

Four Ways to Fight Sexual Sin

Sexual sin goes against who God created humans to be. The Bible teaches us this lesson in Proverbs 5 as the sage warns a young married man against the adulteress.

You may not be young, or married, or a man, but the wisdom of this text applies to you as much as to anyone else. Committing adultery with a woman is not the only form of sexual sin, but it follows a pattern that is common to all. Listening to this passage will help all of us. As the passage unfolds, it presents to us four steps we'll need to take to avoid sexual sin.

1. Flee from Temptation

The author begins with an exhortation to listen:

My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil. (Proverbs 5:1-3)

Sexual sin is often attractive. It has a certain charm that invites and allures with seductive and smooth speech. It is also addictive: "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin" (Proverbs 5:22). Like any appetite, the more we feed sexual sin the more it grows. The more we commit it, the more we will feel we need it, the easier it will be to do it, and the harder it will become to stop.

So, we need to flee.

Now, O sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house. (Proverbs 5:7-8)

Fleeing sexual sin means doing all we can to avoid it. For some of us, that will mean restricting what we look at online, or not watching certain TV shows, or being more careful about what social situations we place ourselves in, or breaking up with someone (even if they mean the world to us), or changing our job.

If any of this seems like an overreaction, listen again to how it all ends: "He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he has led astray" (Proverbs 5:23). Sexual sin is attractive and addictive, and this is a lethal combination. Any action and sacrifice are worth it.

2. Consider the Future

The writer wants us to see what it all comes to in the end: "At the end of your life you groan when your flesh and body are consumed" (Proverbs 5:11). Sexual sin has consequences. We may talk about these things as a "fling" or "one night stand," but the fact is, such sins are not so easily containable.

Do not go near the door of her house lest you give your honor to others and

your years to the merciless lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner. (Proverbs 5:8-10)

Sexual sin seems so attractive now, but fast-forward to the end and it all looks very different: “You say, ‘How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors’” (Proverbs 5:12-13). The wise consider their end before they get there.

3. Uphold Your Marriage

The young man being addressed needs to see how overwhelmingly positive a thing it is to enjoy sexual fulfillment within marriage.

Drink water from your cistern, flowing water from your well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. (Proverbs 5:15-19)

The Bible is not at all embarrassed by the enjoyment of sex in marriage. Some of the imagery here leaves little to the imagination. Cistern and well are both images of female sexuality, as the fountain is of male sexuality. We shouldn’t be surprised to see such imagery in the Bible. God is the one who designed human sexuality, intending for the husband and wife to enjoy their sexual union.

It is a man being addressed in this passage (“be intoxicated always in her love”), and so this is being spoken of from his perspective. But it is equally true of how the wife is to be delighted and intoxicated by the sexual love of her husband. Paul makes this clear in the New Testament:

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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. (1 Corinthians 7:3-4)

But there is alternative intoxication offered: “Why would you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?” (Proverbs 5:20). It can feel every bit as heady and dizzying as romantic fulfillment within marriage, but we know how devastating the fallout of adultery can be. It can wreck a whole life, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and economically.

So we must work on our sex lives. And investment in healthy sex life is not likely to happen without investment in the marriage relationship as a whole, building and deepening the friendship that lies at the heart of it.

What about those of us, like me, who are single? This kind of language can be painful. We hear of the intoxication of sexual satisfaction and it is hard to hear. We must persevere in upholding the Bible’s teaching and honor the marriage bed by living lives of purity. And we need to uphold the marriage we have together with Christ. The language of intoxication that can be so

hard to hear is a picture of what we will experience in eternity with him. We are pledged to him and need to honor our relationship with him by remaining faithful to him.

4. Remember God Is Watching

All that we do, and say, and think, takes place in the full view of God: "A man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths" (Proverbs 5:21).

This is a warning to us. We may be able to deceive other people; we will never deceive God. There is simply no thought he hasn't seen and doesn't know through and through. God sees every word we type into our search engines.

God sees our sin. But he also sees every striving to be pure and godly. He knows when we are battling; he knows what we are going through. It may well be that no one seems to understand the kind of struggle you face or knows the pain you go through as you fight temptation. But Jesus does. He draws near to us, as we draw near to him. Our labors for him are never unnoticed. As we fight for purity, he fights for and with us.