

Husbands and Wives: Avoid promiscuous people, love your spouse

*Cause I can't make you love me if you don't
You can't make your heart feel something it won't
Here in the dark, in these lonely hours
I will lay down my heart and Ill feel the power
But you won't, no you won't
cause I can't make you love me, if you don't*

The lyrics of the song “I can’t make you love me” from the Grammy award winning female artist Bonnie Rait speak of the wrenching heartbreak of a woman whose husband has lost his love for her.

Unfortunately far too many couples not only identify with this pain; they live with this pain every moment of every day. Marriage breakdown because of adultery is becoming rampant with increasing work travel, long hours in the office and internet use.

And it is not just men who are doing the cheating. Recent statistics from western countries indicate that as many as 45% of women and 55% of men have been guilty of committing adultery. ¹

The International Herald Tribune last year reported researchers from the University of Washington found that infidelity is on the rise, and notably, women are closing the adultery gap. The report also found that younger women are also cheating on their spouses nearly as often as men.²

The horror for us is that these figures are only based on the world’s definition of adultery and affairs which culminate in physical sexual contact. As Christians, we know that adultery and affairs not just based on actual physical contact. Jesus’ words shout out to us that we equally cheat on our spouses when we have emotional and mental entanglements with others. (Matthew 5:27-30)

So how are we as Christians to avoid the heartbreak, divorce and sexual chaos that are so distressingly common in our world?

The wisdom of Proverbs provides the answer for us today.

The discourses in the first part of the book contain three large blocks of teaching against affairs and to love one’s spouse (5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27). The amount of teaching devoted in the book of Proverbs to this problem highlights the strength of the temptation and the dangers of wrong action.

1. Avoid promiscuous and seductive people

Again and again, Wisdom warns that the danger of affairs is great because the temptation is great. An intimate relationship outside of marriage appears to offer much pleasure and satisfaction. But the truth is that these temptations only result in tremendous pain. Thus the answer is not to follow one’s desires but rather to obey the instructions of the covenant. To disobey wisdom is bring ruin on one’s life.

*My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
listen well to my words of insight,*

¹ Reasons For Adultery - And How The Shocking Statistics Reveal Why No One Can Be Complacent
By [Doug Young](http://ezinearticles.com/?Reasons-For-Adultery---And-How-The-Shocking-Statistics-Reveal-Why-No-One-Can-Be-Complacent&id=1069262) and C. Young. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Reasons-For-Adultery---And-How-The-Shocking-Statistics-Reveal-Why-No-One-Can-Be-Complacent&id=1069262>

² Sun, Nov 02, 2008
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² *that you may maintain discretion
and your lips may preserve knowledge.*
³ *For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;*
⁴ *but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double-edged sword.*
⁵ *Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.*
⁶ *She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths are crooked, but she knows it not. Proverbs 5:1-6*

The temptation is great because the adulteress lips drip honey. On one level, this may refer to the flattery and flirtatious banter which attracts the listener. But honey is also a metaphor for taste. One wants to lick honey, and so the reference can also mean kisses. The erotic nature of lips dripping honey is used in a positive way in the Song of Songs (4:11, 5:1). Her speech oozes seductive charm and is irresistible in offering delight and excitement.

But appearances are deceptive. What looks sweet turns out to be bitter. And what is smooth like oil is sharp and deadly. Verse 5 makes explicit the danger – it will lead to death.

⁷ *Now then, my sons, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.*
⁸ *Keep to a path far from her,
do not go near the door of her house,*
⁹ *lest you give your best strength to others
and your years to one who is cruel,*
¹⁰ *lest strangers feast on your wealth
and your toil enrich another man's house.*
¹¹ *At the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are spent.*
¹² *You will say, "How I hated discipline!
How my heart spurned correction!"*
¹³ *I would not obey my teachers
or listen to my instructors.*
¹⁴ *I have come to the brink of utter ruin
in the midst of the whole assembly." Proverbs 5:7-14*

Therefore, avoid temptation by not even moving close to such a person. Stay well clear from such a person. Follow the example of godly men and women who have transferred departments or even left jobs when they felt they were getting into compromising situations with workmates.³ Make all possible arrangements because the cost of falling under the spell of the adulteress is too costly.

