

Session 5

Following God's Design

God expects His people to show His wisdom through sexual purity.

Proverbs 5:3-11,15-18



**What if you ignored the blueprint and just followed your heart as you built a house?
How would your decision affect the construction process?**

We expect builders to follow blueprints. Failing to do so leads to problems down the road. The same is true when it comes to sex. God created humans as men and women; sex was part of His creative plan. Failing to follow His design for sex only leads to problems down the road. Solomon addressed the traps awaiting those who ignore God's design and the blessings awaiting those who follow God's design.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Proverbs 1–4, Solomon laid the foundation for obtaining and applying God's wisdom. He taught that true wisdom begins with the knowledge of God and is to be pursued at all costs. Conversely, Solomon gave warnings about why and how God's people should avoid the way of the wicked. The way of the wicked ultimately leads to death and destruction.

In chapters 5–7, Solomon applied the wisdom of God to one of the most combustible and often controversial subjects: sex. He contrasted the world's ways of dealing with human sexuality with God's way of dealing with sexuality.

Solomon addressed two mistakes people make regarding human sexuality. First, some give in to the cultural norms and notions of sexuality, compromising God's intentions. Compromise is the easy choice. Second, Solomon knew that God's people would be tempted to declare what God intended for good as something that was inherently evil and wicked. Solomon did not expect God's people to become callous to their sexual desires. Nor did he want them to compromise God's standards when it came to sexual expression.

Rather than compromise or callousness, the Spirit of God instructed Solomon regarding God's design for sex. God's people are to stay within the clear guidelines and boundaries God established for our good. Solomon affirmed that God created us for sexual intimacy; simultaneously, God set wise boundaries as to how this most sensitive gift should be enjoyed within a committed and monogamous marriage between a man and a woman.

PROVERBS 5:3-11,15-18

3 Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey
and her words are smoother than oil,

4 in the end she's as **bitter** **A** as wormwood
and as sharp as a **double-edged sword** **B**.

5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps head straight for Sheol.

6 She doesn't consider the path of life;
she doesn't know that her ways are unstable.

7 So now, sons, listen to me,
and don't turn away from the words
from my mouth.

8 Keep your way far from her.
Don't go near the door of her house.

9 Otherwise, you will give up your **vitality** **C**
to others

and your years to someone cruel;
10 strangers will drain your resources,
and your hard-earned pay will end up in a
foreigner's house.

11 At the end of your life, you will **lament** **D**
when your physical body has been consumed, ...

15 Drink water from your own **cistern** **E**,
water flowing from your own well.

16 Should your **springs** **F** flow in the streets,
streams **G** in the public squares?

17 They should be for you alone
and not for you to share with strangers.

18 Let your fountain be **blessed** **G**,
and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.

Passage Outline

See the Reality
(Prov. 5:3-6)

Think Long Term
(Prov. 5:7-11)

Enjoy God's Provision
(Prov. 5:15-18)

Keywords

- A. Naomi called herself "bitter" after the heart-crushing loss of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:20).
- B. Describes the adulteress as a deadly weapon
- C. The health and strength that belongs to the best years of life
- D. The anguished "groan" (ESV) of a sufferer in pain and distress from regret at sinful choices
- E. A man should find sexual fulfillment with his own wife.
- F. "Springs" and "streams" are metaphors for a husband's sexual affections.
- G. Use of this word indicates that God gives sexual pleasure in marriage. Blessing also includes the fruitfulness of children.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

In verse 2, Solomon reminded his son to use his lips to safeguard or to pass along God's wisdom. He then began to describe in verse 3 what comes from the lips of the *forbidden woman*. This woman was obviously someone other than the young man's wife. She used her lips and the words that passed through them as tools of seduction. Solomon's words remind us that those who commit sexual sin may be devoid of any true understanding of what meaningful life is all about. They do not understand that sexual perversion doesn't fulfill but instead creates instability and uncertainty.

Why are the consequences of the misuse and abuse of human sexuality so devastating?

KEY DOCTRINE: Family Marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race (Gen. 2:18-24).

Solomon's reference to *sons* likely included all the young men in his royal court. It certainly also includes God's people in all places and in all generations. These verses challenge all God's people to resist sexual temptations and to avoid compromise.

What makes avoiding sexual temptations so difficult? How might a person rationalize flirting with sexual temptation?

Why was Solomon so adamant about God's people avoiding sexual temptation? He identified several consequences of giving in to sexual temptation.

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases. From a Bible dictionary, read articles on "stranger" or "foreigner." You may be led to an article entitled "aliens." Identify characteristics that made a person a stranger or foreigner. Also, pay close attention to the way that they were viewed by Israelites in the days of the Old Testament. How does what you discovered help you better understand Solomon's use of the terms in Proverbs 5?

Solomon urged married men and women to enjoy sexual intimacy within the safe boundaries of an exclusive marriage relationship. He used a variety of descriptive images to make his point. Solomon wanted God's people to know and understand that sexual intimacy is a gift from God and is to be experienced between a man and a woman in a committed and loving marital relationship. Any other expression of sexuality is contrary to God's plan.

Who are your role models for marriage? Why?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Living for sexual gratification will lead to bitterness.
- Considering the consequences of unwise choices can help a person make a wise choice.
- God gave the gift of sexual intimacy to be enjoyed exclusively within the marriage relationship.

Discuss as a group ways of helping others who carry around bitterness and shame as a result of sexual sin. How can the group represent God's standard and be redemptive at the same time? Record insights from this discussion.

