

SEX EDUCATION: THE ADVANCED COURSE
PROVERBS 5:1-23

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

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I am sure this is one of those sermons where not many of you will fall asleep. Yoko has been bugging me to preach through the Song of Solomon for years. I keep telling her that I am embarrassed to even read it, let alone preach through it. Well wouldn't you know it, I chose a very interesting wisdom book to preach through, and low and behold, right here, in the middle of a nine chapter discourse on the nature of wisdom, comes this passage on raw, hot, passionate sex?

I started my week's study the way I usually do, by casually reading the text. After preaching through the first 4 chapters of Proverbs, I was expecting some more insight into the nature of and pursuit of wisdom. However, when I read the chapter, I almost choked, and then went back and read it again. All week as I studied, I kept asking myself, "How in the world am I going to preach it?" I know there are many of you out there who enjoy watching me sweat and squirm my way through this passage. I do not understand why I should be so nervous about preaching this passage but perhaps it has something to do with this sort of thing early on in the ministry.

While I was in seminary, my wife and I were attending a Chinese church. My wife approached me one day and asked if I would be willing to speak to the women's Bible study group. I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to. We are studying through a theology of sex in the Bible at school so perhaps I'll give a lecture on the role of sex in marriage." My wife, being Chinese said, "You better not you embarrass me enough accidentally. You better not! Do you understand?" Reluctantly I said, "O.K. I guess I'll talk about 'sailing.' You know we took a couple of lessons in the Caribbean." She said, "I don't care. Just don't talk about sex."

Well the day of the Bible study, Luing was sick and as I drove to church, I decided that since she wasn't there, I would go ahead and give the sex in marriage talk, which I did. Everything went well, until Sunday at church when I noticed a lot of the ladies from the bible study group gathering around my wife. I overheard one of them say, "Your husband did a great job. He sounds like a real expert on the topic." Luing looked really puzzled and said, "Expert? He's only done it twice, and both times he threw up before we even really got started."

Maybe that is why I'm a little nervous, or maybe its because the Bible is so honest and graphic about the joys and pleasures of sex.

If you look at your outlines, you will notice that I am working backwards through the passage. Now you may think I am doing this because I am confused and I may very well be confused, however, I am starting at the end because I want to first paint a picture of what good, passionate, healthy sex looks like before we describe what unhealthy, destructive sex looks like.

I think at it is important to keep this chapter in its proper context. The first nine chapters of Proverbs have to do with describing the nature of wisdom, how wisdom can be gained, the benefits for following wisdom, and the penalties for rejecting or ignoring wisdom. Keep this in mind as we study through the passage. The main idea of this morning's passage is this: **EVEN THOUGH THIS PASSAGE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT SEX, IT HAS MORE TO DO WITH OUR DEDICATION TO GOD AND HIS WISDOM.** There is a connection between our attitudes towards sex and our attitudes towards God. There is a direct connection between our sexual behavior and our love for God. This passage links our love for God and His wisdom with our dedication to please Him in our everyday lives, even our sex lives.

I. THE FORMULA FOR GREAT SEX (Vs. 15-23)

SINCE GOD DESIGNED AND CREATED SEX, WE WOULD BE WISE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SEX IS ALL ABOUT ACCORDING TO GOD'S WISDOM.

I think too many times in church we say things like, “Don’t do this or don’t do that,” without giving any reasons why or any alternatives. That is why I would like to start out by giving the formula for great sex in verses 15-23. **SINCE GOD DESIGNED AND CREATED SEX, WE WOULD BE WISE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SEX IS ALL ABOUT ACCORDING TO GOD’S WISDOM.** If God is the author of sex then we would do well to listen to His description of it. Last week we described our proper attitude towards wisdom as that of a marriage relationship and we should embrace wisdom as we would embrace our husband or wife. Sex is so important to God because He has chosen the marriage relationship and the sexual intimacy of that relationship to describe His passionate relationship with the church. When we place our faith and trust in anything other than God for our happiness, then we have committed spiritual adultery. So let’s look at how passionately God created sex.

A. PHYSICAL SEX (Vs. 15-17)

Verses 15-17 describe physical sex. In Genesis 2, marriage is described as the emotional, physical, and spiritual bonding of a man and a woman. The Bible says, “For this reason a man shall leave his mother and father, and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Good sex involves our minds, our bodies, our emotions, and our spirits. The problem most of us have today is that our culture has separated sex from the rest of our existence. God designed the marriage relationship to be a safe place where two people can share their entire lives together. Sex is to take place within the context of a life-long commitment. Our culture looks at sex as something recreational, something to go out and have fun with.

