WISDOM: LIVING SUCCESSFULLY IN A TREACHEROUS WORLD

Preserving Purity, Pt 2
Eight Principles from Proverbs to Help You Fight for Purity (Part 2)

PART ONE:

1. Keep your ears attentive to instruction.

2. Acknowledge the power of temptation.

3. Contemplate the hideousness of sin.

4. Remember the consequences of failure.
5. We fight for purity by maintaining our distance from temptation’s sources.

"Ulysses and the Sirens"

Or . . . “How Many Men Think They Can Deal With Sexual Temptation”

• Solomon points to the reality of a “two-paths” or “two-ways” world.

• According to Solomon, many failures in life—including sexual sin—were set in motion by a naïve choice of the wrong path made at an earlier point in time.

• Proverbs 7:6-10 – “For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the naïve, and I discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness. And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.”
• In response, Solomon commands his son *not* to place himself in moral jeopardy by making foolish choices early on life’s path.

• **Proverbs 5:8-9** – “Keep your way **far from her** and do not go **near the door of her house**, or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one.”
  
  ▪ Notice the *spatial* descriptions Solomon uses: “**far from her**” and “**near the door of her house**.”
  
  ▪ The closer you go to the source, the more dangerous it becomes.
  
  ▪ Don’t play with fire. Keep your distance!

• **Proverbs 7:25** – “Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not **stray into her paths**.”
  
  ▪ “**stray**” = “to wander about”
  
  ▪ Not an intentional, but a careless lack of vigilance that leads to “stumbling” into close proximity with temptation.
  
• “Those who fall into immorality usually don’t fall far” (Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs*, 79).

• The devastating “fall” is preceded by a host of earlier, smaller choices that carelessly lead the man closer and closer to the sources of temptation.
• Consequently, in the fight for purity, men must take conscious—and early—actions to ensure adequate distance is maintained between themselves and whatever is a source of temptation.

• To maintain distance requires awareness of two important avenues through which sexual temptations “draw near”:

   (1) availability (means)

   (2) opportunity (time)

• Indeed, we cannot confuse “maintaining distance” from the sources of temptation as synonymous with purity.

• Keeping away from such sources is really only the absence of sin, not the presence of God-pleasing obedience.

• Moreover, Solomon warns not only of the temptations to explicit acts of sexual sin, but of the temptations to non-physical acts of sexual sin.

  ▪ 6:25 – “Do not desire her beauty in your heart.”

• One may do well in keeping away from pornography and fornication, but be woefully guilty of sexual sin through illicit thoughts (Matt 5:27-28).
• Nonetheless, there is a place for concrete, even radical measures:

“If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

—Matthew 5:29-30

• If you are struggling against sexual temptation, take radical steps to deal specifically with availability and with time.

“First, radical measures give you space in which to grow. Change takes time. . . . Second, employing radical measures gives you an opportunity to ‘produce fruit in keeping with repentance’ (Matthew 3:8).”

—Lambert, Finally Free, 73

• Remove digital (graphic) devices and connections, and devote your time to productive endeavors (family, work, service, etc.)
“Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they do tempt the devil to tempt them. Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar, and asks Satan to come in; but if we are occupied from morning till night, if Satan shall get in, he must break through the door. Under sovereign grace, and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than being 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'”

—C. H. Spurgeon

“The antidote to this selfishness involves more than just avoiding pornography. True repentance means replacing pornography with something else, something that honors God and demonstrates love to others. You must begin humbly looking to the interests of others and seeking ways to serve them.”

—Lambert, *Finally Free*, 118
6. **We fight for purity by taking full responsibility for our failures.**

- Common “feelings” among men struggling with sexual sin are those of *self-pity* and *blame-shifting*.
  - “Life isn’t fair. I deserve at least some pleasure.”
  - “It’s not my fault. It is the body You gave me.”
  - “God hasn’t given me a wife” or “God hasn’t given me a *good* wife.”
  - “She shouldn’t have dressed like that.”

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**Proverbs 5:7-14** – “Now then, *my* 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, or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one; and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods *will go* to the house of an alien; and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; and you say, ‘How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.’”

- In vv. 12-14, Solomon quotes the hypothetical lament of an older man who has engaged in sexual promiscuity. According to this scenario, there is no one to blame but *oneself.*
• **Proverbs 5:20-23** – “For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”

  - Despite the intensity of the harlot’s allure, the LORD holds the man who liaises with her fully accountable for his sin.

  - Simple truth: there are no excuses; you are fully responsible.

• **Proverbs 1:24-33** – “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.”
7. We fight for purity by delighting in marriage’s provision for intimacy.

- One in five Millennials (young adults born after 1980) are married—half the number of the previous generation at the same age (Pew Research, 2010).

- God created marriage as His crowning achievement on the final day of creation and pronounced it “very good” (Gen 1:31).

- To disdain marriage is to espouse the doctrine of demons (1 Tim 4:1-4) and open the door to sexual deviancy.

- **Genesis 2:24-25** – “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

- **Ecclesiastes 9:9** – “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.”

- **Hebrews 13:4** – “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”
### Solomon’s “Put Off / Put On” Instruction in Proverbs 5

| Mortification - Put off! | “Now then, my 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, or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one; and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien; and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed” (5:7-11). |
| Vivification - Put on! | “Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well. Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love” (5:15-19). |

“The best defense against the wiles of the ‘strange’ woman is a vital relationship with one’s proper sexual partner—the wife.”

—Longman, *Proverbs*, 160

Physical intimacy “is like fire. In the fireplace it keeps us warm. Outside the fireplace it burns the house down. Proverbs 5 is saying ‘Keep the fire in the marital fireplace, and stoke that fire as hot as you can.’”

—Ortlund, *Proverbs: Wisdom that Works*, 90
“God fully endorses sexual delight in marriage. God does not hate sex; he hates faithless sex with forbidden women, but he loves faithful sexual expression in the context of marriage. God loves it so much that he commands, not just that it happen, but that it be enjoyed to the point of intoxication.”

—Lambert, *Finally Free*, 99

• There are only two options in God’s plan for the unmarried:

  (1) *be continent in chaste singleness*; or

  (2) *get married.*

• 1 Thessalonians 4:3 – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.”

• 1 Corinthians 7:9 – “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

• If you burn, get serious about becoming *marriable!*
8. We fight for purity by taking responsibility to pass it on to our children.

“Each of the three discourses about adultery [5:1-4; 6:20-24; 7:1-5] comes from the lips of a father to his beloved son. This reminds us of the duty of parents to teach their children about the sexual facts of life.”

—Newheiser, Opening Up Proverbs, 72

- The singular address, “My son” (יֶן) is used 22x in the book.
- The plural address, “O sons” or “My sons” (כם) is used another 3x.
- Of these 25 occurrences, 8 (or 1/3) are connected directly to his instruction on sexual purity.
Eight principles from Proverbs to aid us in maintaining vigilance over our souls in the realm of sexual purity

1. Keep your ears attentive to instruction.
2. Acknowledge the power of temptation.
3. Contemplate the hideousness of sin.
4. Remember the consequences of failure.
5. Maintain your distance from temptation's sources.
6. Take full responsibility for your failures.
7. Delight in marriage's provision for intimacy.
8. Pass on wisdom to your children.

Recommended Resources: On Sin and Temptation


Recommended Resources: On Sexual Sin

Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock. 
*What Does the Bible Teach about Lust.* 

Heath Lambert. 

John D. Street. 