

Proverbs Chapters 4-5 - John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, "Picking the Right Woman". Let me say right now, this is not about dating! ☺
 - a) In Chapter 4, the topic is wisdom. That word wisdom is often referred to as a "she".
 - b) In Chapter 5, the topic is making good choices in marriage. Much of the chapter deals with the dangers of adultery. The idea of "picking the right woman" is also about the long term commitment to the right woman.
 - c) In both cases, it is like a father talking to a young man about "which woman to pick". Since most young men will actually pay attention to their fathers (for a short time) when it comes to sex, it makes a good analogy. ☺
2. Let's discuss these two chapters as they fit into all of Proverbs:
 - a) Chapters 4 and 5 are part of a nine-chapter introduction into the book. The remainder of Proverbs is the actual "poetic" proverbs that are usually in two-line verses. The last two chapters of this book are different in style and we'll get to those later.
 - b) Another point to understand is that the whole book of Proverbs is about how to have Godly wisdom. The word wisdom is about applying biblical principals to our lives. The first nine chapters focus on why wisdom is important. They give examples and illustrations on how and why wisdom is important to our lives.
 - c) My point is all of Proverbs deals with the issue of how to have wisdom. Proverbs changes its style of writing after the first nine chapters, but the underlying point is the different styles of writing are designed to teach us the same thing: How to have Godly wisdom.
 - d) An issue I brought up in the last lesson needs to be repeated here: Why have a nine chapter introduction? At first glance, it appears Chapters 1 through 9 essentially say over and over again in effect, "This is good godly wisdom, pay attention to it!"
 - i) Much of Chapters 4 and 5, in this lesson, repeat some of the same themes as the previous three chapters.
 - ii) The reason it is repeated is to stress the importance. Let's face it, we as humans have a short term memory recall. It's important to emphasize what is important.
 - iii) Another illustration is an athlete. Most athletes will tell you the importance of practicing the fundamental aspects of their sport over and over again. A good athlete disciplines him or herself by constantly going over the "basics". That's sort of the idea here: The concepts taught in these first nine chapters are so important, they need to be stressed over and over again.
 - e) This brings us back to the main point of these first nine chapters: Godly wisdom.
 - i) The term "wisdom" essentially means to apply biblical advice to one's life. As anyone who has lived the Christian life can tell you, "head knowledge" is easy. The hard part is actually applying that knowledge to one's life.
 - ii) So why is this "wisdom thing" so important? This is about obedience. If we call Jesus, "Lord", then we are to do what He tells us! Applying Godly wisdom is about living a life that is pleasing to God in all that we do. It is how to live a fulfilling life, far greater than anything this world has to offer. Finally, it is also about how to be a good witness to those around us.
 - iii) The final point to emphasize is understanding the blessings promised for having wisdom. For example, good wisdom will give us a long and happy life. Well, some Christians do die young. The point is not that if we follow these guidelines, we will live a long life. The point is we can live a fulfilled life, no matter what is that time span. This book is not a recipe for financial success and long life. It is a set of instructions on how to live a life that is pleasing to God in all that we do.

3. Chapter 4, Verse 1: Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. ² I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. ³ When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.
- a) Let's start by stating what the text says: It is a father giving good advice to a son. It was written from the perspective of the son. It is son saying in effect, "When I was a kid, my father took me aside and said the most important thing in life is to obey God's commandments. If you do that, you will have a happy and successful life."
 - b) Almost everybody is influenced by their parents, and wants to please them. The vast majority of parents love their children and want to see them do well in life. I state that as this chapter reads like a loving father wanting to tell his son what is best in life.
 - c) If you come from a family where you're father wasn't a good father, read this chapter pretending you did have a loving father! In a sense, we all have a loving Father. The reason God wants us to call Him our Father is to see Him as not only the leader of the family, but also one who loves us and wants to give us good instruction.
 - d) With all that said, this verse, along with the next set of verses, is all about receiving good knowledge so that we can make good decisions. To paraphrase this verse, it is a father saying to a son, "First of all, I can't tell you how much I love you. Because I love you, I want to see you prosper in all that you do in life. In order to do that, I beg you to hear what I have to say about the way life works and apply that knowledge to your life!"
