

FATAL ATTRACTION: GUARD YOUR HEART AGAINST ADULTERY

5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my insight, ²so that you may practice discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. ³The lips of an adulteress drip with honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; ⁴but in the end she is as bitter as gall and sharp as a double-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to Sheol. ⁶She gives no thought to the level path of life; her ways are unstable, but she does not know it. ⁷Now then, my son, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸Keep to a path that is far from her, and do not go near the door of her house; ⁹or else you will give away your honor and give your years to those who are cruel. ¹⁰[Stay away from her] or else strangers will feast on your wealth and you will labor in the house of an alien. ¹¹You will grieve over the outcome of your life, when your flesh and body are worn out. ¹²Then you will say, "How I hated instruction! And my heart despised correction! ¹³I would not obey the voice of my teachers, or listen to those who instructed me! ¹⁴I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly!"*

¹⁵Drink water from your own cistern, fresh water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your spring overflow in the streets—streams of water in the public square? ¹⁷Let them be for yourself alone, not to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹As a loving doe and a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be ravished with her love. ²⁰Why, my son, should you be ravished with an adulteress? Why should you embrace the bosom of a stranger? ²¹A man's ways are in full view of the eyes of Jehovah; he watches all of a man's paths. ²²The wicked man's own iniquities will ensnare him, and he will be held tight by the cords of his sins. ²³He will die due to lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. (Prov. 5:1-23)*

**In verses 3 and 20 the Hebrew is literally, "a foreign woman"*

6 ²³The commandment is a lamp stand, and the law is a light, and the correction provided by discipline is the way of life, ²⁴[intended] to guard you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the adulteress's tongue. ²⁵Do not lust for her beauty in your heart, and do not let her captivate you with her eyes; ²⁶for on account of a prostitute a man is reduced to eating a crust of bread—the adulteress preys upon your very life. ²⁷Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? ²⁸Or can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? ²⁹So [is the case of] the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife: whoever touches her will not go unpunished. ³⁰Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. ³¹Yet if he is caught, he must repay sevenfold; even if it costs him all the wealth of his household. ³²He who commits adultery with a woman has no sense: it is done by the man who wants to destroy himself. ³³Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away; ³⁴for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. ³⁵He will not accept any compensation; he will not be pacified even though you give him many gifts. (Prov. 6:23-35)*

**Literally, "the foreigner's tongue"*

Introduction

Some time ago there appeared in the theaters a movie about a man who became involved in an adulterous relationship. The woman with whom he became involved turned out to be a possessive maniac: she stalked him and at one point in the movie attacked him with a butcher knife. Quite appropriately, the movie bore the title, *Fatal Attraction*.

“Fatal Attraction” is a good title for any movie about a man who becomes involved in an adulterous affair. As a matter of fact, “Fatal Attraction” is an appropriate title to describe any situation in which a man finds himself allured to a woman other than his wife and becomes involved with her in an adulterous relationship.

“Fatal Attraction” is a good title to apply to this fifth chapter of Proverbs, a passage that warns us to be on guard against the sin of sexual immorality. Let us now give our attention to this passage of Scripture in which we are warned to guard ourselves against adultery.

I. Guard Yourself against Adultery, by Looking Beyond the Immediate Attraction

Verse 3 speaks about the allurement of the adulterous woman: her charm and her ability to entice. (Note that the adulteress is literally called “*a strange [or, foreign] woman.*” As a married man, such a woman should be and should remain a stranger to you; you have no business becoming intimately acquainted with any woman other than your wife.) Her lips “*drip with honey, and her speech is smoother than oil.*” She is described as a “sweet talker” (the picture is that of sweet honey oozing fresh from the honeycomb, something that is very appealing,) and a “smooth talker,” (“*smoother than oil,*” very persuasive in alluring unsuspecting victims into her fatal trap.)

