

We live in a culture that does not prize “sexual discipline.”  
Our culture encourages “free expression” of sexuality.

We sometimes forget that our culture is not especially different from other cultures.  
The reason why we have Proverbs 5  
is because ancient Israel was so much like us!

God’s commands are not burdensome.  
Jesus calls us to take his yoke upon us –  
for his yoke is easy and his burden is light.  
When we walk willingly in God’s ways, then we find out how easy it is!  
But when we grumble and rebel –  
then we find out how heavy and burdensome *disobedience* can be!

God’s law is not a straitjacket to bind you,  
but the path of true freedom and contentment.

The seventh commandment is an excellent example of this.

The sexual revolution promised freedom and happiness to all.  
All manner of sexual sins—from adultery to homosexuality to fornication—  
have been encouraged and rewarded.  
But what has it produced?  
Has it produced joy and peace?  
Far from it.  
It has reaped the harvest that it sowed.  
The self-indulgent quest for pleasure invariably reaps a harvest  
of pain and anguish.  
Divorce rates have skyrocketed (and while sometimes divorce is necessary,  
no divorce is ever pleasurable!),  
and sexually transmitted diseases have brought both fear and death.  
Unwanted pregnancies have resulted in a meteoric rise in the abortion rate as well.  
In order to hide from the consequences of breaking the seventh commandment,  
people are frequently breaking the sixth commandment as well,  
murdering the unborn, hoping to escape  
from the consequences of their sins.  
Sin produces fear, misery, and death.

That is the message of Proverbs 6-7, as it reflects upon the seventh commandment.

## **Q70: Which is the Seventh Commandment?**

A70: The Seventh Commandment is, You shall not commit adultery.

### **1. The Price of Adultery and the Reward of Wisdom (6:20-35)**

Proverbs 1-9 is spoken by a father to his son –

a father to his teenage son.

And this lesson is central to a young man's future.

If you get caught up in the pursuit of easy sex,  
then you will surely make a complete mess of your life.

In chapters 1-4, the father introduced his son to Lady Wisdom.

He reminds his son that she is the source of life and of blessing.

Every good thing comes from Wisdom.

If you find her, you will find life.

Therefore everything in life hinges on getting wisdom!

Now in Proverbs 5-7 the father will tell his son about Dame Folly.

Here she is called the "strange woman" or the "forbidden woman."

She is described as a temptress,

a stock character is morality plays from all throughout human history.

"The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,  
and her speech is smoother than oil." (5:3)

She sounds good!

"But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,  
sharp as a two-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death;

Her steps follow the path to Sheol." (5:4-5)

When you walk, who will lead you?

when you lie down, who will watch over you?

when you awake, who will talk with you?

Wisdom?

Or the Adulteress (the foreign woman)

Who will be your nightly companion?

With whom will you spend your time?

Whom do you desire?

When you walk, wisdom will lead you; when you lie down, she will watch over you;

and when you awake, she will talk with you.

*For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light,  
and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.*

Discipline.

Tonight we are talking about sex.  
But the principle applies to every aspect of life.  
“The reproofs of discipline are the way of life.”

If you lack discipline now, you will pay for it in the future!  
Sin is not the sort of thing that you can “play” with.  
You may be able to pet a cute little tiger cub,  
but before long, that cute little tiger cub will grow up,  
and then who is in charge?

Proverbs uses sexual sin as the chief example here,  
partly because of the nature of sexual sin.  
It is addictive.  
It promises pleasure and happiness,  
but before long it enslaves you,  
until “at the end of your life you groan,  
when your flesh and body are consumed,  
and you say, ‘how I hated discipline,  
and my heart despised reproof!’” (v11-12)

Chapter 6, verse 25 identifies the root of the problem:

*Do not desire her beauty in your heart.*

Long before the son commits adultery with the foreign woman,  
he will have desired her in his heart.

When Jesus said, “whoever looks at a woman with lustful intent  
has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28)  
he was simply saying what Proverbs had been teaching for centuries.