 - e) Let me also state the obvious that this book does not just apply to boys. We are reading an illustration of a father talking to a son. This knowledge and wisdom applies to anyone and everyone of both sexes willing to listen to God's advice for our lives. It uses the analogy of father and son, partially because this advice was given to King Solomon by His father King David. In other words, this is a true story. Second, the image of a loving father giving good advice to a son is an image most people can relate to.
 - f) The interesting thing about these verses is that King Solomon had to learn this advice the hard way. This is usually true for most people. King Solomon is recalling from his childhood how his father told him in effect to obey God's commandments.
 - i) Solomon also wrote the book of Ecclesiastes as well as most of Proverbs. Ecclesiastes was written late in Solomon's life. That main point of Ecclesiastes says in effect, "I (Solomon) strayed away from God and tried all sorts of things. Those things included a life of pleasure, having fun, building things, and knowledge. Nothing is wrong with any of those things unto themselves, unless of course, they turn one away from one's commitment to God. That was my downfall."
 - ii) The last line, the conclusion of Ecclesiastes (See Ecc. 12:13-14) is essentially the same the same as Verse 4 here in Proverbs 5. The idea is "the main duty of man is to obey God's commandments." I believe Solomon realized how he had wasted many years of his adult life chasing after things that didn't have any long term benefit. That is when Solomon recalled the words his father spoke to him as a boy. Solomon learned the hard way that his father's advice was right.
 - iii) The lesson for Christians is to learn from Solomon hopefully, without having to learn the hard way, the mistakes of going down the wrong paths in life.
4. Verse 5: Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.
- a) Remember this is a father imploring his son to get wisdom and understanding.
 - b) Let me quickly explain the difference between "wisdom and understanding" again:
 - i) The idea of "understanding" is about knowledge. It is the idea of knowing right from wrong. The idea of "wisdom" is how to apply that knowledge to our lives.
 - c) The text says not to "swerve" from them. The idea is in effect, "Son, what I am teaching you doesn't just apply to the next two months of your life. It goes on as long as you live."

5. Verse 6: Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.
- a) This verse talks about the idea of wisdom as a form of protection.
 - b) It is best to explain this in illustrations: Suppose someone asks you to commit some sort of "little sin". Let's say they want you to lie for them (i.e., "bearing false witness"). Let's say they want you to go along with their plan to cheat on in some issue (i.e., "steal"). The temptation is to go along with them as we all want to be liked by our friends. We may not see the consequences of our actions at that moment. The way wisdom protects us is our brains think, "I cannot do this, as I am accountable to God in all that I do. As tempting as it to do this, the long term consequences are not worth saying yes to this temptation".
 - i) That is how wisdom "protects" us. It is not about a bunch of angels standing around us like secret service agents. ☺ It is about applying Godly knowledge as to make the right decisions in life. It does protect us from the harm of the consequences of bad decisions.
6. Verse 7: Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
- a) The idea of "wisdom is supreme" is similar to some of the ideas taught in previous chapters. The idea is that applying godly wisdom is a priority over financial success, fame, or anything else in this life. It does not mean one ignores work or family for the sake of God. It means one applies the principals of godly wisdom to every aspect of one's life. It is foremost in all the decisions we make in life.
 - b) Now let's talk about the second sentence: "It will cost all that you have".
 - i) This sentence can also be translated, "No matter what else you do". The main idea is that wisdom is the most important thing in one's life.
 - ii) Jesus said in effect the same thing, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it". (Matthew 10:38-39, NIV).
 - iii) The point is Jesus says we have to give up everything to follow Him. What does that mean practically? It means Jesus becomes a priority over every other aspect of our lives. It means that we live our lives to please Him in all that we do. We still have the freedom to live whatever life we want, but we choose to live a life that is pleasing to God. In other words, we make decisions every day based on what we believe is biblically right or wrong.
 - iv) This leads me back to a phrase in Verse 7: "Thought it cost all that you have".