Verse 4 cautions us to beware of the end (i.e.; the final outcome.) After you have been enticed by her seductions, ... after you have yielded yourself to her charms, ... after the act of adultery has been committed, ... at the end “*she is as bitter as gall.*” The initial excitement, the initial promise of sweetness, turn into bitterness. In the end it all turns into bitterness of the worst kind: “*gall*” [or, “*wormwood*”]. The preacher of Ecclesiastes remarks, “*I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her*” (Eccl. 7:26.) The adulterous woman is further described as a “*sharp as a double-edged sword.*” For a conscience that has not become callous and that is still spiritually alive, there will be torturously painful memories, note verses 11-12, “*You will grieve over the outcome of your life, when your flesh and body are worn out.*”¹² Then you will say, “*How I hated instruction! And my heart despised correction!*” Then, too, there are the extremely painful consequences:

Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? ²⁸Or can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? ²⁹So is the case of the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife: whoever touches her will not go unpunished ... ³³Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away, ³⁴for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. ³⁵He will not accept any compensation; he will not be pacified even though you give him many gifts. (Prov. 6:27-29,33-35)

Verses 5-6 provide us with a character sketch of the adulterous woman. *"Her feet go down to death."* Each step she takes along that pathway brings a greater degree of deadness and hardness to her soul, compare this description with Proverbs 30:20, *"This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I have not done anything wicked.'"* That is to say, she feels no pangs of conscience; she is beyond the point of experiencing a sense of guilt. Each step she takes along that path until finally she reaches her destination: *"Sheol"* (the place of the dead; or, in this case, hell itself.) We are also told that *"her ways are unstable."* Proverbs 7:11 describes her as being *"loud [or, clamorous, turbulent] and defiant"* [rebellious, self-willed]; *"her feet never stay at home"* (she is restless, discontented, and looking for illicit adventure.)

Guard yourself against adultery, by looking beyond the immediate attraction. Look at the consequences of adultery: the bitterness and the remorse, the broken relationships and estrangements that it causes. Look at what it can do to your soul and your spiritual life: the deadening, disastrous effect it can have upon you, it will eventually make your personality like that of the adulterous woman herself.

In an article in *WORLD* magazine (8/22/98,) J. Budziszewski relates some of the consequences of immoral conduct and lifestyle:

Deadening: Sex is unparalleled in its ability to unite opposites; according to Scripture, it makes man and woman "one flesh." By attaching and tearing loose, attaching and tearing loose, you build up scar tissue and deaden your capacity for intimacy.

Deception: Everyone knows that adultery means deception. Less known is that so does premarital sex. In one study, 80 percent of women but only 12 percent of men expected to marry their partner. It takes a lot of lying to keep that sort of thing going.

Exploitation: To lie is to break trust. The more you break trust, the more breaking trust becomes part of your character. In every tough spot, your first impulse is to cheat. At first you cheat only your sexual partners, but pretty soon every relationship glows with the lurid colors of exploitation ...

Dehumanization: Marital sex humanizes you, because by your openness to the gift of children you connect yourself with past and future generations. By contrast, promiscuous sex empties out your humanity and makes you like the animals, who have neither history nor hope.

Selfishness: In marital sex you love someone genuinely “other” with all your body and soul; promiscuous sex is merely self-love with another body. To take one of the most powerfully outward-directed impulses in your nature and warp it back inward is to cripple your ability to care about anything outside yourself.

Murder: According to our generation, irresponsible sex is the sin that “doesn’t hurt anyone.” Twenty-five years after *Roe vs. Wade* [the U.S. Supreme Court decision that granted the right to abortion] we should know better; to normalize incontinence we had to normalize murder.

II. Guard Yourself against Adultery, by Avoiding Tempting Situations

Bear in mind again that in this passage the adulterous woman is literally called the “*strange* [or, *foreign*] *woman*.” Again, as a married man, you have no business becoming intimately acquainted with any woman other than your wife. You may have co-workers, mutual friends, sisters in Christ, but on an intimate level they should be “strangers” to you.

Verse 8 gives us this wise counsel: “*Keep to a path that is far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.*” Proverbs 7:6-10 speaks of a young man, void of understanding, who went out looking for trouble, and trouble found him:

At 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. (Prov. 7:6-10)

Proverbs 7:25 issues to us the warning: “*Do not let your heart turn to her ways; do not stray into her paths.*” Consider, too, the admonition of Malachi 2:15b, “*guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.*” In Proverbs 23:26-27, the father of Proverbs gives this counsel to his son: “*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes delight in my ways; ²⁷for a prostitute is a deep ditch, and an adulteress is a narrow well.*” Note: “*A narrow well*” is something in which you get stuck and cannot get out. Consider the example of Joseph when Potiphar’s wife repeatedly sought to seduce him: “*And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her*” (Gen. 39:10.)

