

HOW TO AVOID SEXUAL IMMORALITY

7 My son, keep my words and store up my commandments within you. 2Keep my commandments and you will live; cherish my teaching as you do the apple of your eye. 3Bind them upon your fingers; write them upon the tablet of your heart. 4Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your close relative; 5so that they may guard you from the stranger, from the adulteress who flatters with her words.

6At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice. 7I noticed among the naïve, I observed among the young men, a youth who lacked sense. 8Going down the street near her corner, he went in the direction of her house, 9at twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night, and in the darkness. 10Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with a cunning heart. 11She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; 12now she is in the streets, now in the public square, she lurks at every corner. 13So it was that she caught him and kissed him, and with a brazen face she said to him, 14"I have my sacrifice of peace offerings with me, today I have fulfilled my vows. 15Therefore, I came out to meet you. I was earnestly looking for you, and I have found you! 16I have covered my bed with linens, with colorful linens from Egypt. 17I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18Come, let us drink our fill of love until the morning; let us enjoy ourselves with love! 19The man is not at home; he is gone on a long journey. 20He has taken with him his bag filled with money; he will not return home until the full moon." 21With her many persuasive words she causes him to yield; with her flattering lips she forces him along. 22He follows her without question, like an ox going to the slaughter, or like a fool bound in chains goes to his appointed punishment—23until an arrow pierces his liver. He is like a bird darting into a snare; not realizing that it will cost him his life.

24Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. 25Do not let your heart turn to her ways; do not stray into her paths; 26for she has wounded many and thrown them down; indeed, she has slain a great multitude. 27Her house is a highway to Sheol, leading down to the chambers of death. (Proverbs 7:1-27)

Introduction

According to Greek mythology, sirens (or, sea nymphs) inhabited certain coastal areas of the Mediterranean. As ships passed by, the nymphs sang such enchanting songs that the sailors, drawn by the music, would jump overboard and be drowned. On one occasion the Greek hero, Odysseus, was on board a vessel that had to pass through these alluring and dangerous waters. Aware of the powerful allurements of the nymphs and their song, he ordered that he be bound with ropes and tied to the mast and that the crewmen's ears be sealed with wax to block out the tantalizing music of the nymphs. (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/29/92)

That is one way of dealing with the seductive nymphs of Greek mythology, but how are we to deal with the seductive allurements of sexual immorality we encounter in

our present day society? Let us turn our attention to this 7th chapter of Proverbs and heed the counsel our heavenly Father gives us on How to Avoid Sexual Immorality.

I. Don't Go Looking for Trouble

In Proverbs 7 the “eye witness camera” of Scripture shows us a “video” of a young man who goes out looking for trouble (vs. 6-9.) He passes through the streets near the home of an adulteress. He intentionally turns in the direction of her house. He passes that way in the twilight, the evening, the middle of the night. In contemporary terms, he is “hanging out” with men and women, guys and girls, who are “sexually active” (who engage in sexually immoral conduct.) He is attending parties that feature a heavy emphasis on sexual activity. He is frequenting those nightspots that feature immoral entertainment, and guys and girls waiting to engage in sexually immoral conduct.

Verse 10-11 indicate that trouble found him. She was “*dressed like a prostitute*” (dressed in a seductive, enticing way) with “*a cunning [or, guarded] heart*”—i.e.; she was devious, concealing her true intentions, not about to openly share her heart. “*She is loud and defiant.*” “*Loud*” (or, clamorous, turbulent) here means to be restless, discontented; as is evidenced by the fact that her feet do not remain in her own house. She is roaming the streets, looking for trouble. Maybe she is neglected by her husband, note verse 19, where she tells the young man, “*The man [her husband] is not at home; he has gone on a long journey.*” “*Defiant*” means to be resistant to authority; the commentators Keil & Delitzsch render this Hebrew word, סָרָר, as “ungovernable.” She catches this young man and kisses him (vs. 13.) Her behavior is very aggressive and shameless: she pounces on her prey and begins to seduce him.

Note carefully the terms used to describe this young man. He is one of “*the naïve*” (vs. 7.) That is to say, he is gullible, lacking discernment and judgment; he has poorly developed faculties for making moral decisions, compare Proverbs 14:15, “*The naïve believes every word, but a prudent man carefully considers his steps.*” The naïve (or, the simple) is aimless and drifting; lacking strong moral convictions and a commitment to Christ and His truth; he is easily influenced by the immediate, without considering the long-range perspective and consequences. He is further described as being one who “*lacked sense*” (vs. 7;) literally, he is described as “*lacking a heart.*” There is little spiritual and moral sensitivity; either he is not aware of the potential danger, or else he is not concerned; note Proverbs 6:32, “*He who commits adultery with a woman has no sense; it is done by the man who wants to destroy himself.*”

How do you avoid sexual immorality? You do so by observing the tragic example of this young man and being careful not to imitate him: Don't go looking for trouble. One of the purposes of Proverbs is to teach the naïve how to act carefully, how to evaluate people and situations, how to build their lives upon Christ and

His Word, how to develop a long-range perspective, how to no longer be naïve. Note Proverbs 1:4, which states that one of the purposes of Proverbs is *“to give prudence to the naïve.”* As a Christian, you are called to become the opposite of the young man described in this passage:

Flee from fornication. Every other sin that a man commits is without the body, but he who commits fornication is sinning against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You do not belong to yourself; ²⁰you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. (1 Cor. 6:18-20)

Flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:22)