 - a) To live a life for God is about turning every aspect of our lives over to God in trust. It is constantly saying to God, "OK, I really want to do this, but You want me to do the other, so I'll trust Your judgment and do it your way." It is about looking at different aspects of our lives and adjusting them in conformity to God's will.
7. Verse 8: Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. ⁹ She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor."
- a) The opening line of this study was ""Picking the Right Woman". One reason I choose that title is wisdom is described as a female. The idea is "Pick this woman named wisdom" as one's life long mate. (Obviously, if you are a female reading this, change the sex. ☺) The word picture here is about "marrying wisdom". When I say marriage, I mean a whole, complete commitment in every aspect of the word.
 - b) The idea is to take the biblical concepts of about how to live a life pleasing to God and embrace them as truth. If we do so, God promises those truths will bless our life.
8. Verse 10: Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. ¹¹ I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

- a) From Verses 10-14 we have promises made if we embrace godly wisdom for our lives.
 - b) Let's summarize the blessings in these verses:
 - i) "The years of your life will be many. " (Verse 11);
 - ii) "(I) will lead you along straight paths. " (Verse 12);
 - iii) "You will not stumble. " (Verse 13).
 - c) OK, time for disclaimers: ☺
 - i) Does this guarantee that if we obey God every moment of every day we will live 200 years and never stumble in life? Of course not. We still live in a sinful world and have to suffer the consequences of those sins.
 - ii) These verses are generalizations. It is generally true that if one follows God's way of living, one will live a happy fulfilled life. It is sin that causes us to stumble, and therefore, it is the avoidance of sin that generally leads us to a fulfilled life.
 - d) The contract between God and ourselves is that we if we stick close to Him, He promises to stick close to us. He promises to bless our lives if we are willing to receive it. That doesn't mean we won't have problems. He promises to see us through such times. The key is our attitude during such times. He is asking us to trust Him when life gets difficult.
 - i) Grant it, it is not easy. Sometimes we have to work in small steps. Sometimes I have to pray things like, "Lord, help me deal with the pain for the next 5 minutes." God promises to meet us as our level and help us to cope with any situation.
9. Verse 14: Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.
- a) Verses 14-15 are the "opposite" of the previous verses. Remember Proverbs often speaks in "contrasts", where it contrasts the positives and negatives aspects in adjoining verses.
 - i) After giving us a bunch of verses on the positive benefits of sticking close to God, we now have a set of verses warning us of the danger of turning from Him.
 - b) Verse 14 and 15 are saying in effect, "Do you see those people over there? You're bible-based knowledge says they are evil. Yes, we are to judge people's behavior! Are they asking you to join them in their sin? Go run in the opposite direction. Tell them, "Excuse me, I'll be right back, ☺ and run away as fast you can!"
 - i) This may sound obvious, but stop and think of all the people in jail because they made a bad decision as a young man or woman. Stop and think of all the people killed because they joined the wrong group of "friends".
 - ii) This verse has nothing to do with those who are innocently killed. This is about choices in life, which is why I call the lesson, "Picking the right woman".
10. Verse 16: For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall. ¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.
- a) These two verses finish the thought on evil people. They are saying in effect, "Those that are evil are going to do commit sort of sin, sooner rather than later. Avoid them, because they will get you in trouble in a short time span.
 - b) The verse actually says, "They cannot sleep till they do evil". I am convinced for those who rebel against God and His laws, this is true. I'm not talking about the "average" person who gives God lip service every now and then, but the person who willfully and constantly rebels against God and against all that is good. Committing crimes is acting out what is in their hearts. Another example is the addict who steals to support their habit. The point is one becomes consumed by one's sins and in that sense, they "can't sleep" until they have satisfied that sinful desire.
 - c) Verse 17 is a colorful way of emphasizing Verse 16. In Verse 17, the evil person "eats and drinks" what is sinful. The idea of both verses is the way to tell such a person is that sin is an all consuming aspect of their lives.

11. Verse 18: The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.
- a) Here is another pair of verses where one idea is contrasted to another. These two verses contrast which path to choose in life.
