

## Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27

Everyday Wisdom:  
The Wrong Path - Adultery

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Proverbs has presented us all with a **choice** between **two different paths**. **Path #1** is the way of the **foolish** and **Path #2** is the way of the **wise**. Over and over again through the first four chapters the **father-figure** has told his son to choose the way of the wise. But today the father **invites** his son **and us** to **imagine** what it would be like to **try** the way of the foolish.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to **give yourself** over to living for **yourself**? Just saying, “I’m going to **stop trying** to live God’s way and I’m gonna live my way. I’m gonna do **what** I want to do **when** I want to do it.” Sounds **intriguing**, right? I think if we’re **honest** with ourselves most of us in a **moment** of **weakness** have imagined what that would be like and **how good** it might **feel**.

Today the father takes one temptation **many men** face and **follows that temptation** to its **final conclusion**. It takes the temptation of **adultery**. *Adultery is the act of having sex with someone you’re not married to and either you’re married, or they’re married, or you’re both married, but not to each other.* I know this is a **temptation for men** because you can have the best marriage in the world and still think, “**What if...**” I’m not sure if this is as much a temptation for women, but I also don’t want to **discount** that it could be. **All of us**—no matter **male** or **female**, no matter **old** or **young**, no matter **how godly**—**could** commit adultery.

This is such a **serious temptation** the father writes not **one**, or **two**, but **three discourses** telling his son how bad this sin is. His son is **already married** even though he’s probably a teenager. If you’re **not married** you shouldn’t ignore these passages because **adultery** is not that much different than **fornication**. *Fornication is sex-outside of marriage.* Fornication may not be the **exact same** thing as **adultery** but it’s still a **step** down the **same path**, the way of the foolish.

When I lived in Colorado you could drive **15-20 minutes** from my house and go on a **beautiful hike** up a **valley** or into the **mountains**. At the **trailhead** the **Park Rangers** posted **useful information** like a map that showed how to get to the **different destinations**. If you wanted to hike to the **Rabbit Ears Campsite** you took this trail and if you wanted to get to the **Peregrine Campsite** you took that trail. If you want to get to **Bridal Veil Falls** you followed the trail to the end. Bridal Veil Falls is a **beautiful 20-foot waterfall** that looks **misty white** like a **wedding veil** as it falls down.

At the beginning of our trail our **Park Ranger**, the **father**, has posted a **map**. In fact, **he starts all three discourses** by saying pretty much the **same thing**, “**Pay attention to my commands, God’s Word. Stay on the right path by obeying my words which are the very words of God.**” This is **not self-righteous** or **authoritarian**. The father is simply **passing along** the **laws of God** in his **own vocabulary**.

### Proverbs 7:1-2

- 1 My son, keep my words  
and store up my commands within you.
- 2 Keep my commands and you will live;  
guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. (NIV) (see also 5:1-2; 6:20-23; 7:3-5)

If there’s one thing I feel like I’m **hammering home** in this sermon series is that we all need to **get serious** about **God’s Word**. We need to get serious about **reading, studying, understanding, and applying** the

**Bible** because that's our **map** for the **Christian life**. We don't just read the Bible like we might read a **classic** in **literature class**. We read the Bible because we want to **know the author, God himself**.

At the **trailheads** the **Park Rangers** sometimes post serious signs like "**Warning Mountain Lions**." When I was a kid a mountain lion killed a **hiker** outside of the **town** I grew up in. Those **signs** made me **nervous** and a little bit more **watchful**. But our **predator** in Proverbs isn't a **feline** but a **female**. Proverbs identifies her as the "**forbidden woman**" or the "**adulteress**." She is **married** and she is **off limits**.

The father warns his son that if he goes after the forbidden woman he will encounter **two temptations**:

#### **A. Words of affirmation (5:3; 6:24; 7:21)**

In **all three speeches** the father warns his son not just about her **beauty** or **dress** but her **words**.

##### **Proverbs 5:3**

For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,  
and her speech is smoother than oil; (NIV) (see also 6:24; 7:21)

Are any of you familiar with the **five-love languages**? One of the ways people feel loved is when others tell them how **wonderful** they are ("You're so **nice!**"). This can be a **great encouragement** in marriage and a **devastating tool** outside of it. That doesn't mean we should all stop **complimenting** each other, but if our spouse **isn't affirming** us we need to be **careful** we **don't go looking for it** in **another** man or woman.

Maybe some of you **ladies** feel like this passage is a **little-one sided**. In your experience it's been **smooth-talking men** who are the problem. That's **true**. Proverbs is written with **young men** as its **audience** but young women can **apply** it to their lives **just as easily**.

##### **Proverbs 7:21**

With persuasive words *he* led *her* astray;  
*he* seduced *her* with *his* smooth talk. (*adapted* from NIV)

Women, if you encounter a guy like this **run the other way!** If he wants to break up your marriage or wants the **benefits** of marriage **without** the commitment get out of there. Second **temptation**...

