

“The Wisdom of Marriage”

Proverbs 5:15-23

2019

Week Fourteen, “Father Knows Best,” Proverbs 1-9

INTRODUCTION:

There’s a popular story about William Bennet, an author and former senior official to both President Reagan and the first President Bush, who once attended a wedding in which the bride and groom vowed to remain together, “as long as love shall last.” Bennet quipped, “I sent paper plates as my wedding gift.”

Ouch. But so true.

Now, in light of that rebuke or admonition, comes tonight’s wisdom from the father about marriage. Last week, we heard his exhortation to flee the wicked woman: essentially, “keep your hands off of other women.” This week, he basically tells us to “keep your hands on your wife.”

R. C. VanLeeuwn has said tonight’s text is “a frank invitation to the erotic delights of marital love.”

Derek Kidner says of the father here, “He sings of married love and faithfulness in a passage of rare beauty.”

So fair warning: we’re going to talk about sex and marriage and sexual pleasure . . . if that makes you uncomfortable, well, run for the hills. It’s what the passage emphasizes, so we’re going to teach the passage.

I. The Wisdom:

READ PROVERBS 5:15-20

We start with the father’s wisdom on marriage here. He’ll finish with another warning, but in a rare turn, we get positive reinforcement in these six verses.

John Phillips sums up this wisdom this way: “A man can evade the snare of a wanton woman by being contented with God’s provision.”

And it’s worth nothing here, friends, that these scriptural principles are not human suggestions but holy instructions — today, more than ever before, we need to listen to the verses we just read. Desperately.

Again, in the big picture, before we break it down, here is this wisdom distilled with some of its prevalent imagery in the book of Proverbs: water that is channeled and contained yields satisfaction, while fire becomes uncontained, resulting in destruction.

Don’t forget it!

But know we break down this wisdom.

A. Passion

READ PROVERBS 15:15

“Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.”

There’s that imagery of water. If you look all the way through this section, you will see the wife pictured as the source of refreshing water in numerous ways: as a cistern, well, spring, stream and fountain.

Essentially, the father is saying: here is how you quench your spiritual thirst — with your wife’s supply!

Men, hear me when I say this (and it’s true for women, too, of course): your sexual passion isn’t wrong, but there’s only one place to satisfy it.

God doesn’t say: “There’s temptation out there? Oh, well, you need a will of iron. Just suffer through it.”

No, He says: “Satisfy your thirst through lovemaking with your wife.”

READ SONG OF SOLOMON 4:12

“A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.”

She is only sealed to others — she is preserved for the satisfaction of her husband.

READ SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1

“I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.”

Lest you be confused, that is God talking about sex in marriage — and He is saying it is good, and that the man and woman should drink deeply of the marriage fountain.

But there's more.

B. Progeny

READ PROVERBS 15:16-18

“[16] Should your springs be scattered abroad,

streams of water in the streets?

[17] Let them be for yourself alone,

and not for strangers with you.

[18] Let your fountain be blessed,

and rejoice in the wife of your youth.”

Now, I want to be honest: not everyone agrees with everything these verses are alluding to. I've mentioned progeny because I believe children are in view, to some degree, but some really good theologians dispute that. So fair warning.

But one thing everyone agrees with is that verse 16 is a sobering question for the one considering adultery: how would you feel if you wife did that to you? If her waters — springs, streams — were scattered abroad, i.e. enjoyed by others?

READ MATTHEW 7:12

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Never forget the so-called Golden Rule — but it's amazing how adulterers neglect this truth. I've actually counseled with numerous folks who were having affairs . . . it amazes me how selfish they were. Somehow, their actions were justified — but they were willing to virtually kill their spouse if the tables had been turned.

Now, I personally think verses 17-18 are not just talking about the sexual fulfillment of a couple in marriage, but the fruit of the act. Children are always in view when God sees a house and a home.

READ PSALM 127:3

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

Clearly, children are the fruit of a great marriage — and think about it this way: what orphan or fostering problem would we have in our nation today without sexual immorality?

What if everyone reserved the marital fountain, so to speak, for their partners? What if they rejoiced only in the wife of their youth?