 - b) Notice that God does want us to judge the behavior of others. God is saying in effect, "Look around you and look how people behave. You can choose which people to hang out with based on their behavior." This is not about abandoning God-fearing people when they fall. It is about avoiding those who don't fear God in the first place.
 - c) Remember the biblical idea of the "simple" is one who is naive. Such a person has no discernment about who to pick as for example, friends. The underlying idea of these verses is to teach people how to have discretion in what we choose in life.
 - d) With all of that said, Verses 18 and 19 expand upon the idea of good discernment:
 - i) Verse 18 says in effect, "If you stick close to God and study His commandments, one's discernment will get better and better in life. The ability to make good Godly decisions in life will grow as you mature."
 - ii) Verse 19 says the same thing but with a negative example. It is saying in effect, "If you turn from God, one's life will be worse and worse and you can't explain why everything is going wrong."
 - e) This leads to a quick reminder about discerning "God's will" for our lives. God is not going to audibly tell us what decisions to make. He teaches us to walk by faith. God says in effect: "Pray for guidance and diligently learn your bible. Then trust that I (God) am guiding you in the daily decisions of life." That is what Verse 18 is all about.
12. Verse 20: My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. ²¹ Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; ²² for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.
- a) Here in these verses we are getting more reminders to stick close to God. Imagine a father lecturing his son. The son is rolling his eyes at the father's lecture. The father is saying, "Son, I know you think you know better, but you don't. I have to repeat myself over and over again, until this sinks in! I'm trying to save your life here!"
 - i) The problem is we as humans have this bad habit of wanting to rebel. Whether we like it or not, we need to hear over and over again from God the necessity of sticking close to Him. One reason Jesus compares believers to sheep is that sheep are very prone to wander in the wrong direction. That's us.
 - b) With all of that lecturing in mind, here are a few more verses telling us to stick closely to God and focus on His commandments constantly. When I say "constantly", I mean that one should allocate time every day for prayer and time with God's words. When we don't do that, it is when we too are prone to wonder like sheep.
 - c) I have to admit its tough reading some of these same concepts over and over again and discuss them. I have to remind myself that God is emphasizing how important it is by repeating these ideas over and over again. The repetition of the concept of "stick close to God" is stated often in this chapter as a reminder to us of its importance.
13. Verse 23: Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- a) Let's stop and think about the heart as a word-picture. The heart as an organ has the job of pumping blood all through one's body. The reason the heart (and not the brain) is used the heart gets the blood all through the body. The word picture is God wants his wisdom spread all through one's body. It is a colorful way of telling us to make all of this information part of one's life. Don't let it just be "head knowledge" that we fail to apply.
 - b) The context of Verse 23 is about making good decisions in life. The idea is if we stick close to God and apply the principals taught in this book, then we are guarding our heart.

14. Verse 24: Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- a) Let's read Verse 24 in context of a statement by Jesus, "But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." (Matthew 15:18-19, NIV).
 - i) Jesus' point is the mouth (as used for speaking) is only an instrument of what one thinks on the inside.
 - ii) Let me explain this with an example. Suppose you said to the police, "I didn't really want to steal that money, but my right arm forced my body to follow along and it was really my right arm that stole it. It wasn't my fault!"
 - a) Yes, that's silly, but it makes a point. The right arm (or left arm) does not make the decisions, our will makes the decisions. The same applies to what comes out of the mouth. We can't blame the mouth. It is what we are thinking in our hearts (i.e., our inner soul) that comes out.
 - b) With all of that in mind, re-read Verse 24. Go ahead, I'll wait for you right here. ☺
 - i) Verse 24 is not saying to tape our mouths shut. It is saying in a poetic way that if we want to keep evil things from coming out of our mouths, it starts with not having those thoughts in our hearts.
 - ii) The other point is when we have such thoughts, we are not to act on them.
 - c) "What about the person who cuts me off in traffic? What do I do with my desire to kill them?" ☺ The correct answer (which I fail to apply myself!) is to pray for them. In other words, give that negative thought to God. See that person as someone who needs Jesus and not some person who did a bad thing.