The language in these verses parallel the thoughts in the love-song book of the Bible, “The Song of Solomon.” Let us go through the poetic images given here. The images are mixed so let us look at them verse by verse. In verse 15 it says that we are to drink water from our own well.

Drinking water symbolizes the refreshment or sexual satisfaction we get. The well represents our marriage. So sexual satisfaction is only to be gotten from within the context of a marriage. That is simple enough. But before we go on to verse 16, we should note that cisterns or wells often refer to the female sex organ. Cisterns were holes dug in the ground to catch water, and wells were dug to hold water.

Verse 16 may also have a double meaning. If the well is the female, then perhaps the springs and streams of water are the sperm of males. If this is the case, then men should not be ejaculating sperm any place except in the context of marriage. If we continue with the metaphor of the water being the release and joy of sex within a heterosexual marriage, then that kind of joy and release should not be shared with anyone but a husband and a wife.

Please do not miss the intensity of the language here. He is describing the sex act as erotic, passionate, and refreshing with the only restriction being that it takes place in the context of marriage alone. I know this question will come up so let me address it now: As a youth pastor, I had some young adults who were working with a major, national Christian organization ask me, "Pastor, we are engaged and we have been lying together naked in bed. We have not had sexual intercourse, but we have been masturbating one another. We've been feeling kind of guilty. Is there anything wrong with that?"

I was stunned. I was dumbfounded. I do not know why I am always shocked, but I am. Look at verse 17. It should answer the question. "Let these joys of sex be shared with a husband and wife alone, no one else." What if something happened and this couple ended up not getting married? Let me continue: Keep in mind this passage is not talking just about sexual intercourse it is talking about the release and the joy of the sexual encounter. Whether you are masturbating one another, or when you are having oral sex, the same result takes place and this kind of sexual

enjoyment is not to be shared with others. It was designed to take place with one husband and one wife.

Many of you may be thinking, "Now, I've messed up, I can never experience God's best for my sex life in marriage because I've already ruined it." if you have, then that is true. If you have had oral sex, masturbated with another, or had sexual intercourse with another person, then you cannot experience the fullness of all God created sex to be. That does not mean you cannot be forgiven or have a healthy sex life, but you can never experience sex the way God designed it. You may think this is harsh, but hold onto your hats because the news gets worse.

B. EMOTIONAL SEX (Vs. 18-20)

But let us approach it from the positive side first. Let's assume that you young people have not done any of these sexual acts, you can look forward to a wonderful, physical sex life when you get married. But there is more as verses 18-20 point out there is an emotional side to sex as well. Verse 18 is the setup. Again, there is talk about the fountain being blessed. This can mean that the joy of the sexual act will always continue to be enjoyable or even that the sperm produce children. But the keyword that goes together with blessed, is rejoice, and the husband is to rejoice in the wife of his youth of if you are a girl, you are to rejoice in the husband of your youth. This relationship is meant to bring emotional joy.

Now let us look at verse 19. "A loving doe and a graceful deer" are Hebrew poetic pictures that represent beauty and grace. Keep in mind that we have been describing beauty and grace in Proverbs as much different than our culture describes beauty and grace. The husband is to rejoice over his wife's beauty and grace, as is the wife over her husband's. Beauty has to do with the pursuit of holiness, faithfulness, loyalty, and love.

Look at the second line, “May her breasts satisfy you always.” Again, if we were talking to females, we would say the same of the male’s anatomy. In order to do justice to this line, let’s jump to the last line in verse 19, “May you ever be captivated by her love” this is the description of a couple who are captivated, and enchanted with one another. This verse has everything to do with the intimacy of fondling one another, looking into one another’s eyes and romantically feeling the safety and love of this marriage relationship.

When I was a youth pastor, young people would always ask me, “How far can we go without sinning? Can we kiss? Can we touch?” As I read these verses, it seems to me that any kind of sexual contact should be reserved for marriage. I know that is not a popular concept and no-one in our culture wants to live accordingly but my question to the young people is, “What is the purpose of kissing, making out, petting, and other things? Is it merely recreational? How is that getting to know the other person better?”

The experience of emotional sex is intense within the confines of a heterosexual marriage. This couple is gazing into one another’s eyes, fondling one another, holding one another, and being captivated by one another. That is a beautiful picture of what sex in marriage is.