II. Don't Fall for Seductive Words

According to verses 13b-14, with an expression of contemptuous boldness on her face, she explains that she has offered her sacrifices and paid her vows. The sacrifice of peace offerings was an expression of peace and fellowship between the worshiper and the LORD. But the adulteress interprets this as a peace to be sinfully exploited, a peace that leaves her free to practice sin without fear of retribution. God forbid that we should adopt her sinful reasoning and allow ourselves to view Christ's saving sacrifice as a means of providing us with a license to practice safe sin! God forbid that we should be like those whom the LORD rebukes through the prophet Jeremiah:

Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares Jehovah. ¹²Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. (Jer. 7:9-12)

In verses 9-11 the LORD rebukes Israel for thinking that they could be in fellowship with Him and at the same time continue in their sins, He rebukes them for converting His sanctuary into *“a den of robbers”* (i.e., a safe haven for robbers.) In verse 12 He reminds them how He allowed the temporary dwelling of His tabernacle at Shiloh to be destroyed because of the sins of Israel in those days. In summary, He reminds them that those who continue to live in sin cannot live in fellowship with Him; on the contrary, they will be subject to His judgment.

Let us ever remember that Jesus not only died to forgive our sins, but also to save us from our sins:

*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name **Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.* (Matt. 1:21)

I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ living in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may abound? ²God forbid. We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Rom. 6:1b-2)

In verse 15 we learn that she tells this gullible young man that she has been looking especially for him: she makes him feel special, as though he were the special object of her desire. She may even be indicating that she wants him to share with her in eating her sacred peace offerings, thus covering up her true intention.

Verses 16-17 indicate that she entices the young man with a sensuous, romantic, exotic description of the bed they can share. She has spread upon her bed soft pillows and exquisite coverings imported from Egypt, and it is perfumed with sweet spices. There they can take their fill of love (literally, find ecstasy) "*until the morning*"—note that the adulteress herself warns the young man that this is not a lasting love, but only a moment's pleasure, it is only "*until the morning.*"

In verses 19-20 she assures the young man that they can get away with their anticipated act of immorality, they can engage in this night of sexual misconduct without fear of detection. They can do so because "*the man is not at home.*" Note that she does not speak of him as her husband, but merely as "*the man.*" "*He is gone on a long journey,*" that means there is no chance that he might come home unexpectedly and catch them in the very act of adultery. "*He will not return home until the full moon*" In other words, it will be days before he gets back, and they will know by the phases of the moon exactly when that will be, so they can relax and enjoy themselves without fear of interruption. In contemporary terms, the adulteress assures the naïve young man that no one will ever know of their immoral conduct, they will be able to take the necessary precautions and it will remain their secret.

How do you avoid sexual immorality? We do so by refusing to fall for seductive words.

Bear in mind that disarming seduction is the ploy of the devil:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field that Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall

you touch it, or else you will die.”⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You shall not surely die;⁵for God knows that in the day you eat the fruit of that tree your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired as a means of making one wise, she took of its fruit, and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate it. (Gen.3:1-6)

Bear in mind that God warns us that sexual immorality is not a harmless game that can be enjoyed in secret, it is playing with fire, and those who do so will get burned:

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [sexual immorality in all of its various forms] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷Therefore, do not be a participant with them [in their sins]. (Eph. 5:6-7)

III. Don't Lose Sight of It's Destructive Consequences

Verse 21 reveals that with her *"many persuasive words she causes* (the Hebrew word, *נָחַץ*, has the meaning, "to stretch, to bend, to incline") *him to yield; with her flattering lips she forces him along."* Note how the whole process of seduction picks up speed and intensity as it gets out of control: she begins by persuasively **inclining** the young man to commit immorality and eventually she **forces** him along.

As verse 22 indicates, the young man is far from innocent, he allows himself to be swept along: *"He follows her without question, [i.e.; immediately, without resistance], like an ox going to the slaughter."* This naïve young man is ignorant of his fate, ... *"until an arrow pierces his liver"* (vs. 23.)

Verses 25-27 issue the warning: *"Do not let your heart turn to her ways; do not stray into her paths;²⁶for she has wounded many and thrown them down; indeed, she has slain a great multitude [i.e., she has conquered a mighty army; she is exceedingly strong, stirring up and unleashing powerful passions that can sweep you away like a tidal wave].²⁷Her house is a highway to Sheol, leading down to the chambers of death."* The message being conveyed is this: Where the heart is allowed to wander, the feet will follow, and eventually the soul suffers the ultimate consequence.

How do you avoid sexual immorality? You do so by never lose sight of it's destructive consequences. Ephesians 5:6b warns, *"because of these things [sexual immorality in all of its various forms] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* There is a present form of judgment and punishment: sexually transmitted diseases, broken relationships and destroyed families.

There is a future and eternal form of judgment: *"the cowardly and the unfaithful and the detestable and murderers and the sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars—their place shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8.)

Ephesians 5:7 urges us as Christians, *"do not be a participant with them [in their sins]."* Do not become involved with them in their immoral conduct and lifestyle, so that you will not join them when they receive from God the just punishment for their deeds. Let us heed the warning the Apostle Paul gives to the Galatian churches:

Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked; whatever a man sows, he will also reap: ⁸the man who sows to please his sinful nature, shall reap destruction from the sinful nature; but the man who sows to please the Spirit, shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. (Gal. 6:7-8)

Conclusion

In Greek mythology, Odysseus takes precautions to protect himself from the fatal allurements of the sea nymphs. In real life the Word of God warns us to protect ourselves from the fatal allurements of sexual immorality.