#### **B. Culture of acceptance (7:10-20)**

The woman in chapter seven uses her **beauty** and **dress** and **kisses** to **seduce** the young man (those are part of the temptation) but **verse 12** tells us she does it in the "**streets**" and "**market**" and "**every corner**." Part of what can make it so hard to **resist** the **seduction** of **sexual immorality** is that **it's everywhere**. We see **adultery** and **fornication** on **television**, in the **movies**, in the **news**, in **elected officials**, in **schools**, in **business**, and on and on. Eventually we think, "Maybe I should **try that**." It's **hard to resist a crowd** when they're telling us to "**Go for it!**" She even says she's offered her **sacrifices** (7:14). She's **religious**. She's **spiritual**. But she doesn't take God's commands **seriously**. Some churches don't want to **offend** or come across **judgmental** and so when you do **sleep around** they say it's **no big deal**. *The two temptations are words of affirmation and a culture of acceptance*. But what if you give in? There are **five consequences**:

##### **1. Fleeting pleasure (5:3-4)**

Her lips are like **honey** but they soon turn **bitter**. Honey is good. It's sweet. I like honey. But would you **want** honey you knew would give you **botulism**? No. Sweetness turns bitter. The second **consequence**...

##### **2. Financial and bodily ruin (5:10-11; 6:30-31)**

As Bernie told me, “**Marriage is grand. But divorce is a hundred grand.**” He doesn’t take credit for that saying. I thought I might tell a story of how adultery ruined someone financially but you probably can think of your **own examples** of people **you know** whose affair has **cost** them their **jobs**, or their **homes**, or their **kids**, and so they began to **drink**, or **sleep around**, and that led to **alcoholism** or **depression**.

### 3. Disgrace (5:9; 6:33)

There’s nothing but **shame** down this path. **Fourth** consequence...

### 4. Angry spouse (6:34-35)

An **angry husband** or an **angry wife** may exact **revenge** through **divorce**, taking the **kids**, taking your **motorcycle**, and your **golf clubs**, and whatever else you **loved more than her**. When I was in **seminary** there was a **shooting** at the local **Starbucks**. One **police officer** shot another officer because he **thought** the man was having an affair with his **wife**. One of my **classmates** was at the Starbucks when it happened and he saw the **victim** bleeding. The victim **didn’t die** but the shooter **took his own life**. I don’t know if there **actually** was an affair but just the very **perception** of adultery can lead to **loss of life**.<sup>1</sup> And yet these **consequences** dim in comparison to the **final** consequence.

### 5. God’s punishment (6:29) / Death (5:5, 23; 6:26; 7:23, 27)

The **ultimate consequence** of **adultery** or **fornication** is God’s **judgment**, which leads to **eternal death**. You might not have to deal with **financial** or **bodily ruin**, or **disgrace**, or an **angry spouse** in **this life**, but anyone who commits these things will have to deal with **God’s justice** in the next.

*Our five consequences are fleeting pleasure, financial and bodily ruin, disgrace, an angry spouse, and God’s punishment, which is eternal death.* That sounds bad. But we have **three rules to stay safe**:

#### Rule #1 - Stay away. (5:8; 7:7-8)

If you want to **stay safe** from **mountain lions** don’t go anywhere near where you think a mountain lion might be. This applies to the forbidden woman or **forbidden man** too. **Take a different path**. The **tragedy** of the story the father tells is that in chapter 5 what does the father say?

#### Proverbs 5:8

Keep to a path far from her,  
do not go near the door of her house, (NIV)

And then what does the father watch **a young man** do in chapter 7?

#### Proverbs 7:7-8

7 I saw among the simple,  
I noticed among the young men,  
a youth who had no sense.  
8 He was going down the street near her corner,  
walking along in the direction of her house (NIV)

The easiest way to **fall off the cliff of temptation** is to **hike to the edge**. **Proximity**. So often we say to ourselves, “**How close can I get to the edge? How far is too far? How emotionally invested** can I become in this relationship without **actually** committing adultery?” That’s **emotional adultery**.

Now I do not think this means that **men** and **women** can’t be friends. I am **not a proponent of the Billy Graham rule** where a man can never be **alone** with a woman who is not his wife. I think that rule **objectifies**

women and discards the blessing of male-female friendships. There's a **big difference** between staying away from the **opposite gender** and staying away from the **temptation of adultery**. If you know someone does **tempt you or you tempt them** then **absolutely set up boundaries**, but otherwise use **wisdom** and **discernment** and **keep your spouse informed**. That leads me to rule #2 for staying safe.