Now verse 20 is meant to go with verse 19. It is the negative argument and it uses the same words. We are not to be captivated by a strange woman we are not to be satisfied at another woman’s breast. Look at the word adulteress in verse 20 because we are going to run into that word again. The word in Hebrew is “Zarah” and it literally means a strange woman. It could refer to a non-Hebrew woman, or a woman from another country, but I think it probably means strange in the sense that her behavior and desires are contrary to God’s laws. In other words, she is an alien when it comes to righteousness. Any man or woman who is fondling, masturbating, having oral sex, or anything of that nature, is a strange man or woman when it comes to God’s design for sex.

Again, let me get back to the positive. God designed sex to be captivating, exciting, exhilarating, passionate, tender, and hot. But it is designed to be in the context of a one-man, one-woman marriage.

C. SAFE SEX (Vs. 21-23)

Verses 21-23 give us both the nature of and reason for safe sex. Schools are passing out condoms and cities are handing out condoms while telling people to have safe sex. Really, there is only one form of safe sex and that is if you are not married, then abstinence is the only form of safe sex. If you are married, then only sex with your partner is safe sex.

Why are we to remain pure in regards to our sex lives? Verse 21 reminds us that God sees. You may have devised all sorts of clever rules for yourself in which you can say, “I am not having sex,” and yet be doing some of the things we talked about. It really does not matter what I or anyone else thinks, or for that matter, what you think, God sees everything. We will all have to give an accounting of our thoughts and behaviors before Him some day. I can tell you, I have done enough stupid stuff in my life that I am not really looking forward to that day.

Again, verses 22-23 remind us of what wisdom has been saying all along. If you play with fire, you will get burned. That is the nature of it, the way God created it.

I am here to tell all of us that sex is one of the greatest things God created. It is powerful and enjoyable when used the way God designed it but it can be equally powerful and destructive when used in the way our culture tells us to use it. **SINCE GOD DESIGNED AND CREATED SEX, WE WOULD BE WISE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SEX IS ALL ABOUT ACCORDING TO GOD’S WISDOM.**

I know I did not do justice to these verses. I am hoping that I painted such an exhilarating picture of sex as God designed it, that it would motivate all of you young and unmarried people to remain absolutely pure in thought and deed.

II. THE FORMULA FOR DISASTROUS SEX (Vs. 7-14)

SINCE WE LIVE IN SUCH A PERVERTED TIME AND CULTURE, MOST OF US WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ENJOY SEX THE WAY GOD DESIGNED IT AND CREATED IT.

But if the positive picture is not graphic enough, perhaps the negative picture is what you need. Verses 7-14 spell out for us the formula for disastrous sex. You see, **SINCE WE LIVE IN SUCH A PERVERTED TIME AND CULTURE, MOST OF US WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ENJOY SEX THE WAY GOD DESIGNED IT AND CREATED IT.**

I hope you have been listening carefully to what I have been saying. We do not like to hear about suffering the consequences of our behavior and we somehow think that all we have to do is say we are sorry, and everything is all right. Well that's partially true. When we confess and repent, God forgives us of all our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. However, we must still deal with the consequences of our sin. If we get AIDS from sex, God will forgive us for our sin, but we are still going to die. If we get pregnant and confess our sin to God, He will forgive us, but the baby is not going to magically disappear.

There are real consequences for having sex outside of marriage. If you have participated in some of the behaviors mentioned earlier, if you are divorced, and even if your spouse has died and you are remarrying, then you will not be able to experience the full exhilaration of the sexual encounter as God designed it. That is not to say we cannot enjoy sex in marriage, and that we cannot be forgiven. It simply means we will not experience this sex to its fullest. Now you may be thinking that's a little harsh. If that's the case, then think about this. Most of us had a real choice in regards to sex and we freely acted out sinfully. However, think about the victims of sexual abuse

they had no choice in the matter. They are innocent and yet, they have been robbed of enjoying the fullness of this sexual experience in marriage. There are consequences to our behaviors.

A. A GOOD WARNING (Vs. 7-8)

Verses 7-8 present us with a good warning. Let me draw our attention to the word, "sons." Again, these instructions have been directed at a group, and we could translate it, "children." Now all the examples have to do with a young man being seduced by a strange, exotic woman. However, the passage equally applies to a young woman being seduced by a strange, exotic man. The teacher begs the children to listen carefully to the warnings because there is so much at stake.

