

# “Sexual Wisdom”

*Proverbs 5:1-18*

May 23, 2010

I love the Old Testament book of Proverbs. I began my sermon last week by saying that, and I am glad to begin again with that same declaration. I love the Old Testament book of Proverbs. I love it because it is an expression of God's love for us.

God loves us, and he really wants what is best for us. That's why God sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world. Jesus died on the cross in our place. He took the punishment for our sins on himself, so that you and I can be forgiven. Now God invites all of us to trust in Christ as Lord so that we can experience his love. It is up to you and me to accept that invitation, but the invitation is given to all of us because God loves all of us.

God also shows his love to us by giving us commandments. Contrary to what many people think, God gives his commandments not to prevent us from enjoying life but to enable to enjoy life (Deut. 5:29, 33). We need to understand that. God does not give us his commandments to limit us or stop us from having a good time. God gives us his instructions so that we can truly get the most out of life. That's true with all the teaching that we find in the Bible. It is particularly true with the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Here is a book that is packed with good advice and down-to-earth wisdom that is designed to enrich our lives. That's why I love the book of Proverbs.

This morning we are going to concentrate on what Proverbs (and the Bible in general) has to teach us about sex. Chapters 1 through 9 of Proverbs contain instructions that a father gives to his sons, and in these nine chapters there is no subject that is dealt with as extensively as sex. We find a short instruction on the subject in chapter 2 and then a lengthy treatment of it in chapter 5 and then an even longer discussion of sex in the second half of chapter 6 and all of chapter 7.

Sex is a subject that is important to God! God really wants you and me to understand what is best for us when it comes to sex.

## Sexual Intimacy Is a Great Gift

Let's begin by understanding that sexual intimacy is a great gift. That is where we need to start because that is what the Bible teaches and there are several dimensions to this great gift. First, *sexual intimacy is good*.

<sup>27</sup>So God created human beings in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

God did not make a mistake when he created males and females. He did not make a mistake in creating us as sexual beings. That is part of his original and good plan for us. Sexual intimacy is good.

Furthermore, *God intends for sexual intimacy to be enjoyable*. The father who is writing down his advice for his sons in Proverbs hits us over the head with that truth.

<sup>18</sup> May your fountain be blessed,  
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

<sup>19</sup> A loving doe, a graceful deer—  
may her breasts satisfy you always,  
may you ever be intoxicated with her love. (Prov. 5:18-19)

We don't quote that last verse very often in church, do we? God compares his good gift of sexual intimacy to getting drunk! Sexual intimacy is a gift that God gives to us that should overwhelm us and sweep us! God intends it to be that enjoyable!

Let's note a third dimension to the Bible's teaching about the gift of sex. *The enjoyment of sexual intimacy is to be mutual.* Here in Proverbs the father is speaking to his sons. If you look at the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament, you find the woman is equally excited about the physical pleasure of sexual intimacy (Songs of Songs 5:10-16; 8:1-3). In the New Testament we find Paul giving instructions to the Corinthians about sex, and he too stresses the mutual nature of sexual relationships.

<sup>3</sup> The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. (1 Cor. 7:3-4)

Sexual intimacy is a great gift of God. God says that it is good, and he says that he wants it to be enjoyable for both the male and the female.

The Bible also teaches that *sexual intimacy is to be heterosexual.* According to God's plan it is male and female, not male and male or female and female.

In Genesis 2 we find God saying that "it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." So what does God do? He creates a woman (Gen. 1:18-22). There is God's pattern: male and female.

Today some people try to minimize the Bible's teaching that sexual intimacy is to be limited to heterosexual relationships. They will smile and say that there are only a few verses that say that homosexual relationships are wrong. They dismiss those verses as "the clobber passages." Those are the verses that Christians use to "clobber" gays and lesbians. Instead those people say that we should concentrate on Jesus' teaching about how we should love each other. Why concentrate on "the clobber passages" instead of "the love passages"?

That approach is clever. It can sound really convincing when you first hear it. But if you take the time to really look into it, it doesn't hold up. Let's recognize that the Bible passages that forbid homosexual behavior are found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Gen. 19:1-13; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7). It is true that there are not that many passages that deal with subject. But how many do you need?<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, we should remember that when sexual intimacy is portrayed positively in the Bible, it is always heterosexual intimacy. Always! That's true in Genesis, in Proverbs, in the Song of Songs, and in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles (Gen. 2:18-25; Prov. 31:10; Song of Songs; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7). God's Word teaches that sexual intimacy is to be heterosexual.