 - i) My point is not about traffic safety, but about perspective. The bible is teaching us to watch what comes out of our mouth. We do that, by "working with the heart". That is, sticking close to God and asking His help to guide us. That is the only way we can prevent the "bad stuff" from coming out of our mouth.
 - d) So, what do we do when we mess up and say the wrong thing? First of all, welcome to club. ☺ The correct answer is to apologize. Confess the sin as wrong. If you can't confess it to the person you hurt, do it to God. Sin causes guilt and that guilt blocks our relationship with God. It must be cleared out as soon as possible.
15. Verse 25: Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. ²⁶ Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.
- a) This chapter finishes with an encouragement to never give up. The idea of these verses is to keep on making the right decisions; keep on focusing our lives upon God, keep up with our commitment.
 - b) I called this lesson "Picking the Right Woman" and I meant it. The "woman" of choice here is wisdom. Remember I'm speaking in metaphors. If you're a woman, reverse the sex. The idea is one is to cling to wisdom as if one made a marriage commitment to her.
 - c) Remember why one makes a marriage commitment: Out of love for that person. In a healthy marriage, we give ourselves "fully" to our spouse in that we make our spouse a priority over ourselves. We stick to our commitment because we made that commitment. Our commitment to God is similar. It is based on the gratitude of what Jesus did for us and based on our love for God and wanting to be pleasing to Him.
 - i) The bible is using the word picture of a good marriage to understand how a person should stick close to God in all that they do. It is more than acknowledging God exists and Jesus died for our sins. It is about a commitment of every aspect of our lives. That is the central idea being poured out in this chapter. The chapter ends with the encouragement to "stick at it".

16. Chapter 5, Verse 1: My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, ² that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge.
- a) Chapter 5 continues the same theme as the previous chapter, but is going to use the example of an adulterous woman as a "bad choice" in life. The discussion of an adulterous woman begins in Verse 3. Before we get there, the first two verses in this chapter remind us to pay attention to God's wisdom.
 - b) Remember the chapter breaks were not added until many centuries after the text was written. With that said, this is a good location for a chapter break. The idea of repeating this "pay attention" sentence is to show an illustration is about to begin, but it runs along the same topic of having good wisdom as to life's decisions.
17. Verse 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.
- a) Here we have another two line "contrast". The text is saying a woman who wants to commit adultery has "smooth speech", but in the end she is bitter. (Gall is a bitter drink.)
 - b) One of the best quotes I ever heard on the topic of adultery is as follows: "Sometimes God punishes the male adulterer by making him live out the rest of his life with the woman he had an affair with in the first place."
 - i) The idea of that quote is a woman who is willing to cheat with a married man is not the type of woman who has a lot of respect for God and His laws. People who go down that path usually end up bitter in the end and they take it out their misery on others around them.
 - c) Getting back to the verse, the main idea is to warn men that an adulterous woman starts off using flattery. Let's face it, there must be some appeal to committing adultery, or it would never happen in the first place.
 - d) Most marriages are a struggle and require time and effort in order to keep them strong. Men and women are inherently different by nature. The danger is taking one's spouse for grant it. I bring this up as this is often when the danger of adultery comes in. Another woman comes along and appeals to the male ego. This other woman tells the man how wonderful he is. She appeals to his ego. That is usually when the danger comes.
 - i) That concept applies to this verse. What the married man doesn't realize is the price he has to pay down the road. A woman willing to cheat on a married man will also cheat on the "new man" down the road. An adulterer who doesn't fear God will not be loyal to the new person as well.
 - ii) Remember that this section of Proverbs is written to the naive. The idea is to teach a young man or woman about the long term consequences in life. The idea of an adulterous relationship may be appealing at first, but God is trying to teach about the long term consequences.
 - e) The reason the bible makes such a big deal about adultery has to do with honoring the commitments one makes in life. Marriage between a man and a woman is a commitment. Both men and women are different and are both imperfect creatures. Therefore, there is going to be struggles at times. The idea is to make the mental decision to keep the commitment first, and then "let the body follow" that decision.