Look at verse 8. The poet says do not even go near the door of her house. Let me warn you young people about what I have observed over the years, once you go down the path of sexual immorality, your thinking becomes really confused. I have seen men and women both continue on in unhealthy relationships because of such confusion. I would say that most of the men and women I have counseled whose husbands or wives had committed adultery, were consistently willing to take them back yet they continued to be confused by their partners continued adultery. I can tell you clearly and I know this for certain: Sexual immorality will confuse your thinking and some distortions will remain with you for the rest of your life. The stakes are high so let us follow seriously what the wisdom teacher has to say about what is at stake.

B. A LOT TO LOSE (Vs. 9-14)

In verses 9-14 he warns us that we have a lot to lose. In the first half of verse 9, the poet says that we may lose our strength. Pursuing holiness through wisdom energizes us but getting into a relationship with a sexually immoral person will drain us of energy. Men or women who use seduction to get you in a relationship will always drain your energy. Since sex acts are physically and emotionally pleasurable, it can be easy to get hooked on them. Satan has substituted sex for

love and when people are sexually active, they feel loved. When you become involved, then jealousy and other negative emotions start to surface. The chances are you will use up your strength and energy trying to hold on to this immoral person.

1. STRENGTH (V. 9a)

Why? First of all, sexually immoral persons have no problems having sex with other lovers since the goal is pleasure. Even if a sexually immoral person will not cheat on you, the chances are you know that you are only one in a chain of serial monogamous relationships. In other words, even though she is only involved with you sexually at this time, it will only be a matter of time before she dumps you and looks for someone else who can satisfy her. Any of you who have been in, or are still in this type of relationship, know how energy draining they can be.

2. YEARS (V. 9b)

The second half of verse 9 warns us that we can lose years. You may think the person you are involved with is being faithful to you, and he or she may be. But think about this: When you have sex with a person -- I am talking sexual intercourse, oral sex, or anything else of that nature -- then you are not only having sex with that person, you are having sex with every person your partner has had sex with, and with every person their partners have had sex with, and so on. That is not only gross it is dangerous. Let me warn you if you get AIDS, you're going to die. If you get genital herpes, you will have to live with this for the rest of your life, and so will the person who ultimately decides to marry you. Syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases will take their toll on your body, on your mind, on your emotions, and your spirit.

3. WEALTH (V. 10)

Hooking up with sexually immoral people can cause you to lose your wealth and there are many examples. Let me point out a couple. Let us say you hook up with someone sexually and

later get married. The chances are that he or she may not be reliable. Ask people who are going through divorces and who have lost substantial amounts of money.

Further, sexually immoral people tend to want to live life in the fast lane, buying expensive clothes, accessories, and go to expensive restaurants and clubs. You will spend a lot of money when involved with sexually immoral people. Life should be simple. If you are in a pure relationship with someone, life should be fun, simple, uncomplicated, and energizing. If you are involved sexually, then life becomes a complicated struggle.

4. ABUNDANT LIFE (Vs. 11-14)

This brings us to verses 11-14. You stand to lose everything God wants you to have. You stand to lose the abundant life. This will almost always happen. After you have invested yourself sexually, there will come a time when you cry and weep and when you are full of regret. There will come a time when your life becomes so miserable you say, "I wish I had listened to God's word and lived my life pure and holy.

Look at verse 14. That is like the final insult to getting involved with sexually immoral people. The Hebrews had no choice they lived in a close-knit community. Their shame would have to be lived out in front of all their family and friends. When the bottom fell out, even though no one had to say a word, the broken person would have to hear the Bible say, "I warned you. I told you so. You wouldn't listen." How embarrassing would that be?

Today, we do not have to live life in the context of community. We can find new friends and even a new church. Or we just boldly stand up and defend our sins and move on with life as if nothing happened.

Let me throw out another warning here. I have seen people continue to make the same mistakes over and over again, and their lives are just one train wreck after another because they

refuse to repent and get right with God and let me say that it happens more often than not when connected with sexually immoral behavior.

The author of this Proverb and I want to warn all of you, in the strongest possible terms, that there is a lot to lose by being sexually immoral in any way. A lot of us have lost a lot already. But let's stop the bleeding. If you are acting out sexually or are suffering the consequences of sexual immorality, confess, repent, change your behavior and your patterns, and move. Remain sexually pure in every way until you enter a healthy, heterosexual marriage which I know is difficult because of today's culture. Satan has deceived most of us and most young people will also be deceived. The fact is **SINCE WE LIVE IN SUCH A PERVERTED TIME AND CULTURE, MOST OF US WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ENJOY SEX THE WAY GOD DESIGNED IT AND CREATED IT.**

III. THE FORMULA FOR OBTAINING WISDOM (Vs. 1-6)

GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. THE WAY WE APPROACH SEX IS A GOOD MEASURE OF HOW MUCH WE LOVE GOD.