The Bible also teaches that *sexual intimacy is to be marital* or limited to the marriage relationship. Genesis 2:24 says that "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." In the ancient world the act of leaving father and mother was a public act. It was a declaration to the clan and to the society at large that a new family unit was formed. In our society weddings perform that same function. It is only after such a public declaration that sexual intimacy is to take place. In addition to that, we should note that when sexual intimacy is portrayed positively in the Bible, it is not just heterosexual intimacy. It is also marital intimacy.

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<sup>1</sup> A quick check in a concordance shows only six verses that explicitly forbid stealing (Exod. 20:15; Lev. 19:11; Deut. 5:19; Matt. 19:18; Rom. 13:9; Eph. 4:28). Would we want to conclude that stealing is not significant because it is forbidden only six times in the Bible?

According to the Bible sexual intimacy is for a man and a woman in a committed and publicly recognized relationship. Why does the Bible place those limitations on sexual intimacy? It's because God loves us and wants what is best for us. To put it very bluntly, God says, "If you want great sex, reserve it for marriage!"

### Sexual Sin Is a Great Tragedy

Let's look at the other side of the coin now. If sexual intimacy is a great gift, then sexual sin is a great tragedy. Sexual sin is squandering and wasting something that is genuinely valuable. Look at what the father says to his son about the consequences of sexual sin.

- <sup>11</sup> At the end of your life you will groan,  
when your flesh and body are spent.  
<sup>12</sup> You will say, "How I hated discipline!  
How my heart spurned correction!  
<sup>13</sup> I would not obey my teachers  
or turn my ear to my instructors.  
<sup>14</sup> And I was soon in serious trouble  
in the assembly of God's people." (Prov. 5:11-14)

As a pastor, I have heard so many people say things like that. I've heard so many people regret that they did not wait until marriage for sexual intercourse, but I have never heard anybody tell me that they regretted waiting until they were married. I've heard many people regret that they did not remain faithful to their spouse, but I've never heard anybody regret that they did remain faithful to their spouse.

Earlier this month I was reading "Dear Abby," and I came across this letter. It's short, but it is also powerful.

DEAR ABBY:

I recently got genital herpes. I am very depressed over it and am experiencing a lot of difficulties, not to mention the expense.

The man I caught the virus from, "Jack," claims he didn't know he had herpes. I don't know what to believe, except that I should be compensated. My life has been destroyed. I hate the fact that this happened and, to top it off, Jack has changed his phone number! Is this a criminal act? Should I take action? — OUTRAGED IN MISSOURI<sup>2</sup>

Think about all the things mentioned in that short letter. First, there is the disease itself for which there is no cure. The treatments she is getting for herpes are expensive. Her relationship with "Jack" is over. She is depressed and feels like her life has been forever ruined.

What more needs to be said? Sexual sin is a great tragedy.

### Sexual Discipline Can Be a Great Struggle

That brings us to a third teaching from God's Word. Sexual intimacy is a great gift. Sexual sin is a great tragedy. The Bible teaches us a third realistic and down-to-earth truth. Sexual discipline can be a great struggle. God never underestimates how difficult it can be to live sexually in the way that is best for us. Look at how the father in Proverbs appeals to his sons.

- <sup>1</sup> My son, pay attention to my wisdom,  
turn your ear to my words of insight, . . .  
<sup>7</sup> Now then, my sons, listen to me;  
do not turn aside from what I say. (Prov. 5:1, 7)

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<sup>2</sup> May 5, 2010.

Do you hear the father appealing to his sons? “Please listen to me. I want what is best for you! I know it’s hard, but please take my advice to heart.” (See also Prov. 6:20; 7:1, 24.)

In the New Testament Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, “Flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:12a). It is a struggle, but do whatever it takes to live according to God’s good and beneficial teaching. It is worth the struggle!

Sexual control was hard back when Proverbs was written 3000 years ago. It is still a struggle today. Today, however, there are some new factors that make it even more difficult.

First, there is the issue of internet pornography. Pornography is so accessible today, and so many men and women have been taken captive by it. Recently I came across a source of help that I want to pass on to you. It’s a website called x3watch.<sup>3</sup> It offers you the opportunity to choose an accountability partner who will be informed if you go to a questionable site on the internet. It also offers a filter that prevents you from going to certain sites. It also offers a third feature that I want to be sure that you know about. X3watch offers a video workshop to help you develop the discipline of saying no to pornography. This is something that I have been looking for. I’ve talked to a lot of men who admit that they have a problem with pornography, and they want to get out of that bondage, but what do they do? At x3watch there is a video workshop for single men and one for married men and also one for single women, and I believe that x3watch is developing a program for married women. Please keep in mind that there is no computer software that can solve the problem of temptation. Pornography is ultimately an issue of the heart. But I do think that these workshops at x3watch can help, and I recommend them to you.