The father spells out the consequences of the son coming under the spell of adulteress. Firstly, his vitality or strength will be exhausted. Secondly, his material wealth will enrich others. Thirdly, v11 foresees a tragic end when the person's body gives out and his life force is spent. Finally, he will suffer public shame and disgrace.

One important observation is that in most people's experience, it is usually the male who is most often the predator rather than the female – it is more likely for a man to seduce a woman. However, we must understand that this passage is not addressed to 'fools' or 'the simple'. Rather it is addressed to the son who was in the path of wisdom – he is wise.

As such, those following the way of wisdom are not to be seduced by the adulteress (v3) or literally 'the strange woman'. She was strange because she was acting outside the

³ 'The Snare' by L. Mowday. Navpress, Surrey, Great Britain 1988

covenantal norms and was outside the covenant community of God. That is why those who follow her, succeed in only following her to their deaths.

Therefore, when read by us in Christ, the warning is clear – we are on the path of life, let us not be seduced or led astray by those who are acting outside of Biblical norms. Following such people will only lead to death.

2. Love your spouse

The father does not stop at just warning about bad behaviour. He moves from warning about wrong behaviour to encouraging the right behaviour. A good defense must be complimented with a good offence. Instead of enjoying pleasure from the strange women, we should enjoy sexual relations with our wives.

- ¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.*
- ¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets,
your streams of water in the public squares?*
- ¹⁷ Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.*
- ¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.*
- ¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be captivated by her love.*
- ²⁰ Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?
Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?*

This passage is filled with erotic imagery to entice the son to find satisfaction only in the wife of his youth.

Verse 15 and 16 may simply mean have sexual intercourse with your wife. However, a comparison to Ancient near eastern poetry and Song of Songs 4:10-15 suggest that it refers to a woman's sexual organs. Verses 18 in turn seems to suggest male sexual organ. The passage continues with a sensuous description of the wife's sleekness and beauty.

The father's point is clear. In the light of the delights and enchantment of one's wife, why should the son pursue sexual pleasure in the arms of another, considering all the potential dangers?⁴

- ²¹ For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD,
and he examines all his paths.*
- ²² The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him;
the cords of his sin hold him fast.*
- ²³ He will die for lack of discipline,
led astray by his own great folly.*

The father saves his most powerful argument till the end. Three even higher motivations are given in verses 21-23: (1) Since God sees all of man's ways, adultery committed in secret is known by the Lord. (2) Man cannot escape God's judgment. (3) The sin will ensnare and tie the person down like ropes. There will be no escape from the folly of adultery. Ultimately, the LORD is watching and He will exercise judgment. Therefore, the result of all adultery, according to the passage, is inevitable.

Conclusion

⁴ Pg 162 'Proverbs' by T. Longman III Baker Academics, Grand Rapids 2006

The danger of adultery and affairs is clear for all married Christians. While the dynamic of this passage is of a father instructing his son, it is relevant to all Christians by its inclusion into the Canon of the Old Testament. Therefore, it speaks just as relevantly to a Christian lady being seduced by a sweet talking colleague or boss.

We should take heed of the warning contained in Lois Mowday's book 'The Snare' "...it can sneak up on you almost unexpectedly. Someone cares enough to pay attention. To look into your eyes. To touch with understanding.

Innocent as it seems, this is how most affairs begin. Most of us think it can't happen to us. But it can."⁵

We would do well to heed the call of Wisdom: Stay far far away from those who would seduce us and love your spouse with all your heart.

By Andrew Ong

⁵ 'The Snare' by L. Mowday. Navpress, Surrey, Great Britain 1988