Consider ways of being mindful of the consequences of unwise decisions. What actions can you take to remind yourself of the consequences of ignoring God's design and the blessings of following God's design?

How can you lift up God's design for marriage including His design for sex? List actions you will take in the next week to do so.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Marital faithfulness is a life-enriching blessing.

Read Proverbs 5:3-6, identifying the danger the woman represents.

While the forbidden woman's words may have seemed sweet and smooth, bitterness flowed from her. *Wormwood* is a shrub that has a bitter flavor. A *double-edged sword* was a formidable weapon used in combat. These two items stand in direct contrast to the honey and oil the woman appeared to possess. Her flattery would likely build up the ego of an unsuspecting young man at the start but eventually would leave him wounded. He would be left with nothing but extreme bitterness and awful misery.

The young man may have thought that some sense of stability awaited him in the temptation, but the exact opposite was true. The woman was only concerned about herself, with sex being the ultimate act of selfishness. She was only living to please her own impulses with no interest in how this act impacted her victims.

Seeking to gratify our sexual impulses outside of God's plan doesn't end well. However, marital faithfulness and sexual intimacy between a husband and wife is one of the life-enriching blessings that come with following God's design for sexuality.

How have you been impacted by the misuse and abuse of human sexuality?

Day 2: Keep your distance from temptation.

Read Proverbs 5:7-8, recognizing the importance of the command to keep away.

Misguided and untamed sexual urges can keep us from thinking long-term and rationally about the consequences of our actions. Therefore, Solomon encouraged young men to think about the long-term consequences of sexual sin. They already had been warned about the seductive words of the forbidden woman and were being challenged once again to recognize and follow Solomon's wise words. Solomon urged young men to stay far away from sexual temptation. The *her* was the forbidden woman of verse 3. She was an adulteress, a mistress, or a prostitute. Her tempting ways would pull a man away from his commitment to the Lord. Her seductive words and ways would make him lose sight of the priority of honoring the Lord with a life that valued His wisdom. For that reason, Solomon gave the command to not even go near her door. Keeping your distance from temptation makes it easier to remain faithful to God and His designs for life.

What makes avoiding sexual temptations so difficult?

Day 3: Consider the consequences.

Read Proverbs 5:9-11, noticing the concerns that Solomon has.

Solomon identified several consequences of giving in to sexual temptation. First, he pointed to the young man giving up his *vitality to others*. Surrendering to sexual temptation places a person in danger of losing respect, honor, and dignity. The *others* in verse 9 are those who rob us of our strength once we give in to sexual sin. They may be other lovers of the forbidden woman, owners of a prostitute, or the husband of an unfaithful wife. A relationship with the promiscuous woman takes a toll on anyone who has a sexual encounter with her. Beyond this, financial hardships would come to the one who gave in to the adulterous woman. The *strangers* of verse 10 could have been relatives or owners of a foreign woman who made her way into Israel and lured men away from the Lord. They could have been the woman's other sexual partners. The man driven by lust for her may not have known them until after she had seduced him. Perhaps they would blackmail him, or maybe they would require him to support her financially. No matter how it happened, his resources would be taken from him and given to them. He would be destitute while someone else enjoyed his money. His heart would break as he watched his wealth end up in a foreigner's house. Finally, in verse 11 Solomon reminded the young men of the physical consequences of sexual immorality. There are numerous diseases that are common among those who abuse and misuse their sexuality, some of which can be terminal. Solomon wanted young men to think about the short- and long-term consequences of misguided sexual passions.

How can a long-term view of sin's consequences help you resist in the present moment?

Day 4: Enjoy sexual intimacy within marriage.

Read Proverbs 5:15-18, considering what these metaphors represent.

Solomon urged married men and women to enjoy sexual intimacy within the safe boundaries of an exclusive marriage relationship. He used a variety of descriptive images to make his point. When Solomon said to drink from your own cistern, he meant do not gratify your sexual urges in illicit relationships outside of your marriage relationship. *Should your springs flow in the streets, streams in the public squares?* Solomon wondered why a husband would want to become sexually involved with someone other than his wife. *They should be for you alone and not for you to share with strangers.* Not only is sexual intimacy to remain private, it is to be exclusive. God's Word is abundantly clear on this matter. (See Ex. 20:14; 1 Thess. 4:3.) *Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.* Physical intimacy in marriage renders an ongoing blessing for a husband and wife as they share life together.

What do these verses teach about God's design for sexual intimacy?

Day 5: Through Christ, God can redeem all sinners.

Read Proverbs 5:3-11,15-18, reviewing what you've learned this week about what God desires for sexual intimacy.

The good news is that in Christ, God is able to redeem the repentant sinner who has violated God's original intent for sexual expression. The hope for all sinners is the gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 6:9-11 starts with a warning and ends with a promise of good news: "Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males ... And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." The good news is that in Jesus Christ those who have violated God's purposes regarding sexuality become part of those who "used to be like this." In Jesus Christ the sinner is washed, sanctified, and justified. This is good news indeed!

Who do you know that needs to know that God forgives all sins, including sexual sins?

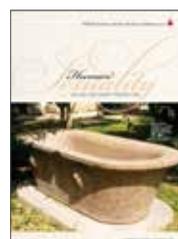
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Proverbs 5, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

Who is responsible for sexual sin?

What are some long-term physical and economic consequences of sexual sin?

How can sexual purity demonstrate love for God and others?



For additional context, read "Human Sexuality: An Old Testament Perspective," available digitally in the Summer 2020 *Biblical Illustrator for Explore the Bible* at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.