“Do not desire her beauty in your heart,  
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes

In other words, “do not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

The word “desire” is the same word translated “covet” in the Ten Commandments.

Coveting begins with the eyes.

You are looking too intently at her.

Guard your eyes. Guard your imagination.

I have focused on men—because in Proverbs it is a father warning his son.

In the Song of Songs, it is a bride teaching her girlfriends.

Women also deal with lust.

The desire to be appreciated and affirmed

can lead a woman to imagine and desire another man.

The warning is the same:

guard your heart!

There are two arguments against adultery given in verses 26-33 and 34-35.

1) adultery's inevitable penalty

*Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?*

*Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?*

*So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife;*

*none who touches her will go unpunished.*

There are no exceptions.

If you play with fire, you will get burned.

If you think that you are the exception—that you can get away with it—

I have news for you: you won't!

But not only is the penalty severe and inevitable, it is also unending!

*People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry*

*but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold;*

*he will give all the goods of his house.*

We have sympathy for a starving thief.

But he who *commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*

*Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his disgrace will not be wiped away*

Adulterers deserved death according to the law,

but it would appear that leniency was often extended.

But such leniency resulted in perpetual disgrace.

Forever the stigma of adultery would remain upon the adulterer—

like a Scarlet Letter that could not be removed.

The second argument (in verses 34-35) against adultery turns to the jealous husband.

After all, if you have committed adultery with a married woman,

there is going to be a very angry man that you will have to deal with.

*And jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.*

*He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.*

He will see to it that you are destroyed.

## **2. The Path of Adultery and the Way of Wisdom (7:1-27)**

Chapter 7 brings the warning against folly to its climax.

The father warns his son against the seduction of the adulteress.

The challenge for the father is to help his son understand the temptation,

and yet make it repulsive.

This is hard!

We want our children to be well-prepared to deal with life—

so we need to give them an honest lesson in what they will face.

They need to understand that they *will* be tempted—  
and yet we need to show them where the temptation leads:  
Folly invariably leads to death.

Once again,

the father opens his lecture by addressing, *my son, keep my words,  
and treasure up my commandments with you;  
keep my commandments and live;  
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;  
bind them on your fingers;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

The law was written on two tablets of stone.

The father understands that in order for us to live,  
the law needs to be written on tablet of your heart.

This is the blessing of the new covenant, according to Jeremiah 31.

Jesus is the one whose heart was pure—who indeed kept the whole law,  
and did as his Father commanded.

Therefore, in Jesus, the law is written on our hearts,  
and we are more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

Now, when God commands something,

the commandment has two sides—both what is required, and what is forbidden..

So, for instance, when he commands us to honor our father and mother,  
there is an implied command not to dishonor them.

Likewise, when he commands us not to commit adultery,  
there is an implied command to promote the chastity of our selves and our neighbors.

**Q71: What is required in the Seventh Commandment?**

A71: The Seventh Commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behaviour.

**Q72: What is forbidden in the Seventh Commandment?**

A72: The Seventh Commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

And you see this in Proverbs as well.

The father says that the reason for his lecture  
is to draw you to wisdom and keep you from folly.  
*Say to wisdom, 'you are my sister,' and call insight your intimate friend,  
to keep you from the forbidden woman,  
from the adulteress with her smooth words (v4-5).*

What happens when you say “I do”?

What happens when you say “I take you to be my wife”?  
By that speech, something happens.  
They are merely words—and yet they accomplish something.  
When the pastor says, “I pronounce you man and wife!”  
there is something irreversible that happens.

When you say to wisdom, “you are my sister,”  
something irreversible happens.  
“Sister” was a term of endearment for one’s beloved in Egypt.  
The idea is that you must marry wisdom in order to avoid folly.

But you cannot dance between the two.

The father then recounts a story:

I have looked out through my window and seen among the simple,  
I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense.  
Unlike you, my son, he had no one to teach him wisdom—  
or, perhaps, he refused to listen!  
But either way, he lacked sense.  
He had never given himself to wisdom.

