. It's one little step at a time and pretty soon we find ourselves in a mess.

One of the interesting things in our 21st century culture is all the neurological information we have that we haven't had in the past that deals with this whole issue of sex and immorality and sexual addiction. And we're learning more and more about it. One of the things that we're finding is someone's struggling with some sort of sexual addiction — their brain in a scan looks very similar to somebody who's addicted to meth. And I think part of what you have to understand, we're not just talking about a bad habit here. We're talking about a significant issue with our brain. One of the things they're looking at now for those of us that are parents or grandparents, is the level of exposure of our young people to this kind of pornographic material before their brains are developed that's actually causing their brains to not develop correctly, which has the potential of being a lifelong consequence.

One of the things that makes me very angry is how much the culture has lied to our young people about the effects of sex outside of God's plan. And the reality is that the consequences could be felt for a lifetime. So, this is serious business and I think churches need to help. It's irresponsible, in my opinion, for churches not to have the resources today to help people that are struggling. The struggles are real, the consequences are real, and it's part of our responsibility to help people find the freedom they long for in Christ. This is something we'll talk more about tomorrow from Proverbs chapter 5.