 - i) Yes, the bible says it is acceptable (but not required) to divorce if one's spouse commits adultery. (See Matthew 19:8-9). Yes, I do believe it is acceptable to get away from a spouse if that person is physically abusive. Other than those extreme cases, the important thing is to stick it out no matter what.
 - ii) This surprisingly, brings us to the definition of the word "Israel": That word can be translated "struggles (or wrestles) with God". A healthy relationship with God, like marriage, requires hard work. It is going to struggle at times in order to keep that relationship going well. There are times we as Christians complain to God about why "this" is happening. There are times we take God for grant it.

- iii) This is why idolatry is often a synonym for adultery. In both cases, one is turning away from one's commitment. Idolatry is about breaking one's commitment to God. Adultery is about breaking one's commitment to their spouse.
 - iv) My point of this whole section is to understand that when you read about adultery in Chapter 5, the topic at hand is about young men making good decisions in life and not falling into the temptation of adultery. The underlying topic is about keeping one's commitment to God.
- f) Meanwhile, the adulterous woman is still in big trouble. ☺
18. Verse 5: Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave.
- a) The idea of Verse 5 is that this adulterous woman is working her way to hell. The context is to warn the "guy" not to follow her down the same path.
 - b) If one reads this entire chapter without any commentary, one gets the idea that this adulterous woman is either married and/or commits the sin of adultery on a regular basis. The idea is about a woman who doesn't respect God and His laws.
 - c) Let's talk about the issue of salvation as it deals with the issue of adultery.
 - i) First of all, it is not an unforgivable sin. The only unforgivable sin in Christianity is the lifetime denial of Jesus as payment for one's sins.
 - ii) If you know the story of Jesus and the "woman at the well" in John Chapter 4, Jesus was preaching to a woman who was married five times and the man she was with at that time was not her husband. (Ref.: John 4:17) I'm not positive this woman committed adultery, but I would say the odds were pretty good. ☺
 - iii) Jesus never told her, "Too bad for you woman, you're going straight to hell. I can't be bothered with you." He took the time to tell her that He was the Messiah (See John 4:26) and Jesus let her go tell her fellow Samaritans that Jesus is the Messiah. Was she saved at this point? Probably, but we don't know for sure. My point here is that Jesus didn't give up on this woman based on her past sins.
 - iv) There are few sins that cause as much damage to society as adultery. Men and women who commit such sins rarely stop and realize the damage they do to their children over the long run. My point is this sin may be forgivable in God's eyes, but one still has to live with the damage done by this sin.
 - d) This leads us back to Verse 5. The idea is not that if one commits this sin once, they are going straight to hell. The point of this verse is that if one continues in a lifestyle of ignoring God and His laws, it does lead to eternal damnation. The other point is that this verse is a warning to the person being tempted to not be drawn into that lifestyle.
19. Verse 6: She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.
- a) Verse 6 explains why this adulterous woman is going to hell. The verse is saying in effect that she is not thinking of the long term consequences of her action, just the momentary joy of the sexual relationship.
 - b) This gets back to what I stated earlier: Sin must have some appeal, or people wouldn't commit sins in the first place. The joy of the sin is always in the short term and the price one pays for the sin is always in the long term. What this verse is saying is the person committing the sin is willfully ignoring the long term consequences of their actions.
20. Verse 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.
- a) A modern paraphrase of these sentences would be, "Avoid her like the plague!"
 - b) One has to remember that this is written to the young and naive. They don't grasp the consequences of making bad decisions in life. Verses 7 and 8 are essentially saying, "Don't do this" while Verses 9 and 10 give the consequences of such a decision.

- c) Let's talk about why somebody would want an adulterous relationship. It may be out of boredom. It may be out of frustration with one's marriage. It may be as simple as physical attraction. For most married men, the most common reason is not the physical attraction to other women, but it usually stems from problems in one's own marriage.
- d) The point of all of this is when the temptation comes (and it comes!), one has to make the mental decision of saying, "This is wrong, and I'm not going down that path!"
