

The Strange Woman and the Simple Young Man

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Proverbs 7 paints for us a vivid picture of a young man being led astray by a strange woman. He is described as “simple” and “void of understanding” (v. 7). Knowing exactly where he was going, he walked down the street to her corner. No surprise, there she was. “There met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (v. 10). She caught him and caused him to take part in her adulterous ways. Scripture, especially the book of Proverbs, in no uncertain terms describes the seventh commandment and the temptation to violate it. Although the scenario given to us in Proverbs describes a young man falling prey to the seduction of a strange woman, it can go both ways. Young women can and do fall prey to strange men.

Who was the strange woman? She was a “woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (v. 10). Her description begins with what she was wearing. You might say there was no mistaking what her occupation was. You may have heard the phrase “dressed to kill” used to describe someone. The strange woman really was dressed to kill because “Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (v. 27). When we give in to temptations to violate the seventh commandment, we are defiling our bodies, which are temples of God. Whoever defiles the temple of God, God promises to destroy (1 Cor. 3:14–15).

Proverbs 7 also describes the strange woman as having “cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her” (v. 26). It doesn’t matter who you are, all people—rich and poor, old and young, weak and strong—are tempted to violate the seventh commandment. Some have the gift of not falling easily into this sin, but those are very rare persons indeed. As our society plummets into the depths of depravity, it seems as if it is getting more and more difficult not to be tempted. Adultery and fornication is everywhere, and it’s accepted as normal.

After the strange woman caught the foolish young man, she seduced him by describing to him all that she had to offer him. “I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon” (vv. 16–17). Proverbs does not skirt around the fact that there is momentary “sweetness” in the sinful pleasure of following after her. “For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil” (5:3). That being said, the next two verses continue by describing the aftermath of falling prey to her ways: “But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell” (vv. 4–5). The momentary pleasure of giving in to sexual temptation ends in bitterness. Beware of her kiss, for it is the kiss of death.

Who was the simple youth described in Proverbs 7? “Passing through the street near her corner...he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night” (vv. 8–9). He was alone and he was browsing. He knew it was dangerous, but being “void of understanding” (v. 7) he went anyway. When the strange woman caught him, he was easily overcome in his lust for her and he went “after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter” (v. 22). He became so blinded in his lust that he knew not that it was for his life (v. 23). “Her house is the way to hell” (v. 27) and he went willingly. We would call him a fool and rightfully so but would we do the same thing? Do we do the same thing? Do we go where we should not?

These days we don’t have to go walking down the street to find the strange woman. She is in our living rooms and in our pockets. On a smartphone, TV, or computer we can access almost anything we want with a few clicks or swipes and no one would be the wiser. We need accountability. We need help from our parents and our friends in order to resist temptation. We are out of our minds if we think we can browse the internet without accountability. Parents, you might agree that giving your child unrestricted access to the TV is like letting them play with matches. If that is true, then surely handing them a smartphone without restrictions and accountability is like handing them a grenade. It is only a matter of time before it explodes. Caution is to be exercised. Accountability is needed.

What are we to do about this sin? How can we fight against it? It may seem at times that we are overwhelmed with this enemy of ours. We can’t get away from it because it’s everywhere. You can’t drive more than a few miles down a highway without seeing an advertisement from a company trying to use sex to sell whatever it is they are selling. We try our hardest to fight against this sin, but as soon as we think we have gained some ground, we drive past a billboard or we see an image on social media or a news website and our gaze lingers. Even in that split second of our lingering gaze, we have violated the seventh commandment. This is frustrating for the child of God, downright exhausting at times. We know we cannot fight it ourselves, so how do we fight it?

One way we can fight this sin is through obeying our parents. Wise sons and daughters obey their parents in *all* rightful matters, but obedience to father and mother is specifically stated regarding this sin. “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother...For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman” (Prov. 6:20–24). Our parents have been battling the strange woman their whole lives long. They have good advice and encouragement to offer us and even reproofs when necessary, so when they speak to us about these matters, we need to be open to listening to them.

Another way we fight against sin as it presents itself to us in the seventh commandment is through wisdom. “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee...To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words” (Prov. 2:10–11, 16). How do we get wisdom and learn discretion? By walking in the green pastures of God’s word instead of the dark street near the strange woman’s house. There is great blessing in being in scripture day after day. This is not the fleeting pleasure of the strange woman that ends in destruction. The blessing of walking in God’s word is true pleasure, everlasting pleasure. By the grace of God working in us we can make ground against this sin. By his grace he sanctifies us as we put to death our sins of adultery and fornication. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3).

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