Verses 9-14 reinforce the admonition to stay away from tempting situations by again revealing the consequences of adultery and sexual immorality. *"You will give away your honor and give your years to those who are cruel"* (vs. 9.) You will surrender your reputation, your good name, your respect, and your integrity; in exchange, you will become an object of scorn, contempt, ridicule, and gossip in the mouth of cruel men for years to come, even all the years of your life. *"Strangers will feast on your wealth and you will labor in the house of an alien"* (vs. 10.) You will be reduced to poverty, bound to do menial work for others. The cost of adultery and sexual immorality may also be measured in financial terms as well as spiritual terms: the loss of family, the loss of standing in the community, the loss of confidence on the part of others in your trustworthiness and moral integrity. The loss of these things many times translates into financial loss as well, note Proverbs 6:26a, *"On account of a prostitute a man is reduced to eating a crust of bread."*

So long as your conscience is still alive, you will experience the terrible agony of guilt and remorse: *"You will grieve over the outcome of your life, when your flesh and body are worn out. ¹²Then you will say, "How I hated instruction! And my heart despised correction! ¹³I would not obey the voice of my teachers, or listen to those who instructed me!"* (Prov. 5: 11-13.) The memories of obstinate, rebellious, sinful behavior can weigh upon a man with excruciating pain.

"I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly!" (vs. 14.) Note: The Hebrew word, רָע, has both the meaning of evil and ruin or calamity. Here is the testimony of one who is overwhelmed by his guilt in the midst of God's holy assembly, compare Psalm 40:12b, *"My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up."*

Guard yourself against adultery, by avoiding tempting situations, ... and thereby avoiding the tragic consequences of adultery and sexual immorality.

III. Guard Yourself against Adultery, by Enjoying Your Own Spouse

Verse 15 exhorts us, *"Drink water from your own cistern, fresh water from your own well."* This is a poetic way of saying, let your sexual desires be satisfied with your own spouse. Note the counsel the Apostle Paul gives to the Corinthian church:

But since there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife [should fulfill her duty] to her husband. ⁴The wife's body does not belong to her [alone], but also to her husband; and likewise, the husband's body does not belong to him [alone], but also to his wife. (1 Cor.7:2-4)

Verse 16 poses the question, *“Should your spring overflow in the streets—streams of water in the public square?”* Here is a poetic way of pointing out the inappropriateness and the wrongfulness of promiscuous sex. Note the admonition the Apostle Paul gives to the Thessalonian church:

It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thess. 4:3-8)

Verse 17 urges us, *“Let them [your springs] be for yourself alone, not to be shared with strangers.”* Here is poetically emphasized the intimate and sacred nature of the sexual act; it is something to be experienced and enjoyed exclusively within the bonds of marriage. Consider the description of the marital relationship as presented in Genesis 2:22-24,

Then Jehovah God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘Woman,’ because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be bound to his wife; and they shall be one flesh. (Gen. 2:22-24)

Verse 18 expresses the desire, *“May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.”* Here is expressed God’s desire that, within the confines of marriage, His good gift of sex be enjoyed to the full with His blessing.

In verse 19 the wife is portrayed as a lovingly doe and a graceful deer. The wife presents herself as lovely and sexually attractive to her husband—the Hebrew words emphasize the sensuous, the romantic, and especially the feminine qualities of grace, beauty, and elegance. The husband is exhorted to be always satisfied and completely captivated with his wife’s love.

Guard yourself against adultery, by enjoying your own spouse. Wives, seek to make yourself as physically and sexually attractive as you can for your husband. Husbands, do not be infatuated by the “perfect” beauties of the Hollywood movies; allow yourself to be satisfied and fulfilled with the wife the LORD has given you.

Conclusion

Verse 20 raises the question, *“Why, my son, should you be ravished with an adulteress? Why should you embrace the bosom of a stranger?”* (Why should you allow yourself to be captivated with a woman other than your wife and enter into an illicit sexual relationship with her?)

The implied answer: There is absolutely no good reason to do so; ... and there is a very good reason not to do so! The LORD watches over a man, carefully examining his paths (his decisions and actions) (vs. 21.) For the man who refuses the counsel of God, the final outcome is death (vs. 23.)

“Fatal Attraction” is, indeed, a very appropriate title to describe the situation in which a man finds himself allured to a woman other than his wife and becomes involved with her in an adulterous relationship. As the preacher of Ecclesiastes observes, *“I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her”* (Eccl. 7:26.)