

Sexual Purity – A Biblical Worldview Perspective Remains Truth

Dr. Bohlin uses a passage from Proverbs to provide us insight into the importance of sexual purity for our age. This important biblical worldview concept is still valid today even in this age where sexual promiscuity is trumpeted from the media.

Medical Reasons for Sexual Purity

As our society prepares to enter the 21st century, one trend and long-time staple of our culture looms ever larger on the horizon. The places to which one can escape in order to avoid sexual temptation continue to shrink. Children cannot be allowed to roam unsupervised through the neighborhood video stores because of the racks of videos with alluring covers of scantily clad exercisers and playmates of the year. The aisles of popular new releases contain images from R-rated movies that were only found in skin magazines thirty years ago. A trip to the grocery store can take you past the book aisle with suggestive covers on romance novels which contain graphic descriptions of sexual encounters. Billboards for beer, cars, and movies all use sex to sell. Radio stations readily play songs today that were banned from the airwaves decades ago. A trip to the mall takes you past stores with only sex to sell. Your home is invaded with sexually explicit images over even the free non-cable channels and your home computer. Unwelcome mail enters your home selling well-known sex magazines that continue to earn millions of dollars every year.

From the moment Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness, sexual temptation has been in our midst. But except for brief periods in declining cultures, the temptations had to be

sought after. There were places where one could be relatively safe from the sights and sounds which inflame lust and desire. Those days are over. Oh, sure, you can have blocks installed on your computer or phone and the local video store will allow you to put a screen on your children's rentals. But the fact that such systems are necessary and only voluntary should be enough to tell us of the pervasiveness of sex in our society. Sexual purity is a rare and often scorned virtue today. When a Hollywood couple makes it known that they are saving sex for marriage, people ask, "Why would you do that?"

While sex is clearly pervasive in our society, you don't have to look very far to find plenty of reasons to avoid sexual relations outside of marriage. The biblical words for *fornication* or *sexual immorality* refer to all sexual activity outside of marriage, and the Scriptures clearly state that all such activity is forbidden (Lev. 18 & 20; Matt. 15:19; 1 Cor. 6:9-10,18; 1 Thess. 4:3). But a person may rationalize that while sexual activity outside of marriage is sin, "I can always be forgiven for my sin, and as long as I am not found out, who gets hurt?" Paul answers this resoundingly in Romans 6. "May it never be!" cries the apostle. By allowing sin to reign in our hearts we effectively say that Christ's death and resurrection has no power in our life.

If this is not powerful enough, consider the physical consequences of sexual immorality that exist today. In the 1960s there were only two STDs: syphilis and gonorrhea. Today there are over 25, and 1 in 5 Americans between the ages of 15 and 55 has a viral STD. That number is 1 in 4 if bacterial infections are included. There are 12 million new infections every year with 60 percent of these among teenagers.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease which often results in sterility. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) frequently produces genital warts which can develop into cancer. Rampant HPV infection is the primary reason that women are urged to have Pap smears on a yearly

basis. If you are sexually active outside of marriage and “lucky,” you may only contract herpes, but even this is an embarrassing, bothersome, incurable infection. But you may get AIDS, which will kill you. Since the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) can lie dormant for years before developing into deadly AIDS, your sex partner may not know that he or she is infected. The fact is, if you are sexually active outside of marriage, it is almost guaranteed that you will contract at least one STD.

But information is not enough. Why is sexual purity within marriage so important to God? And what do we do to avoid falling into sexual sin with so much temptation swirling around our heads? We will now turn to explore some time tested advice from Scripture to see what we must do and why.

The Naturalistic Rejection of the Mystical Nature of Marriage

In his book *Reason in the Balance*, Phillip Johnson brilliantly documents the vise grip of philosophical naturalism in science, law, and education in the United States. Our populace has been taught for so long that matter, energy, space, and time are all that exists that it has infected every form of cultural discourse, including our sexual behavior. Freedom of choice and personal fulfillment are praised as the ultimate virtues because, for the naturalist, sex is just a physical act that fulfills a basic need and instinct of every person. People should be free to pursue whatever sexual expression they choose to meet that basic physiological need. And this need is only created by our fundamental drive to reproduce and spread our genes into the next generation. In the naturalistic worldview, sex becomes simply a basic need and marriage just a relative cultural expression to satisfy that need for some, but not all people.

That is why so many people, including Christians, look at

Scripture's clear statements condemning sex outside of marriage as antiquated and old-fashioned. "Oh," they say, "they applied to the people of that time, but not now. Not as we prepare to enter the 21st century!" But this raises some important questions. First, do the Scriptural injunctions against any sex outside of marriage really apply today? The answer, of course, is, "Yes, they do." We recognize readily what the Bible has to say about sex, and we see all about us the physical, emotional, and relational consequences of sexual immorality. Since God is sovereign, He established these consequences as warning signs not to transgress His principles. But second, just why is sexual fidelity so important to God?

The first reason is because God's intentions for marriage were clearly stated right from the beginning. Genesis 2:18-25 makes it plain that God's design was one man and one woman for life. Jesus used this passage as the basis for His teaching on divorce in Matthew 19: "What God has joined together, let no man break apart." As Creator, God has every right to tell us what He wants.

Second, the Father has used the marriage union as an analogy for His relationship with Israel in the Old Testament and the church's relationship with Jesus in the New Testament. Isaiah 1:21, Jeremiah 2:20, 3:1-10, and especially Ezekiel 16:15-34 accuse Israel of playing the harlot, chasing after other gods and ignoring her rightful "husband." God's union with Israel was to be forever. He was faithful, but Israel was not. The Lord rained down His judgment on the unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah. In Ephesians 5 Paul tells husbands that they are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Elsewhere, Jesus is spoken of as the bridegroom and the church as His bride, another relationship that is to be forever. Jesus will be faithful. Will the church? Our marital and sexual relationships are to mirror the Lord's special relationships with Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New.

God hates divorce and any sexual relationships outside of marriage, because He hates it when His faithfulness to us is spurned by our turning to other gods. This is true whether they be the pagan gods of old, which are still around, or the modern gods of self, money, power, and sex.

Well, we may know what is right, but knowing what is right is often not the same as doing what is right. Now, I want to look at a passage in Proverbs that instructs its readers concerning dangers, both obvious and subtle, of sexual temptation.

A Young Man Lacking Sense Meets a Harlot

It is hard for some to imagine that the Bible contains explicit advice on how to avoid sexual temptation. But the entire chapter of Proverbs 7 is devoted to exactly that. In the first five verses, Solomon essentially pleads with his son to listen and guard his words carefully concerning the adulteress.

My son, keep my words,
And treasure my commandments within you.

Keep my commandments and live,
(sounds like serious stuff!)

And my teaching as the apple of your eye.

(actually the "pupil" or "little man of your eye." This was meant therefore to be a precious truth to be closely guarded and kept.)

Solomon goes on in verse 3:

Bind them on your fingers;
Write them on the tablet of your heart.

Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
And call understanding your intimate friend.

That they may keep you from an adulteress,

From the foreigner who flatters with her words.

In verses 6-9, King Solomon takes the role of an observer, telling his son what he sees unfolding before him.

For at the window of my house,
I looked out through my lattice,

And I saw among the naive,
I discerned among the youths,
A young man lacking sense.

Passing through the street near her corner;
And he takes the way to her house.

In the twilight, in the evening,
In the middle of the night and in the darkness.

Solomon speaks of one who is young, inexperienced, and lacking judgment. His first clue was that he purposefully walks down her street and actually heads straight to her house in the middle of the night. As Charlie Brown would say, "Good grief!" The young man's intent is probably harmless. He is curious, perhaps hoping for a glimpse of the adulteress plying her wares to someone else on the street. Sin is probably not on his mind. He just wants to see what the real world is like. That kind of thinking is still heard today. "I just need to know what is out there so I can warn my family and others around me." In reality, our young fool was looking for titillation and was confident that he could withstand the temptation.

This is precisely why Solomon says he is lacking sense. The apostle Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Overconfidence is our worst enemy in the face of temptation. I am reminded of two contrasting characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Boromir and Faramir. Boromir and Faramir were brothers. Boromir, the elder, was renowned for his exploits in

war. He was his father's favorite and the principal heir. He was confident, however, that were he to wield the One Ring, the Ring of Power, he would not be corrupted by it and could use it to defeat the armies of the evil Sauron. However, his overconfidence and lust for power lead him to attempt to steal the ring from the designated Ring-bearer. His foolishness caused the Fellowship of the Ring to be split apart under attack and led eventually to his death. He thought he could stand, but he fell.

His brother Faramir, however, had a more realistic picture of his sinful nature. When confronted later with the same opportunity to see and even hold the Ring, he refused. He knew the temptation would be strong and that the best way not to yield to the lust for power was to keep the temptation as far away as possible. Faramir, though perceived to be weaker than his brother, was, in a sense, actually the wiser and stronger of the two. He took heed and did not fall and later played a significant role in the final victory over the forces of evil.

What about you? Do you consider yourself strong enough to resist the temptations presented in movies, books, commercials, etc.? Do you walk into the movie theater blindly, lacking sense, uninformed as to why this movie is R-rated or even PG-13? Are you a headstrong Boromir, or a wise Faramir who knows his weakness in the face of temptation and avoids it whenever possible?

The Schemes of the Adulteress

As we continue in our walk through Proverbs 7, Solomon now focuses his attention on the schemes of the seductress. Our young man lacking sense is walking down her street, right past her house. Solomon continues in verse 10:

And behold, a woman comes to meet him,
Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.

She is boisterous and rebellious;
Her feet do not remain at home;

She is now in the streets, now in the squares,
And lurks by every corner.

Wow! What a surprise! A woman comes to meet him! Can't you just hear Gomer Pyle exclaiming at the top of his lungs, "Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!" Surprise, indeed! This is only what was expected. Her boisterousness lends an air of fun and frivolity. Let's face it, if sin weren't so enjoyable we wouldn't fall prey to it so easily. Solomon next gives the impression that she is everywhere to be found. As I pointed out earlier, that is even more true today. Even a widely proclaimed family movie like *Forrest Gump* surprised many with scenes that were unnecessary and sexually explicit. If you were surprised, you shouldn't have been. Check these things out beforehand. Don't act like a young man lacking sense and wander down the street of temptation unaware. Remember that Jesus extended the moral law from our actions to our thought life. If we simply lust after a woman, we have already committed adultery in our hearts (Matt. 5:27 28).

Solomon next turns to the woman's tactics:

So she seizes him and kisses him,
(Suddenness can put you off your guard unless you have predecided what you would do, whether it is a real seduction, a scene in a movie, TV program, or book. Will you close your eyes, leave, change channels, skip a few pages? What? Know beforehand!)

And with a brazen face she says to him:

"I was due to offer peace offerings;

Today I have paid my vows.

(I'm not such a bad person. See, I do a lot of the same things you do. You're not going to reject and judge me, are you?)

Therefore I have come out to meet you,

To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.”

Ah, the ultimate weapon with a man: female flattery. Men are suckers when they're told that they are needed. It was he, particularly, that she was waiting for. Not just anybody. If a man senses he is needed, he will be very reluctant to say no. Men usually hate to disappoint.

Solomon continues:

“I have spread my couch with coverings,
With colored linens of Egypt.

I have sprinkled my bed
With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
Let us delight ourselves with caresses.”

As she continues her assault on the male ego by indicating all the trouble she has gone through just for him (“Don't hurt my feelings now,” she says), she creates a sensual picture that is meant to arouse him and draw him in. Be realistic. This sounds inviting, even from the pages of Scripture. This should be a loud tornado siren in your ear to tell you: “There, but for the grace of God, go I!” The adulteress finishes her seduction with the assurance that no one need ever know, in verses 19 and 20. She says:

“For the man is not at home,
He has gone on a long journey;

He has taken a bag of money with him,
At the full moon he will come home.”