And he walked down the street near *her* corner.  
This was his fatal flaw—  
he is simple, he is gullible—  
he did not realize where he was!  
You see, my son, he was not a fool.  
He was not looking for trouble.  
But he was not wise.

After all, he approached her house at dusk—  
as darkness was falling.

My son,  
be especially careful at night.  
It is easy to stumble and fall when darkness covers your steps.  
You may think that darkness is a cloak that will hide evil deeds,  
but the eyes of the LORD pierce every dark corner!  
When folly calls you,  
stay away from her door.  
One of my seminary professors told the story of a man addicted to pornography—  
who kept going back to the same store.  
One of the first things his counselor told him to do was to avoid that street,

even if it meant going miles out of his way.  
Do not go near the door of her house.  
Do whatever it takes to stay away from her.

*And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.*

She hides her true identity in order to entice you.  
If he had known at first that she was married, perhaps he would have avoided her,  
but she seduced him with her smooth talk.  
She looks attractive.  
She offers cheap sex.

And she is everywhere!

*Now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.*

(Perhaps you can see that this is not a particular woman –  
she is at every corner!

Why?

Because the problem is that this young man is looking for *anyone!*)

*She seizes him and kisses him,*

*and with bold face she says,*

*“I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows!”*

In other words, I have meat at home–

I have the best food!

Come, and share it with me!

*I have come out to meet you,*

*to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.*

(Literally, I came out to face you and seek diligently your face.)

In other words, you good-looking hunk, come with me!

And she draws him in with promises of a plush bed, and aphrodisiacs:

*myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.*

*“Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.”*

After all,

*my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey;*

*he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home.*

You have nothing to fear!

The seed of the serpent offers the same promise the serpent had in the garden:

“You will not die!”

There are no consequences for your actions.

She does not try to say that adultery is right,

“But only that they can get away with it because her husband is not at home.”

*With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.*

*All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast*

*till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare;*

*he does not know that it will cost him his life.*

What we have here is a picture of entrapment.

The adulteress, whether witting or no, is luring him to his death.

Just as stupid animals do not see any connection between traps and death,

even so, morally stupid people do not see any relation between their sin and death.

We died to sin.

How can we live any longer in it?

The wages of sin is death.

The path of folly is nothing more and nothing less than the road to hell.

The father has given his sons an earful.

He has let them hear the very words of the adulteress—

with her syrupy sweet siren song.

Now he calls them back:

*And now, O sons, listen to me.*

Remember, boys, remember what we are talking about here:

*be attentive to the words of my mouth.*

*Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,*

*for many a victim has she laid low,*

*and all her slain are a mighty throng.*

*Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.*

Her bedroom is a battlefield where corpses lie.

Her bedroom is the gate to hell.

How do you avoid her?

We saw last week that murder starts as hatred in the heart.

In Matthew 5 Jesus says that adultery starts as lust in the heart.

The outward act results from an inward disposition.

Just as hatred and murder is striking out against the image of God in man,

so also lust and adultery are rooted in a refusal to worship God.

Sexual sin is inherently predatory.



Sexual sin is all about power – getting what I want.

You often hear that “rape” is not about sex, but about power.

That is true – but it is important to say that not *just* rape, but every sexual act (or thought) that arises from lust is about power.

Sexual sin, in all its forms, is inherently predatory.

No matter how sweet and kind the sexual sinner is –  
the sexual sinner *becomes* a predator

by being the one through whom sin obtains mastery over another.

This is why the line between “sex” and “violence” in our culture can be hard to ascertain.

Our culture wants to draw that line at “consent.”

So long as you have two consenting adults, our culture says, “it’s okay.”

And that works – so long as the end and goal of sex is pleasure.

If one person isn’t “having fun” – then that’s “bad.”

But what if sex isn’t primarily about pleasure?

Psalm 45 speaks of the beauty of the king – and the beauty of the queen.

Their beauty reminds each other (and all Israel) of the beauty of God.

When you see the image of God you love that image

because it reminds you of God.

Indeed, this is why we should love all people – because all people are created in God’s image!