Now I want to put all of this in perspective. Life is not all about enjoying ourselves and seeking pleasure. And even though God has given us this wonderful gift of sexual pleasure in the context of marriage that is not the most important issue in life. The most important issue in all of life is how my eternal destiny can be changed from death to life. In other words, the most important issue in life is to ask the question, "Am I in a right relationship with God?" That is what wisdom is about -- pursuing God's holiness in our everyday lives. The poet started this chapter by reminding the student of what is going to guide this discussion of sex. I am ending with it, because I want this thought to linger in our minds. Verses 1-6 spell out the formula for obtaining wisdom. God wants to be first in our lives. **GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES**

AND THE WAY WE APPROACH SEX IS A GOOD MEASURE OF HOW MUCH WE LOVE GOD.

Again, I think this is worth repeating. When we remain sexually pure, it is not because we are trying to keep some religious rule and get heavenly credit for it. No! We remain sexually pure because we love God and purity is a quality that should characterize His children.

A. STAYING ON TRACK (Vs. 1-2)

Verses 1-2 remind us to stay on track. The poet reminds us that even though wisdom is readily available to us, we must actively and intentionally seek it. Our attention must be tuned into God's frequency so we can hear His voice and stay on the road to life. This is in contrast to getting involved with a sexually immoral person described in verse 3 who gets us off track. Look at the neat thing the poet has done. In verse 1 he encouraged his student to listen to his words that will lead and keep him on the track to life. His words may be harsh at times and we may not want to hear them, but they will lead us to life because they are God's truth.

B. GETTING OFF TRACK (V. 3)

In contrast to verse 3, we are introduced to the words of a seductress. Her words are sweet, and the way they are described here, they seem to be spoken with her lips pressed against the young man's. She is speaking to him and kissing him at the same time her speech is flattering and sexual. The young man is being seduced. Again, this works the opposite way if the student is a girl. The young man will be seducing her with flattering words and sexual attention. I don't think these scenarios are too hard for us to imagine. We all have these romantic ideas. But here is the important question, "Did we get these ideas from MTV, Hollywood, television, our friends, or do they come from God?"

D. FOLLOWING THE WRONG TRACK (Vs. 4-6)

The answer is important because verses 4-6 paint a bleak picture for those who end up following the wrong track. The words spoken with honey and kisses turn out to be bitter and rotten in the end. Even though wisdom's words were sometimes hard to swallow, they ultimately keep us safe and lead us to life.

I know the words of our culture and the excitement and pleasures of sexual immorality seem really appealing to us but in reality they are leading us to death. And here is a really sad word. Look at verse 6. People who follow this path, do not even know that what they are doing leads to death. Sexual immorality will mess with your mind to the point that you either will no longer care what is right and wrong or you will not care what is right or wrong. Either way, the result is death.

Listen, God loves us and has wonderful lives planned for us. Pursue wisdom chase after holiness desire faithfulness and love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You will not be disappointed. **GOD DOES CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. THE WAY WE APPROACH SEX IS A GOOD MEASURE OF HOW MUCH WE LOVE GOD.** Do you trust God enough to remain pure in thought, body, and spirit? Do you love Him enough to put your sex life in His hands? Remaining sexually pure is a demonstration of our love for God.

EVEN THOUGH THIS PASSAGE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT SEX, IT HAS MORE TO DO WITH OUR DEDICATION TO GOD AND HIS WISDOM.

Wisdom is about living out God's moral laws in our everyday lives. It is simply not trying to rigidly follow laws or trying to follow them technically. As we have said, people try to play with the meaning of words in order to justify all sorts of sexual behavior. But I am hoping this morning's message will be a warning that sex is a powerful gift. It can be used to bond two people together in marriage, or if misused can destroy lives.

Listen to what Frederick Buechner says:

“Once they had sinned, Adam and Eve tried to hide their nakedness from each other and from God, and to one degree or another we have all been hiding it ever since for the reason, I suppose, that we know that our sexuality is yet another good gift from God which as sinners we can nonetheless use to dehumanize both each other and ourselves.”

Since we live in such perverted times, it is good to think about the nature and purpose of such a powerful event as sex. Young people remember, there is always forgiveness, but once the gift is misused it will be forever tainted. Listen to the words of the poet, and take them to heart.