Oh, friends, we'd virtually have no challenges with orphans. The problem would dry up and go away . . . so I can't help but see an echo of the impact of illegitimate affairs here — it places children in the world that are unloved, neglected, fought over as bargaining chips, you name it.

But let's get back to the father's central point, even if it makes us uncomfortable.

C. Pleasure

READ PROVERBS 5:18-19

“[18] Let your fountain be blessed,

and rejoice in the wife of your youth,

[19] a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;

be intoxicated always in her love.”

The father unabashedly calls for seeking fulfillment in the sexual intimacy of marriage — literally, “be swept away with delight.”

Now, I know we tend to be really prudish in the church about sex — but I'm telling you that's what this passage tells us.

Of course, first, again, there's a reminder of the importance of marriage fidelity.

READ ISAIAH 54:6

“For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.”

All of this works best if we stay committed to the wife of our youth — our first wife, our first marriage. It doesn't mean you can't recapture this goodness in remarriage; it just means it will be harder.

READ HEBREWS 13:4

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”

But, regardless, sexual satisfaction is in view here.

READ I CORINTHIANS 7:4-5

“For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Sex within marriage is actually commanded . . . even though popular culture has cultivated the myth that monogamy is ultimately unsatisfying, God's word continually tells us that monogamy is the best, the most satisfying, the most pleasurable.

And God designed marriage, so He knows!

READ GENESIS 2:25

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Just read Song of Solomon — really read it, friends. And then ask yourself, “What are they really doing in this passage?”

I agree with Ray Ortlund Jr. who says that verse 19 is “frankly erotic.” As a deer is beautiful and attractive to the eye in the way it moves, in even its innocence — that's how a man is supposed to see his wife. Yes, you are supposed to enjoy your wife visually.

Now, again, we're so prudish, no one likes to talk about this in church — but its killing our marriages.

As Ortlund sums up verse 19: “when you get married, drop your inhibitions, and go for it in both quality and quantity.”

The word “love” at the end of verse 19 is explicitly sexual in nature in the original Hebrew; there's just no wiggle room around it. But why should we be afraid to admit this?

Why should we not celebrate the pleasure of sexual love within marriage?

If you struggle in with these thoughts, let me recommend a book to you rather than drawing you a picture: order “Under the Sheets: Secrets to Hot Sex within Your Marriage,” by Dr. Kevin Leman.

It might set you free just a bit. It might even help you understand the Song of Solomon a little bit. But it may also rattle your prudish cage a little bit, which could be good.

Let me finish this section on sexual pleasure in marriage this way. We all know Christ's first miracle, right?

At a wedding feast. Celebrating marriage. Sexual union. Essentially, in keeping with the imagery of sex and the waters of marriage, Christ changed water into wine and said: “Drink. Enjoy!”

But we have to understand there are boundaries to what we are discussing. The father wasn't going to get too far from it.

D. Prohibition

READ PROVERBS 5:20

“Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?”

But asking this as a rhetorical question, starting with, “Why?” the father is essentially saying that this action is inexcusable. It's the equivalent of saying: “You really couldn't be that stupid, right?”

To be intoxicated or to embrace the bosom of an adulteress is the same as being infatuated or straying, even to err or sin — to be lost.

The price is so, so high.

And it's worth noting here that the breast really refers to the part of the body employed in an embrace — it's more of a comprehensive embrace that one body part. Which makes it even more intimate, in my mind.

The father is bluntly saying that sex is God's blessing in marriage — but everything else is condemned. Period.

As Charles Bridges has written, “Domestic affection is the best defense against the vagrant desires of unlawful passions.”

READ I CORINTHIANS 7:5

“Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Now, please no one hear me wrong: sexual sin is inexcusable. Period. It is condemned. There’s no excuse for it.

But even the withholding of sex within a marriage is foolish. Unwise. Positions the marriage for failure.

And, at the end of the day, marriage represents the mystic union between Christ and the church, so it needs to be treated with the utmost care. Sex within marriage is an essential part of serving one another; sex outside of marriage is a destroyer.

And if we didn’t understand that rightly, the father is going to drive his point home quite bluntly in the last three verses.