This rationalization of “no one will know” is true not only of an affair, but also of what we allow into our minds through the privacy of our computer, videos rented when no one else is home, magazines stashed away in a secret place, or visits to parts of town where we certainly don't expect to find anyone

we know. But it's a lie. These things cannot be hidden for a lifetime. Either you will slip up sooner or later, or you will poison your mind to such an extent that the outward temptation can no longer be resisted. Moses speaks to Israel in Numbers 32:23 warning them that if they do not obey the Lord, "their sin will find them out."

The Young Man Capitulates and Must Face the Consequences

As we have seen, the young man in Proverbs 7 has walked right into temptation's snare and has been totally mesmerized by the pleas and schemes of the adulteress. I have made many parallels to today as to how prevalent sexual temptation is. Now we will see the young man's demise and the consequences of his actions. Beginning in verse 21:

With her many persuasions she entices him;
With her flattering lips she seduces him.

Suddenly he follows her,
(probably as if in a trance)
As an ox goes to the slaughter,
(silently and dumbly)
Or as a stag goes into a trap,

Until an arrow pierces through his liver,
As a bird hastens to the snare,
(again blindly and without knowledge)
So he does not know that it will cost him his life.

He capitulates without a word, mesmerized by her seduction. The analogy to the ox, the deer, and the bird point out that each of them walk blindly, silently, and unknowingly to their death. So it is with the young man lacking sense. While he will not die in a physical sense, though he may if he contracts AIDS, he will die in the sense that his life will never be the same. Not only will the shame and guilt be

difficult to overcome, but there will be severed relationships that may never be repaired. There may also be consequences that can never be removed and scars that may never be healed, such as a child out of wedlock or a broken marriage in which children are the real victims. But even if the sin is with pornography, remember your sins will find you out. You may keep up appearances for awhile but your ministry, your family, and your relationship with God will slowly rot from the inside out. Solomon closes with some final warnings and observations:

Now therefore, my sons, listen to me,
And pay attention to the words of my mouth.

Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
(*do not give your mind opportunity with impure material*)
Do not stray into her paths.

For many are the victims she has cast down,
And numerous are all her slain.

Her house is the way to Sheol,
Descending to the chambers of death.

Your best defense is to first realize that none are immune. Remember Boromir and Faramir from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Boromir, the stronger, older brother, thought he could resist the power of the One Ring and use it to defeat the enemy. In the end, his lust for power drove him to irrationality and eventually to his death. Faramir, however, assessed his weakness correctly and refused to even look at the Ring when the opportunity arose, knowing its seductive power. He not only lived but was used mightily in the battles that followed. No one was capable of totally resisting the power of the Ring. Those who actually gazed upon the Ring, handled it and even used it, resisted only through an extreme exercise of will often aided by the intervention and counsel of others or circumstances (Frodo, Bilbo, and Samwise). Those who totally yielded to it were destroyed by it (Gollum).

Many have faltered before you and many will come after you. Your first mistake would be to think of yourself as above this kind of sin or immune to it. Don't kid yourself. It can ruin you physically! It can ruin you emotionally! It can ruin you spiritually!

Purity affirms who we are; we are made in the image of God. Purity affirms our relationship to Jesus Christ as His bride. Purity affirms women as a treasure God created for us as a companion and helpmate and not as an object for us to conquer.

Pray and ask forgiveness for any involvement in pornography, R- rated movies, and lustful thoughts. Commit to predecide what to do about those sudden temptations, commit to purity, commit to wives and husbands (or future wives and husbands) to be faithful in the power of the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther said that you cannot stop birds from flying over your head, but you can certainly stop them from making a nest in your hair. Some temptation is unavoidable, but as far as it depends on you, give it no opportunity to set up residence in your mind.

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