

Soteria Church, March 7, 2010
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Integrity, Fidelity and Adultery **Proverbs 5:1-23**

83 verses (out 915 total) in Proverbs deal specifically with infidelity and adultery
9% just specific to unfaithfulness in marriage

In Proverbs there are two classic chapters devoted to this subject, chapters 5 and 7

Here, a father begs his sons to stay away from wayward women:

Proverbs 7:21-23 speaks of a foolish young man following after the unfaithful wife
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

No one setting out to have an affair really intends to ruin their life

In fact, they think the affair will somehow improve their life

Proverbs 5 is the other classic passage on this same subject

Proverbs 5:1-2 *my son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge*

The person looking for an illicit affair is not, or refuses to think with wisdom (what is right)

Or with understanding (seeing the possible negative outcomes)

Or with discretion and knowledge (knowing what's wrong to stay away from)

The father here is trying to persuade his son to think and be wise before acting on impulse

Proverbs 5:3-6 the overall view of the beginning and end of an adulterous relationship
For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path of Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it

This can go both ways: the forbidden woman, or the forbidden man

The foolish person will follow after another foolish person

But neither fool is willing or able to see the inevitable...life destroyed

Proverbs 5:7-7 *and now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth*

The concerned and attentive father is now going to do his best to protect his sons from their own sin...

Proverbs 5:8-11 *keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your*

strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed

What is the father talking about here? Alimony and child support

Your money goes to your ex, your children, and to another household

And yet your holidays are lonely, and you no longer enjoy intimacy with your family

Proverbs 5:12-14 is the regret that anyone who has had an affair and breaks up his or her own family feels at some point, either immediately or later in their life

And you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin and in the assembled congregation

I would guess that most adulterers, if given the chance to live life over again would not have entered into the affair that cost them their marriage and families

Look at the many politicians, sports stars and celebrities that have lost their reputations, their futures and their earning power from having had affairs just in the past year

Look at the number of Christians who having had an affair feel forced to run off to another church who will not know their past, and won't ask questions

Proverbs 5:15-17 *drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should our springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you*

This speaks again to alimony and child support

But it also brings up again the loss of relationship, especially with your children

Have you noticed how many people caught in adultery want the forbidden relationship, but also want the marriage to remain intact; their violated spouse to remain faithful; and the children to still respect and love them as their parent?

That's the thing with sin: we want the pleasure that sin provides, but we never want the negative consequences

And we get angry or bitter or depressed when circumstances go sour

And this is how a lot of counselors make their money: helping people to see that we can each choose our behavior, but we can never control the consequences of our choices

Proverbs 5:18-19 What a godly marriage is supposed to look and feel like

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love

This sounds a whole lot better than working to be wise, exercising discretion and

self-discipline and restraint

Here, the father is encouraging his sons to insure that their sex life is blessed by God

That they will each celebrate their wife

That they will each always be attracted, delighted in and intoxicated by their bride

The same one who intoxicated them at the beginning of the courtship

In seeing how committed, faithful and intoxicating married love is and can be, why look elsewhere?

Proverbs 5:20 *why should you be intoxicated, my son with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?*

So let's stop to answer a question: Who IS the forbidden woman?

In this chapter of Proverbs the forbidden woman appears to be someone else's unfaithful wife

But is that the extent of what is forbidden to a married man or woman? Hardly!

It should appear to refer to anyone who is not your spouse, or will never, ever be your spouse, or could end up being someone else's spouse

This includes pornographic, air-brushed images

This includes people who you refer to as "just friends" but you communicate with that person more frequently and more intimately than with your spouse

This includes sexual activity before or outside of your marriage

Anyone who owns your heart aside from your husband or wife

And this is why God called his chosen people, Israel, the unfaithful wife

Hosea 7:1-4 *when I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria; for they deal falsely; the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside. But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face. By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened*

Ezekiel 23:43 *then I said of her who was worn out by adultery, Now they will continue to use her for a whore, even her!*

Sin is seen as adultery, for sin is a violation of covenant love. Devotion. Commitment.

And we cannot be faithful apart from seeing our marriages through the eyes of our relationship with God, Himself

Proverbs 5:21-23 *for a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast by the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray*

Finally, the loving and concerned father wraps up his discourse to his sons – with 2 primary conclusions for his sons to ponder and remember:

1. God always knows what's in our hearts. He knows where our true allegiances lay
2. Adultery never results in good for anyone involved, especially for the one or ones who commit the adultery. Families are irretrievably shattered, and the adulterer lives the rest of his or her life with regret

So how do we as Soteria Church respond to these wise words from a wise father?

Consider the sacredness of marriage. God invented it for our joy, and to complete those who are married

For marriage is a picture of our Triune God

3 persons, sharing the same essence in perfect unity

Permanent, never broken

And marriage is a picture to us of Jesus' relationship with the Church

His death bringing us to life

His covenant love holding, protecting and guiding us in His gracious love

Consider what you can do now to protect your marriage relationship – or your future relationship

Consider how adultery is not just a physical act; it is also and perhaps more frequently a shift of the heart, long before a physical act is ever contemplated. We each can and must ask the Holy Spirit to renew our minds daily.

You may be sitting here, even today knowing you've been playing too close to the fire

You know you've been living with a divided heart

You may have even concocted an expansive set of reasons why your affections are now so misaligned, and how you can now justify adulterous thoughts, day dreams or even actions disloyal to your spouse or future spouse

Maybe you even feel addicted if not trapped by these thought patterns

And if brought to light, out in public you know you would hurt somebody in your life, and you would be embarrassed if not brutally ashamed

Consider what you, if married, can do to preserve and intensify the intoxication of being loved by your spouse

Talk, and take time to intently listen

Date nights

Don't put your marriage on hold while you have kids in your home: for 20 years!

Fool around. A lot.

Be your spouse's biggest cheer leader and greatest fan – especially in public

Pray for God to preserve your love, and the condition of your own heart

Consider how adultery against your spouse or with someone who may not necessarily ever be your spouse is also adultery against God.

Ask yourself the question often, "What is the state of my integrity?"

And, expose for yourself the reasons, the idols within you that may cause you even to day dream about being unfaithful to God by being unfaithful to your spouse

(Is it the desire for power, for affirmation, for comfort or control?)
Know this: premarital sex is adultery just as extra-marital sex is adultery

Finally, know that you can be forgiven from an adulterous heart and adulterous affections
And through our repentance we can be changed

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Let's face it; we've all been adulterers, because we've all been idol worshippers

The gospel tells us that:

God made us to love him in integrity and fidelity, and he would us
Our first parents sinned against God, and we all inherited their ability to be adulterers
against God

God knew we could do nothing different, and that we were all caught up in our sin
So God sent his Son, Jesus, the promised Messiah, to die in order to release us from
the spell our idols hold over us, the idols that lead us to be unfaithful

Because of Jesus' sacrificial death, and his atonement for our sin as our substitute
our relationship with God can be like a divorced couple who falls in love again
and remarries, with wisdom, discernment and knowledge – and intoxicated with
the love of our heavenly Father

It's the love of our God toward us that should cause us to joyfully renounce our other adulterous
romances and compelling idols to turn finally to our living, faithful and loving God