II. The Warning:

READ PROVERBS 5:21-23

He has been singing about the beauty of sex within marriage, but now he returns to the fear of God . . . it’s a repeated truth he just can’t stay away from because it is so, so crucial. So foundational.

We should all drink the water . . . or get prepared for calamity and disaster. And it’s worth reminding ourselves of an old saying: “There are no atheists in eternity and but a few on their death beds.”

Everyone thinks they can run from God, but it just isn’t true. Not that this truth stops the wicked from hoping for the best:

READ JOB 24:15

“The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he veils his face.”

Let’s break down his warning.

A. God perceives our sin

READ PROVERBS 5:21

“For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths.”

There are no secret sins, friends — and what God knows, by the way, He can make known at any point of his choosing. Don’t ever forget it.

And, as believers, we are doubly doomed when it comes to sin — not only does God see all, but we have the Spirit inside of us, observing all first hand.

READ I CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

That verse sure had a chilling affect on my thoughts of sexual sin as a young man — and it still does. As it should.

As H.A. Ironside has written, “Nothing is too insignificant for His notice; nothing is too great for His attention. All is naked and open before Him.”

READ II CHRONICLES 16:9a

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth . . .”

READ JEREMIAH 16:17

“For My eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from Me, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.”

Oh, friends, God sees it all. He knows all. And God considers how our sin will wind up . . . and it saddened.

You do realize, by the way, that it is our own sexual sin that has caused us to lose faith in the institution of marriage? It’s not marriage that is failing — it’s the sin of man.

The last study I saw should that 33% of those that are married had committed adultery, and 53% were planning to do so because they assumed their spouse would.

That's frightening. And God sees, and God knows. Which leads to the most frightening thought.

B. God punishes our sin

READ PROVERBS 5:22-23

“[22] The inquiries of the wicked ensure him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.

[23] He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.”

Here is the big picture: our sin grabs us and entangles us — all according to God's design. To His discipline.

He has made marriage to work a certain way, and He has woven consequences into the world for us when we behave outside of His perfect plan.

We do need self-control in these areas, of course, but we must understand that God's remedy for our thirst for sex is sex — overflowing sexual joy with our wives or husbands . . . and absolutely nothing else.

If we do something else, God punishes our sin:

1. Eventually

READ PROVERBS 5:22

“The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.”

The very sin in which we delight, sooner or later, forges the chains that bind us! And it is impossible to sin without being bound.

READ JOHN 8:34

“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.’”

READ ROMANS 6:16

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

And sin touches everything we are — its slavery is inescapable and it brings with it overwhelming regret and shame.

Folks can say that isn't the case . . . but just what. Sexual sin will work it's magic. In my own pastoral ministry, I can say this: I've observed how alone so many who have committed sexual sin are in their later years . . . they really are held fast in the cords their sin.

And that's just the beginning.

2. Eternally

READ PROVERBS 5:23

“He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.”

Let me ask you: how blunt to you need it stated for you? Is verse 23 not clear enough?

“Led astray” here is the same word as “intoxicated” in verse 19. What an ironic contrast. You can either delight in the love of your wife, or be led into destruction by sexual immorality — but they will both take you somewhere.

And, lingering in the back here, is the picture of death, of eternity, of the end of our dies.

Such sin — being led astray — leads us down the darkest path, the eternal path of being separated from God.

SHARE THE GOSPEL

READ ISAIAH 53:6

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

And yet, here is the good news: just as God has a plan for marriage, God has a plan for those who struggle, who fall, who sin.

I can't tell you that you can avoid the consequences of your sin — God's world doesn't work that way; sin bears its toll, in so many cases — but I can tell you that He has a plan to forgive you, if you'll but accept it.

READ JOHN 8:36

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

READ REVELATION 22:11

“Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

Once eternity opens, you are fixed in whatever state you entered it — separated from God, condemned in your sins, or made new in Christ. Forgiven and redeemed.

So why not come to Christ and be forgiven? Start here. Right here. Right now. Regardless of your past. Regardless of your sin.

Just as sin can hold you in bondage, so too, can the blood of Jesus hold you fixed in your new righteousness.

Amen? Amen.

CONCLUSION: