

Wisdom in Sexual Temptation – Proverbs 7

Introduction

Drama hit us in ways that words just can't sometimes. Nowhere is this truer than in those TAC ads. Since 1989 the TAC has been using drama in short TV commercials to make us feel the devastating effects of irresponsible driving. For years now, the highly emotional and graphic content of these ads have gripped our attention. Some of those images are still burnt into my memory.

But what made these ads so effective wasn't just the content, but the idea that the characters in them were *regular* people. Regular people like you and me simply making bad decisions and suffering huge consequences.

You could see yourself making a dumb decision to text while driving, or speed if you were running late.

These clips were designed to make you sit up and say – *if I don't learn from that guy behind the wheel, I could be that guy behind the wheel*. I could be the one who accidentally kills his girlfriend, writes off his car and becomes a paraplegic. *If I don't learn from that guy, I could be that guy*.

A similar message comes from the *moral* car crash that is Proverbs 7. In chapters 5 and 6 the author of Proverbs has already spoken of how the wise will avoid heading down the dangerous path of sexual temptation. Now, as if to pack that message with some punch, he grips our senses as well as our mind with a vivid and confronting drama of an average guy who through a simple lack of wisdom engages in devastating sexual sin.

And as we listen to how this drama unfolds, the whole time we need to be saying, “*If I don’t learn from this guy, I am this guy.*” And that is the big goal of this talk – to figure out what we can learn from this guy so that we don’t end up coming to grief like this guy.

But before we jump into this story I want to address two initial misconceptions about this topic.

The first is that God is against sex. Some of you might be thinking, “here we go another talk about how bad sex is.” But God is not against sex. He was the One who created it. In fact, a whole book of the bible is dedicated to singing the praises of sexual intimacy in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. It’s because God values his gift of sex so highly that He cares when people misuse and abuse it. Sexual sin, displeases God and so often devastates lives. And because God loves us, He warns us with this story.

But the second misconception is that the topic of sexual temptation is a male issue. God’s wisdom about sexual temptation is for both men *and* women. While it is true that Proverbs 7 is written as a Father’s loving counsel to a *son* (v.1), the principles that come out of this passage are applicable to all – for all people (men and women) can experience the seductive power of sexual temptation that the proverbs 7 man goes through.

In a gospel coalition article entitled “women use porn too” Rebekah Hannah makes the point that when the topic of sexual temptation is only cast as a male issue it can unintentionally leave some women in the dark, with their sin.” But in the Bible God *doesn’t* cast this issue simply as a male issue but a human issue. You see that in 1 Corinthians 10 where Paul speaks about sexual immorality and then writes that:

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted^[d] beyond what you can bear.

Sexual temptation is common to mankind, therefore we *all* need to pay attention to the help God gives us in His word – which includes Proverbs 7.

So what we'll do is go through this chapter step by step. We'll look at the prologue, the three scenes of the drama and then the epilogue. We'll then consider, as followers of Jesus, what we can learn from this guy so that we don't become this guy.

Prologue (7:1-5)

So, first, the prologue to this drama calls us to cling to wisdom as though our life depended on it.

That is the opening message to this tragedy. The prologue is saying that if we are going to avoid the devastation of sexual sin we need to embrace wisdom. We particularly need to embrace the wisdom of proverbs 5 and 6, which is now presented for us in the drama of chapter 7.

But, you see unless this wisdom is taken to heart it will be useless when that moment of temptation comes. We need to cling to it as though our life depended on it. We need to imbed this wisdom within us, guard it more than we guard the sensitive structures of our eye. This wisdom cannot just remain to us like a vague acquaintance – someone we met once at a party but can't really remember – no it has to become like our sister or a close relative – someone we know well.

Look at verses 1-5:

7 My son, obey my words,

and treasure my commands.

2 Keep my commands and live,

and guard my instructions

as you would the pupil of your eye.

3 Tie them to your fingers;

write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"

and call understanding your relative.

5 She will keep you from a forbidden woman,

a wayward woman with her flattering talk

Wisdom keeps us safe against sexual sin. And again, this is as true for women as it is for men – for there are plenty of wayward *men* with flattering tongues in our world. The apostle Peter warns about such men who (2 Peter 2:14):

14 ... have eyes full of adultery that never stop looking for sin. They seduce unstable people and have hearts trained in greed.

We all need God's wisdom here.

I wonder how many of you actually pay attention during pre-flight safety instructions. For me, it's not as though I don't see them in the aisle acting it all out or hear what they're saying, I just never really take it in.

Why? Because, truth be told, I don't believe the risk is that likely... And so I just stare at them blankly and covertly put my earphones back in – sometimes it's even the beginning of a good nap session. But what an idiot I would feel like, if in an emergency I didn't have the faintest idea of what to do – particularly after sitting through countless demonstrations.

If you don't think the risk of sexual sin is real, you won't take the instruction to heart. If you don't think you and your bf/gf good fall into sin, you won't listen to this. If you don't think you could form a romantic connection to a work colleague who is not your spouse... You won't listen to this.

The author of Proverbs is shouting at you in this prologue to take out your earphones and listen up. You see, despite what you might think about your capacity to be safe against sexual sin *the risk is real*.

The guy we're about to read about is a classic example of someone who didn't take the risk seriously and ignored life-saving wisdom and instruction. And so, as we begin the drama proper, we need to keep thinking - *“If I don't learn from this guy, I am this guy.”*

Now this drama can be divided into three scenes: A young man who **strayed**, a young man **seduced**, a young man **slain**.

Scene 1: Strayed (7:6-12)

So, let's look at scene one of this tragic drama.

In this scene we see a foolish guy who strays into dangerous territory.

This guy is foolish – He’s the sought of guy that had his earphones in during the safety instructions of Proverbs 5 and 6.

Think about it, what is he doing in that part of town at that time of night? He wanders into temptation where time and place are sure to be against him? This guy is senseless.

Look at what it says in verses 6-9:

⁶ At the window of my house

I looked through my lattice.

⁷ I saw among the inexperienced,^[a]

I noticed among the youths,

a young man lacking sense.

⁸ Crossing the street near her corner,

he strolled down the road to her house

⁹ at twilight, in the evening,

in the dark of the night.

The first mistake this guy makes is to stray into dangerous territory and think all will be fine.

It’s like that moment in the TAC ad where they show a guy making that initial dumb decision to have just one more drink before getting into the car with his girlfriend. *Example here?*

Well, the guy may not know what he’s doing, but the woman he’s about to meet sure does.

She spots him near her house and homes in on him. She knows exactly what she will do and what she will say to snare this guy.

Look at verses 10-12:

¹⁰ A woman came to meet him

dressed like a prostitute,

having a hidden agenda.^[b]

¹¹ She is loud and defiant;

her feet do not stay at home.

¹² Now in the street, now in the squares,

she lurks at every corner.

This guy's first mistake is to wander into temptation without thinking twice. Maybe he thinks he's one of the few exceptions that can play with fire and not get burnt. This guy isn't an exception. You and I aren't an exception. He is a fool. He lacks wisdom. So, what must we say? "*If I don't learn from this guy, I am this guy.*"

Scene 2: Seduced (7:13-21)

And so, begins scene two.

In scene two we see this foolish guy, who *strayed* into the wrong place now being *seduced* into sexual sin.

The woman in this story uses **5 specific tactics** to make sure that her seduction of this fool is successful. Each of these tactics shows us the different stages of sexual temptation so it's important to consider each way the hook sinks further into this guy's mouth.

1. Tactic 1: the shock treatment.

Before this guy has a chance to reconsider where he is and what he's doing she smacks one on him. It all happens so quickly.

Look at verse 13:

¹³ She grabs him and kisses him

You can imagine this guy is both stunned and now totally consumed with nervous excitement.

2. Tactic 2: Rationalisation.

She finds a way to help this guy reconcile their sexual sin with the idea that they are still “good people.” She speaks of fulfilling her vows by making a fellowship offering at the temple and then implicitly suggests their time together could even be an act of devotion to God. “Please, there is food left over at my house - come on in and let us celebrate the Lord’s goodness together and see where the night takes us.”

Look at verse 13-14:

she brazenly says¹⁴ to him,

*¹⁴ “I’ve made fellowship offerings;
today I’ve fulfilled my vows.*

It is an insidious lie that God would ever accept that which He says is wrong. But in the moment of sexual temptation we *want* to believe lies. We want to believe that:

- “Our sexual activity is okay because we’re engaged and going to get married anyway.”
- “Porn is just a part of healthy human sexual expression.”
- “If I haven’t slept with him or her, it’s not adultery.”

3. Tactic 3: *Flattery*.

The woman essentially says: “sweetheart, you are the one I’ve been looking for my whole life – all those other guys – they’re just boys. You are the man!”

Look at verse 15:

*¹⁵ So I came out to meet you,
to search for you, and I’ve found you.*

Flattery is so effective because most of us love hearing words of affirmation. Most of us love hearing that we are attractive, brilliant, thoughtful people. Most of us love feeling like someone really values us. But flattery can and has been used by many to manipulate people into unhealthy emotional connections and then sexual sin.

So with the shock treatment, rationalisation and flattery, this Proverbs 7 guy is becoming hypnotised. But it gets worse with Tactic 4.

4. *Titillation*. You can feel at this point the hook sinking deeper into this guy’s mouth as the woman titillates his senses.

In verse 16 she describes her bedroom like it’s pleasure Island. As she speaks, this guy starts to imagine the *sight* of exotic and raunchy bed sheets from Egypt. The intoxicating *smell* of a perfumed bed. This guy is lost in her words as he listens to her speaking of a sexual encounter that will last until the break of morning.

Look at verse 16-18:

*16 I've spread coverings on my bed—
richly colored linen from Egypt.*

*17 I've perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.*

*18 Come, let's drink deeply of lovemaking until morning.
Let's feast on each other's love!*

Applying the brakes at this point is nearly impossible. Maybe though, there is still a sliver of hope. Maybe his fear of getting caught might be enough to make him back off... Well, that hope too is dashed. Because the last and perhaps deadliest tactic is deployed in this temptation process – Tactic 5: *Reassurance*.

5. The last nail in the coffin comes with a reassuring promise that no one will ever know.

You can imagine her saying to this guy, “relax, it’s dark, no one can see you out here. You don’t have to worry about my husband – we’ve got the house to ourselves. You have nothing to worry about.

Look at verse 19-20:

*19 My husband isn't home;
he went on a long journey.*

*20 He took a bag of silver with him
and will come home at the time of the full moon.”*

Maybe you've tried to find reassurance within sexual sin – "It's okay because no will know what I look at late at night." "It's okay, we've got the house ourselves, my housemates are away for the weekend."

Maybe there could be a possibility that this woman's husband does never find out.

Maybe. But God knows. God sees. The wisdom of proverbs 5:21 is clear:

*²¹ For a man's ways are before the LORD's eyes,
and he considers all his paths.*

I guess this guy had his earphones in when that was getting taught in Sunday school.

And so the seduction process is complete. Through shock-treatment, rationalisation, flattery, titillation and reassurance the adulteress woman reels her catch in.

Look at verse 21:

*²¹ She seduces him with her persistent pleading;
she lures with her flattering talk.*

This guy was seduced, but he wasn't an innocent victim of unpreventable circumstances. He didn't have to be there at that time of night. He didn't have to stick around. But he was, he did. And it all goes just so bad. Just like in a TAC ad, this is the moment when the car begins to swerve off the road straight for a big eucalyptus tree.

Do you feel the horror and tragedy of this moment in the drama? You see, it's likely, in this context and culture, that this guy is a young married man. Maybe he's even got a couple of

young kids and is looked up to in his community. But when you're foolish enough to enter that deeply into temptation all of that fades away because of the intoxicating spell of lust.

This drama is reminding us of the overwhelming power of sexual temptation. It distracts our minds then devastates our lives. Which is what we see in scene three.

Scene 3: Slain (7:22-23)

In scene three the guy who had strayed, and was then seduced is now slain.

The insatiable desire to commit this act of adultery now engulfs him. He has nothing left in him that will make him reconsider or pause for thought. He is so blind with passion that he cannot see the path away from her – and so, he follows her, as though in a trance to certain destruction.

Look at the imagery used to describe this moment in verses 22-23:

²² He follows her impulsively

like an ox going to the slaughter,

like a deer bounding toward a trap

²³ until an arrow pierces its liver,

like a bird darting into a snare—

he doesn't know it will cost him his life.

Those images grip our imagination don't they? The Ox walking unwittingly into the moment where it meets its end. A deer thinking everything is fine until the sudden thump hits its side.

A bird trapped in a net, totally unaware that its neck will soon be snapped in two by a human.

This is like the moment in a TAC ad where the passenger is laying dead on the road while the foolish guy is being wheeled into an ambulance. This guy wasn't walking into a bed room, he was walking into his own grave. Now, the mention of death in Proverbs, isn't always limited to physical death. Often, as is the case here I think, the terms is probably better understood as a life that experiences that which is the opposite to a full and blessed life. A life that marked by financial ruin, relational chaos, fear, misery and yes, perhaps in some cases physical death. But the point is this, where adultery or sexual sin happens, destruction will often follow. And unless there is repentance and faith in God's saviour Jesus who forgives sin – God's just judgment will follow. What happens when wisdom is absent and the temptation is present: destruction. And that is the warning the epilogue to this drama wants you to hear loud and clear.

Epilogue (7:24-27)

Like the prologue to this drama, the epilogue calls us to cling to wisdom as though our life depended on it.

No other defence will withstand the great enemy that is sexual temptation and adultery. We need to pay attention to this drama, heed the warning and live wisely as our defence against temptation.

Look at verses 24-27:

*²⁴ Now, sons, listen to me,
and pay attention to the words from my mouth.*

*²⁵ Don't let your heart turn aside to her ways;
don't stray onto her paths.*

²⁶ For she has brought many down to death;

her victims are countless.^[1]

²⁷ Her house is the road to Sheol,

descending to the chambers of death.

Having watched this young guy fall, the epilogue invites us to put ourselves in his shoes. To recognise that we will become him if we don't learn from him. I remember one of our pastors was once asked while he was on a panel in front of our church whether there was a key principle he lived by that he found had helped him in his years long ministry. I'll never forget his answer: "I've never doubted my capacity for catastrophic sin." What had kept him on track in life was his recognition that he could be this guy in proverbs 7. If we are going to take this drama to heart that is what we need to say too.

So what do we do with this part of God's word tonight? Well, I think that we're supposed to receive this story as a *loving warning* given to us by our Heavenly Father who wants us to keep trusting Him and living His way so that we don't come to grief. So let me suggest two ways you can learn from this guy so that we don't become this guy. First: cling to God's wisdom and Second: Cultivate right desires.

1. Firstly, we need to cling to the wisdom of this passage. And there three pieces of wise advice that we get in Proverbs 7.

Guard your hearts.

The first piece of wisdom is to guard our hearts and minds against sexual temptation (v.25).

Temptation always starts in our inward thoughts. We can't stop them from coming but we must not entertain them – fantasizing about possible encounters or rationalizing how you might justify some act of sexual immorality. All of these trains of thought will allow temptation to make its case to us. I'm willing to bet the guy in Proverbs 7 had that woman on his mind long before he made the decision to wander off near her house. I remember being at a Belgrave Heights men's convention, and the speaker, Al Stewart, asked us this confronting question: *"If you were going to commit adultery with someone, who would it be?"* After a few moments of silence, he then added: *"If you've got a name in your head, you've already got a problem."*

Temptation will always creep into our mind. We must call it out for what it is and say a quick pray in that moment asking God to lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Stay away

The second piece of wisdom we get here is to stay away from trouble (v.25).

This guy made the huge mistake of kicking around near the house of an adulteress at night time. He put himself in a situation where he was easy prey. We need to learn from this guy and stay away from places, people and situations that would make it easy for us to progress down the road of sexual temptation.

If you were to create a list of danger zones that you need to avoid – what would it be?

Is it something like Facebook – do you find yourself scrolling through pictures of a particular person – feeding unhealthy thoughts about them?

Is it staying up too late looking at your phone?

Is it the married work colleague that you are finding yourself becoming increasingly emotionally close with.

How are you going to either avoid situations or alter them in such a way as to make them safer?

Perhaps some level of internet protection/accountability is necessary?

Maybe you just pull the trigger and delete facebook?

Maybe you need to have an awkward but necessary conversation with your work colleague about why you need some space.

Sometimes it's helpful to enlist the help of an older believer who you can confide in and who can encourage you to be godly in your struggle. And I do see a number of men doing this with older men. But it is also something the bible encourages women to do with older women. In Titus 2 Paul tells older women to teach what is good to the younger women, to "encourage them to be self-controlled and pure." Sexual temptation is a powerful and the body needs to work together to combat it.

Consider the consequences.

The third piece of wisdom is to meditate upon the consequences of sexual temptation. The path towards adultery and sexual sin is basically described as a highway to hell in this passage – it leaves a trail of destruction that God wants you to avoid. And cultivating a healthy fear of that is good.

You have to think, "if I give myself over to sexual temptation, it could wreck my life and reputation. I could shatter my ministry. It could have lasting negative effects.

I was reading some stats from a few years back that was highlighting the high rate of sexting. 62% of teens and young adults have received a sexually explicit image. 41% have sent one, usually to their bf or gf. This stuff can land you in trouble with the law and become a permanent source of anxiety later on, where you know someone has access to that image of you. Look to the consequences.

To those of you who are married - When you feel you are getting too close to another person or tempted to look at porn, you need to say to yourselves: "if I let this person or this porn win my heart, the trust in my marriage could be severely damaged or destroyed, my family might be torn apart."

And ultimately, God tells us that if we choose to comfortably and unrepentantly live according to our sinful desires (including sexual sin) we will not inherit the KOG (1 Cor 6:9). You can't live in comfortable defiance of God and think that will be okay. That will actually send you into God's judgment. Paul tells the Corinthian believers:

You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

We need to cling to wisdom: guard our minds, stay away from temptation, and think upon the consequences.

But secondly, we need to cultivate right desires.

We need to replace our love for what God says is wrong and replace it with a love for what God says is right.

Love for your spouse (if you have one).

In chapters 5 and 6 of Proverbs, the young men are told to replace their lustful desire for *another* woman with a renewed love and desire for their wives. And for those of you who are married that is one good desire God wants you to be cultivating. Renew your love and desire for your spouse. Prioritize date nights, make time for your husband and wife without kids (if you have any). Do what it takes to be captivated by his or her love so that your desire for another person simply evaporates. I have an older friend who will often ring me up and ask me the question: “How are you going loving your wife? Have you booked in a date night?” He has been a good encouragement to keep loving my spouse.

Love for your saviour (most important)

But for all of us, single or married, the ultimate right desire God wants us to cultivate is our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Because, while password protections and accountability partners are helpful, they do not in themselves change what you love.

But the truth is that you will love your sin *less* when you love your saviour *more*.

And Titus 3 reminds us why we should love our saviour more. It speaks of how Jesus loved us and saved us despite us being disobedient, deceived and enslaved to various passions and pleasures.

⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, ⁵ he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

We need to be ready in moments of temptation to say, I don't want to dishonour the one who loved me so much that He died for me. He overcame temptation for my sake and went to the cross, so I'm going to ask for His help to overcome my temptation so that I can demonstrate my thankfulness.

But perhaps you're here and you feel the weight of sexual sin in your life – Well, you need to know that Jesus *is* merciful. Sometimes we can worry that we've gone too far for Jesus. But He we need to remember that He came to save and forgive people like the guy in our passage. His mercy towards the adulterous woman in John 8 is proof of this. Yes, sexual sin has ripple effects that may bring difficulty and complexity in this life, but don't lose sight of the fact that Jesus offers forgiveness – which is of real eternal value. And actually, that's much more important than hiding it to save face, or even to stay in ministry. If you have unconfessed sexual sin, repent and cling to Jesus as your only source of forgiveness, your hope for change, and your guarantee of eternal life.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by just pointing out the obvious. Many of you here are young – most of you have a lot of living to do yet – that means a lot more temptation is yet to come; many more moments when you will feel that pull away from Jesus and towards sexual sin. Cling to the wisdom of Proverbs 7, cultivate your love for Jesus and keep saying to yourself, *If I don't learn from that guy in Proverbs, I am that guy.*