### **Rule #2 - Take a friend. (5:15-20)**

There was a man recently who was **running** and got attacked by a **juvenile mountain lion in Colorado**. It weighed between **35-40 pounds** and could have **killed** him. But like **Chuck Norris** he actually killed it instead. He plans to go **running again** but next time he's going to **bring a friend**.<sup>2</sup> God has given anyone who is married a **partner**, and **Lord-willing** a friend, their **spouse to help them fight temptation**. And what's the **number one tool** God has given **married couples** to fight **sexual temptation**? **Sex!**

#### **Proverbs 5:15-20**

15 Drink water from your own cistern,  
running water from your own well.

He's not talking about a **literal well** here. It's a **poem**. It's a **metaphor**.

16 Should your springs overflow in the streets,  
your streams of water in the public squares?  
17 Let them be yours alone,  
never to be shared with strangers.

**Treasure the gift of sex** in marriage and **don't share it** with anyone else.

18 May your fountain be blessed,  
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.  
19 A loving doe, a graceful deer—  
may her breasts satisfy you always,  
may you ever be intoxicated with her love.  
20 Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife?  
Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?

Sometimes as the church we can be a bit **squeamish** about sex. Talking about it can make us feel **uncomfortable**. But do you know what the **Bible** right here is telling husbands and wives to do? To **have sex** and to **have lots of it!** This is the **wrong week** to **skip church**. But in **all seriousness** a **Christian married couple** can have a **far better sex-life** than **anything the world has to offer** because it's **built** not just on **love for each other**, but **love for God**, and on a **marriage commitment** that God himself **created** and **affirms**.

But what about if you're **single**? How can you fight temptation? Marriage is **not** always the **answer**. God can give you Godly-Christian friends to **encourage** you and help hold you **accountable**. *Take a friend.*

Now there's a temptation here as Pastor Bryan Chapell says to either feel **prideful** or **condemned**. You might walk away prideful because you've **never** committed adultery, so you're **good to go**. Or you might walk away condemned because you **have committed** adultery. Well this is why we need the **gospel** because I want us all to walk away **convicted** and **forgiven**. The **problem** is **worse** than we thought. **Jesus** said:

**Matthew 5:28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NIV)

Are you saying that for me to **even imagine** a “**what if...**” with that other person I’ve **committed adultery**? Yes. **Being tempted is not sin**. But **giving into the temptation** and **accepting it** and **dwelling on it** and **thinking about it** is **lust** and lust is sin. Do you know what that means? **Every single one of us** in this room is **guilty of adultery**. Do you know what God says the **penalty** for adultery is? **Death**.

**Deuteronomy 22:22** If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. (NIV)

Because of the **lust** in our hearts it’s as if we’ve committed **adultery** and **every single one of us deserves death and hell**. That’s **why Jesus had to die**. That’s why Jesus had to **pay the penalty** for our sins on the cross. The law **required a life** and we can either **pay with our own** or **let Christ pay for us**. Maybe you’re thinking that you would **never let** anyone pay for your sins—that it’s **better to pay for your own mistakes**.

**I would agree with you** except for one thing. You **can’t pay**. You don’t have enough **capital**. In fact, you **don’t have any** capital. The Bible says “all our **righteous acts** are like **filthy rags**” (Isa 64:6). That’s like you having **zero dollars** and owing a **billion dollars**. You’ll **forever** try to **repay** what you can never pay. That’s **hell**. You need someone **who can actually pay**, who has **enough capital**. *This brings me to...*

### **Rule #3 (what matters most) - Believe in Jesus. (John 3:16)**

Jesus has the **capital required** to **pay** for your and my **adultery** of the **heart**. He **never sinned** and always **obeyed** his **Father**. His whole life he **never committed adultery** or **lusted** in his heart. He was **alone** with **women** and **men** and he was **just fine**. He was perfectly **good** and **holy** and used **his** capital to **pay our debt**. He took our **death penalty** on the **cross**. He **died** to **save us** from our **sin**.

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)

If you want to be **forgiven** for the **adultery in your heart** or the adultery you’ve **actually committed** **believe in Jesus**. **Three days after his crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead** so that whoever **repents** of their sin—admits their wrongdoing—and **believes** in him will receive complete **forgiveness**. “Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). *Believe in Jesus*.

This **path** is **different** than the other paths. There’s still **dangers** and **mountain lions lurking** nearby. But you’ve brought a **friend**, your **spouse**, and the **Park Ranger** is showing you the way, **Christ Jesus**. He promises us if we keep trusting him he’ll lead us to **Bridal Veil Falls**. *Believe in Jesus*.

*Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon, which includes endnotes and references. Read [our story here](#).*

<sup>1</sup> Shields, Bill. DA: Beverly Police Officer Was Shot Because Of Perceived Affair. Published 3/15/2012. <https://boston.cbslocal.com/2012/03/15/da-beverly-police-officer-was-shot-because-of-perceived-affair/> Accessed 7/26/19.

<sup>2</sup> Schwarts, Matthew S. "Man Who Suffocated An Attacking Mountain Lion Describes Fight For His Life." NPR. Published Feb 15, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/15/695035064/man-who-suffocated-attacking-mountain-lion-tells-his-story> Accessed July 25, 2019.