You cannot love God, and simultaneously *hate* that which reflects God.

We saw last time that murder is rooted in hatred for God

and an attempt to destroy his image.

Today we see that adultery is also a form of hatred for God –

but rather than destroy his image (as in murder),

in adultery we instead put that image in the place of God;

we worship the creature rather than the creator.

This is why the scripture regularly connects adultery and idolatry.

From Eden’s Garden to the present,

the pattern has been that we *see*, and then we *covet*.

We construct idols because we have discontented hearts.

And in adultery, we take the created image of God (a man or a woman)

and we put that image ahead of God in our hearts.

That is what *lust* is all about.

By the way, this is why it is not a good thing to “lust” after your wife.

It is possible for a husband to lust after his wife.  
It is possible for a wife to lust after her husband.  
But it is not a good thing.  
If you are simply using your spouse for your own sexual pleasure –  
that is not the self-denying love that Christ calls us to!

Rosaria Butterfield – a former lesbian – puts this very well.  
“Too often good Christians see sexual sin as merely sexual excess.  
To a good Christian, sex is God’s recreation for you  
as long as you play in God’s playground (marriage)....  
What good Christians don’t realize is that sexual sin  
is not recreational sex gone overboard.  
Sexual sin is predatory.  
It won’t be “healed” by redeeming the context or the genders.  
Sexual sin must simply be killed.  
What is left of your sexuality after this annihilation is up to God.  
But healing, to the sexual sinner, is death: nothing more and nothing less...  
[T]oo many young Christian fornicators plan that marriage will redeem their sin.  
Too many young Christian masturbators plan that marriage will redeem their patterns.  
Too many young Christian internet pornographers think that having legitimate sex  
will take away the desire to have illicit sex.  
They’re wrong.  
And the marriages that result from this line of thinking are dangerous places.” (p83)

Butterfield points out that half of Christians marriages end in divorce –  
and she claims that that is largely because “Christians act as though marriage redeems sin.  
Marriage does not redeem sin.  
Only Jesus himself can do that.” (p83)

And this is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5.  
Jesus is saying that *something* must be cut off and thrown away.  
If you are to live, something must die.

Part of the discipline of wisdom is what you do with your eyes.  
We saw last week that murder starts as hatred in the heart.  
In Matthew 5, Jesus says that adultery starts as lust in the heart.  
The outward act results from an inward disposition.  
Just as hatred and murder is striking out against the image of God in man,  
so also lust and adultery are rooted in a refusal to worship God.  
You were created to belong to God.

You often hear that you reflect your fidelity to God through your fidelity to your spouse.  
And that is true, but if you start there, then you don’t really get at the heart of faithfulness.

After all, what about those who are single?

You belong to Christ.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 6:13.

Paul says, *Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food –  
and God will destroy both one and the other.*

*The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord,  
and the Lord for the body.*

*And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*

*Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?*

*Never!*

*Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?*

*For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’*

*But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.*

*Flee from sexual immorality.*

*Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,*

*but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*

*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.*

Notice that Paul doesn’t seem to care whether he is talking to married or single persons.

Paul does not say, “your body belongs to your spouse – or to your future spouse.”

After all, Paul is about to say in the next chapter that he thinks it’s a good thing  
for a person to remain single all his life!

Whether you are married or single, the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord.

Paul does *not* say that the body was made for married sex.

I cannot help but say it again:

Paul does *not* say that the body was made for married sex –  
therefore don’t have sex outside of marriage.

What he says is that the body was made for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

If you are engaged in sexual immorality,  
then you are uniting a body that belongs to Jesus with a prostitute.

You are not your own – you were bought with a price.

All of you – married or single – are called to glorify God with your bodies.

Celibacy is a *profound* sexual act.

Why do I say this?

Many are saying today that abstaining from sex is like abstaining from food.

But think about how Paul sets up the parallel between food and sex:

“food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.”

The stomach was designed for food – and vice versa.

But then he says, “the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord,  
and the Lord for the body.”