A second contemporary challenge is homosexuality and how it is becoming more and more acceptable in our culture. Most likely there is somebody here today who is struggling with same-sex attraction. If you find yourself in that situation, I recommend that you check out another source on the internet. It’s called ReachTruth, and there is a video workshop that you can go through at its website.<sup>4</sup> Please check it out.

A third contemporary issue is cohabitation. It is becoming more common and more acceptable for a man and woman to live together before marriage. That is not God’s will for you. God wants what is best for you, and he says that sexual intimacy is to be reserved for the marriage relationship.

Every year the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia produces a report called “The State of Our Unions.” It is an examination of the current status of marriage in our country. In its 2009 report it has a section that deals specifically with cohabitation.

The belief that living together before marriage is a useful way “to find out whether you really get along,” and thus avoid a bad marriage and an eventual divorce, is now widespread among young people. But the available data on the effects of cohabitation fail to confirm this belief. In fact, a substantial body of evidence indicates that those who live together before marriage are more likely to break up after marriage.<sup>5</sup>

I want to say it again: God gives us his commandments because he loves us and because he wants what is best for us. Flee from sexual immorality. Flee from pornography. Flee from homosexuality. Flee from cohabitation. If you do, life will be better for you.

Loud voices in our culture send the message: “Experiment to see what is right for you.” If you think that you might be homosexual, give it a try. If you think you might want to get married to

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<sup>3</sup> Go to [www.x3watch.com](http://www.x3watch.com).

<sup>4</sup> Go to [www.reachtruth.com](http://www.reachtruth.com).

<sup>5</sup> Go to [http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/pdfs/Union\\_11\\_25\\_09.pdf](http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/pdfs/Union_11_25_09.pdf). Accessed May 21, 2010. See pages 84-86. The report goes on to say, “This evidence is controversial.” It then discusses questions that have been raised about the data on cohabitation and its consequences. That discussion concludes, “What can be said for certain is that no evidence has yet been found that those who cohabit before marriage have stronger marriages than those who do not.”

somebody, live together for a while first. "Experiment to see what is right for you." That's the message of our culture today.

God has a different message. He says, "Trust me that I know what is right for you."

Don't experiment with sex. It is too valuable a gift to gamble with. Trust God instead. He does know what is best for you.

### Sexual Purity Requires a Great Savior.

There is one more thing that must be said on the subject of sex. For many of us this sermon has made us feel very uncomfortable. We think the sexual mistakes that we have made, and we feel terribly guilty.

I think it is safe to say that there is not an adult in this room this morning who can raise his or her hand and say, "I have done everything right when it comes to sex. In my actions and in my thoughts concerning sex I have never done anything wrong." Every one of us is a sinner. Every one of us stands in need of forgiveness when it comes to our sexual sins.

That brings me to my point. Please listen carefully to this. Sexual purity requires a great Savior. And the good news is that we have that Savior in Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* (1 Cor. 6:9-11 emphasis added)

Do you hear that? Please let the message of those verses sink in. "Some of you," Paul says, "were sexually immoral and adulterers and practicing homosexuals, but through Jesus Christ you have been forgiven and made pure in God's sight!"

No matter what any of us here today have done in the past, it can be forgiven. No matter what sexual sins you and I have committed, God can forgive us and restore us. Please remember that when God forgives, he forgives totally!

If you have never turned to Christ in faith and asked to be forgiven, please do so today. Tell God that you are counting on Jesus and his death and resurrection to make you right with God. If you would like to talk to me or one of the other pastors about what that can mean in your life, please come talk to us about it. We'd love to explain the good news of Jesus to you in more length.

If you are a Christian but you have not been living sexually the way that he wants you to, now is the time to repent and start living according to God's good and loving wisdom. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy." God is more than ready to forgive us if we will confess that what we have been doing is wrong and then stop living that way. 1 John 1:9 states that wonderful truth so concisely and powerfully: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." God is ready to forgive us totally!

Sexual intimacy is a great gift. Sexual sin is a great tragedy. Sexual discipline can be a great challenge. And sexual purity requires a great Savior. Thank God that we have that Savior in Jesus Christ!