



FOLLOWING GOD'S DESIGN

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

PROVERBS 5:3-11,15-18

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.

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

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVERBS 5:1–7:27

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.

Read Proverbs 5:3-11 and 15-18, looking for both warnings and blessings. What do these warnings and blessings reveal about God’s design for sex?



EXPLORE THE TEXT

SEE THE REALITY (PROV. 5:3-6)

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 as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword. 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.

VERSE 3

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. In ancient Israel, nothing could have been sweeter than *honey*. Likewise, nothing compared with her sweet, seductive speech. In Solomon's day, nothing could have been *smoother than* olive *oil*. It flowed smoothly out of its container. So did the flattering words of a woman who used them to seduce. Her flattery could be very difficult for a young man to resist.

VERSES 4-6

Paying attention to the lips of the adulteress and listening to her words would prove to be dangerous. In the beginning, her seductive speech would sound tempting with the promise of carnal pleasure. However, *in the end* the story would be quite different.

While the forbidden woman's words may have seemed sweet and smooth, bitterness emanated from her. •*Wormwood* is a shrub that has a *bitter* flavor. A *double-edged sword* was a formidable weapon used in combat. A soldier with a double-edged sword could inflict damage with every movement, slashing with deadly efficiency.

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.

Solomon urged his son to consider the ultimate outcomes of sexual immorality. The forbidden woman was headed to **death; her steps head straight for Sheol**. Sheol was the grave or the place of the dead. In fact, Solomon recognized that the adulteress **doesn't consider the path of life; she doesn't know that her ways are unstable**. 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.

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.

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).

THINK LONG TERM (PROV. 5:7-11)

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 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 when your physical body has been consumed,

VERSES 7-8

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.

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. He challenged them: *listen to me, and don't turn away from the words from my mouth*. 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 encouraged young men to think about the long-term consequences of sexual sin.

Solomon urged young men to stay far away from sexual temptation: *don't go near the door of her house*. 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? How might a person rationalize flirting with sexual temptation?

VERSES 9-11

Why was Solomon so adamant about God's people avoiding sexual temptation? He 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*.

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?

Finally, in verse 11 Solomon reminded the young men of the physical consequences. 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.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SEXUAL SIN

- Sexual sin begins in the mind (Matt. 5:28).
- Sexual temptation is powerful (1 Cor. 6:18).
- Sexual sin is destructive (Prov. 6:32).
- Forgiveness is available (John 8:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:11).

ENJOY GOD'S PROVISION (PROV. 5:15-18)

¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern, water flowing from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs flow in the streets, streams 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, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.

VERSES 15-18

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:

- ***Drink water from your own cistern, water flowing from your own well.*** In Solomon's day, water was a precious treasure. The desert climate didn't produce much water. Wise people collected rain water and kept it in a cistern. 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. Solomon was urging the husband to devote himself to a sexual relationship with no one other than his own wife.
- ***Should your springs flow in the streets, streams in the public squares?*** Solomon raised an important question about sexual fidelity in marriage. Why would a husband want to become sexually involved with someone other than his wife? Of course, the same question could be asked about a wife. He wondered how a wise person could take precious water he had collected for himself and pour it into the street. From the perspective of a wise person, such an action would be considered foolish.

- ***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.*** Again Solomon used the image of water to make his point. Water flowed freely from a ***fountain***, and the stream that fed it could always be counted on to provide a never-ending supply. In the same way, physical intimacy in marriage renders an ongoing blessing for a husband and wife as they share life together.

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.

The hope for all sinners is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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 are your role models for marriage? Why?



IN MY CONTEXT

- 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 Needs
