

May 20

Proverbs

Hello everybody and welcome to the May 20th edition of Project 4:4. I'm Reid Brown. Today as we read in Proverbs we got a heavy dose of Solomon's warnings about the dangers of lust and sexual immorality. Apparently, this problem which is so rampant and obvious in our society today was also a huge problem in the days of ancient Israel. Let's keep in mind that the temptations are out there right now confronting you is basically just the same as the ones that God's people throughout the ages have had to deal with. They may sometimes take slightly different forms just as the drug of choice on the streets changes from time to time, but the basic temptations and vices are just the same. This is important because if for even a moment you start believing the lie of Satan that it is somehow harder now than it ever was before to be righteous and to stand for godliness, you won't be far from the place at which you begin to rationalize and excuse your own sinful actions on the theory that your sin is less sinful because the pressures upon you are so much greater.

As you read the daily Proverbs portion, notice that more space in this book is devoted to warning us about sexual immorality than to any other subject. That has to be significant!

I'm pretty sure that you will have noticed that these warnings are addressed entirely to men. Men are the tempted ones and women in these verses are the temptresses. Often in the book of Proverbs, it would appear that the most deadly scenario involves married women luring married men away from their own wives and into her poisonous arms. It sounds pretty chauvinistic to us and to be honest, the society of that day was chauvinistic. To be fair we might also need to add that there were a lot more protective measures in place in that society to protect the women who wanted to remain pure than for the young men who were growing to adulthood. In any case I am very certain that if the book of Proverbs were being written into the context of the 20th century, the settings of the wise man's bits of advice would be somewhat different and there would be just as much encouragement directed to young ladies to watch out where they put their feet and laid their heads as is directed here to the males. But let's get past the cultural setting and look at the principles that are embedded in it. They are just as relevant and just as essential today as they were in Solomon's day and if we fail to pay enough attention to them, the consequences will be just as devastating to us as to the young man to whom they were originally written.

Here is the bottom line: sexual relationships outside of the bounds of marriage are evil. Not only do they dishonor God, but they devastate lives. Not only do they devastate the lives of other people, they ultimately devastate your own life. In fact, one way or the other, they are quite likely to kill you. Before you ever allow yourself to become sexually involved with anyone who is not your wife or your husband, whether you or they are married or not, you need to ask yourself one very big question: in light of the fact that this relationship is going to ruin my life, is it really worth it?? That is the message of the Proverbs teaching today. You do not have to look far around you to witness people whose lives are dramatic proof that God is not joking about these harmful effects. Any sex outside of marriage is wrong. There are no exceptions to that rule. No matter how badly neglected you have been by your spouse, no matter how much you think you love the person with whom you are about to go to bed, if he

or she is not your wife or husband it is wrong. Do yourself the greatest favor of your life and run as fast as you can in the opposite direction. The consequences of extramarital affairs (even if you aren't married) are destructive in the extreme and you are not about to become the world's first exception to the rules that God has laid down to govern the affairs of human beings. If you play you will pay.

Now I want you to notice here that Solomon is very explicit about the ways in which we will pay if we fail to heed God's command regarding this subject.

First he or she might lose their wealth- that was true in the days of ancient Israel and its true now. It happens in a lot of different ways- it costs a lot of money to keep a mistress, or to visit a prostitute, when adulterous affairs are made public there are a multitude of other costs- like divorce settlements, lawyers. And then there is the cost that many an unfaithful spouse has discovered of trying to make alimony and child support payments to one family while attempting to establish another one. Many a prosperous person has suffered tremendous financial loss as the result of an extramarital affair. Solomon says: 5:10 "watch out, otherwise strangers will feast on your wealth and your toil will enrich another's house." If a thief is caught, he says in chapter 6:31, and adultery is thievery, the thief must pay back 7 times what he has stolen even if it brings his own household to financial ruin. When you steal another man or woman's spouse that can happen to you too.

Solomon also mentions the fact that sexual immorality also leads in many cases to physical illness and disease. There are a great many rather nasty diseases that men and women who live by God's laws within monogamous and god honoring marriages never get.

Solomon also mentions private guilt and public shame as two more possible consequences of engaging in sexual misconduct. If you think about what he is saying, you will quickly know that the fleeting pleasure of an illicit sexual encounter is not worth the consequences that are very likely to follow it. Don't do it!!

In the midst of all of these warnings, it is clearly apparent that there is, in the eyes of God, a very proper and wonderful place for human sexuality. It is of course in the context of a marriage relationship. Sometimes, Christians have fallen into the trap of believing that because sex outside the marriage bond is so destructive and therefore evil, that all sexuality is evil and that there is no good place for us to celebrate and enjoy our sexuality. They see it, and too often have been taught to see it as a necessary evil, needed so that we can procreate and continue the human race but in and of itself evil. Some have even been taught that sexual relations with your own husband or wife are evil unless specifically engaged in for the purpose of having children. Some struggle with enjoying sexual relations with one's own spouse just because it is enjoyable and because you want to experience the intimacy and love during the act of intercourse, but somehow feel that is wrong. Well let me tell you they are wrong! We see ample evidence that sexuality and sexual relationships within the marriage bond are a wonderful gift from God that he means for us to fully enjoy. In Chapter 5:18-19 Solomon says, "May your fountain be blessed" "and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer- may her breasts satisfy you always. May you be ever captivated by her love." That sounds like a pretty healthy and positive view to me.

Know that God loves you and desires for you to experience His protection and provision for the best possible sex life we can enjoy when we follow His guidance. This is Reid Brown wishing you the best sex through the obedience of our Day 20, Project 4:4 reading.