Again, Paul doesn't say, “the body is meant for marriage” –

he says, “the body is meant for the Lord.”

Every Christian must eat.

But not every Christian must have sex.

Paul will go on to say in chapter 7 that “because of the temptation to sexual immorality  
each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”

As revealed in the garden of Eden,

the sexual relation was designed for one man and one woman.

The command to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful and multiply,”

which includes childbearing as one of the primary goals of marriage.

The purpose of sexual relations is to reflect something of the image of God.

God created a son after his own image and likeness.

And then in Genesis 5 we are told that Adam

had a son in his image and likeness.

In the sexual relation, God has given to his image-bearers

the ability to reproduce the image of God.

To use our ability to reproduce the image of God

in any other way than that which God commands,

is a perversion of the sexual relation.

This is *why* the Bible regularly condemns homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery,  
and finds polygamy to be stretching the rules at best.

(Jesus makes it clear that polygamy was not included in God's design for marriage

–Mt 19:4-6–and Paul insists that elders must be monogamous.

From which it appears that a polygamist could become a Christian,

but a Christian may not become a polygamist!)

But it is also the reason why the Bible insists that adultery is first a matter of the heart.

If you are looking at a woman with lustful intent–

in other words, if you are desiring her,

then you have already committed adultery with her in your heart.

Jesus has some pretty strong words for you.

“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

For it is better than you lose one of your members  
than that your whole body be thrown into hell.” (5:29)

Now, some people have taken this too literally.

It appears that Origen may have actually castrated himself  
in his desire to obey Christ in this matter. (Something he later regretted)

Why should we take this figuratively?

Just because it is too extreme?

No.

Rather, because physical self-mutilation does not get at the heart.

I’ve torn out both my eyes and yet still I lust!

The problem is in my heart!

So what does it mean to tear out your eye and throw it away?

It means exactly the same thing that Paul means when he says  
That “those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh  
with its passions and desires.” (Gal 5:24)

This is not a literal statement either.

I have never been physically crucified.

Rather it means that in your union with Christ,  
your old self was crucified.

So if your right eye causes you to sin,  
tear it out and throw it away.

The statement is designed to cause you to despair in yourself,  
flee to Christ and look to him.

The solution to lust is not sex.

The solution to lust is humility –  
it is to lay down your life.

This is where the monastery was correct!

You will never satisfy a sinful appetite by feeding it.

You can never turn lust into love.

You must put to death the lusts of the flesh,  
and that happens through humbling yourself,  
taking up your cross, and following Jesus.

The problem of lust is solved the same way as any other sin.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So what do you do when you are tempted to lust?

Remember, if you look at a woman for the sake of your own selfish pleasure – that is sin.

That is the exercise of the predatory power of sexual sin.

If your “looking” is about your personal, private, pleasure –  
then you are *not* loving that person.

So what do you do?

If your answer is “don’t look,”

then you may succeed at avoiding that particular instance of lust,

but you are not really dealing with the issue.

Indeed, if you are constantly focused on “not looking”

then you are *ruled* by lust – controlled by your obsession with “not looking”!

The only way to *kill* the sin of adultery is through *humility*.

Since adultery and lust are all about *power*,

the only way to love and serve God in the face of the temptation to lust

is by the way of the cross.

Her beauty is *not* for you.

Humbly accept that –

and glorify the one who created her beauty.

So when tempted to lust remember these two lessons.

First, remember that folly always leads to death.

Sexual sin is always predatory.

I really like Rosaria Butterfield’s way of saying it:

“besetting and indwelling sexual sin is predatory, and it will not stop until it kills.

Therefore, have no contact with pornography or with secret lovers—  
physical, non-physical, virtual, or real.”

<http://rosariabutterfield.com/#about>

All of the sweet nothings that folly whispers in your ear are lies.

Her path is the road to the grave.

Sin always produces misery.

Sin always leads to death.

And second, remember to look to Christ.

But your only hope and comfort is the cross of Jesus Christ,

the place where God’s face is revealed,

and his love for you is displayed.

The body was made for him – and he for the body.