- e) I've heard a couple of great techniques to help out Christian men in sexually tempting situations. These include: 1) Run away if you can. You can't be tempted if you are not there. 2) Praying for the person that is a temptation to you. If you get your focus on God, it's harder to stay "tempted". 3) Remind yourself that you have a great wife. Start telling God of all the blessings of one's marriage. Finally, 4) think of the consequences. That is what Verses 9 and 10 are all about. If nothing else can motivate us when temptation comes, it is to think of the consequences of those actions. Speaking of which...
- f) Verse 9 says, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel.
 - i) The King James translates the first part as "Giving your honor to others".
 - ii) The NIV here says, "Give your best strength to others".
 - iii) Let me put it this way, the longer I live, the more I am convinced that a person is only as noteworthy as his or her reputation. If one has a reputation for being a liar, it is hard to overcome that reputation. If one has the reputation for being a cheater, it is almost impossible to overcome that reputation.
 - iv) With that said, a person who cheats on their spouse develops the reputation as a "cheater". Others will think, "If that person can't be trusted to keep their vows in a marriage, how can I trust them to keep their commitment to our "deal"?"
 - v) One of the great dangers of an adulterous relationship is losing one's reputation for faithfulness. That is the idea behind "giving your honor to others".
 - vi) The second part says one gives one's years to the one who is cruel.
 - a) So who is this "cruel one" that we are subject to, if we get involved in an adulterous relationship? It can be the devil himself. The idea is that if we no longer care about God, whether we realize it or not, we are now, "the devil's pawn" for doing things that work in opposition to God.
 - b) In a broader sense, once one turns to the lifestyle that opposes God (i.e., doesn't care if one is accountable to God), one starts "hanging out" with other sinners. The idea of "giving one's life to the cruel one" refers to living a life with those who don't care about God.
 - c) The "cruel one" could be the woman that has the adulterous relationship the man. Since that woman doesn't care about being accountable to God, I'll argue that woman ends up bitter and the "cruel one".
- g) Verse 10 says in effect that if one commits an adulterous relationship, "strangers" will get one's wealth. If you think about, if someone has an adulterous affair, he now has two women to financially support! There may be two sets of families to support.
 - i) This verse can also be describing blackmail. There are many con men that make a living off the blackmail of withholding the information of adultery to the spouse.
 - ii) When this verse was written, the idea also was about "mugging". The idea is that the temptation of an adulterous affair was a setup operation to steal money. The modern day equivalent is the women who waits for her "prey" in a bar, gets the man drunk (or slips him some sort of sleeping pill) and then steals his money.
- h) The main point of Verses 9 and 10 is that when one falls to the temptation of adultery, one is going to pay a far greater price than what one originally expected.
- i) Remember this is about motivation. The writer of Proverbs is trying to get across to us the consequences of an adulterous relationship is far greater than just cheating on one's spouse. It can cost one their reputation and their wealth.

- j) Another way to look at these verses is when temptation comes to stop and ask, "Is it worth it? Is it worth losing one's reputation in the community? Is it worth losing all or a good part of one's financial wealth? Is it worth the damage done to one's life?"
 - k) Remember that while the topic at hand is adultery, the underlying topic is to understand that we are all accountable to God. While we may not lose our salvation over this issue, we definitely suffer consequences in our lifetime for this action.
 - l) I have also found that every person is more tempted by some things than others are. What is very tempting for one person is not very tempting for another. One has to be careful to not only pray about things that are very tempting, but also be careful in those areas of our life where we don't think we need help.
 - i) For example, the apostle Peter's best asset was his boldness. When you read the Gospels, Peter was a "shoot first, ask questions later type of guy". Yet, the area of his life where he stumbled was he was too scared to admit he knew Jesus when the moment counted. Peter didn't pray about his fear because he thought he was strong in that aspect and didn't have to pray to God for help in that area.
 - ii) My point is to pray about areas of one's life where one believes they are strong against temptation as well as to pray about areas where one is weak.
21. Verse 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."
- a) Most of us know the expression, "Hindsight is 20/20". The term "20/20" refers to good vision. (You can see at 20 feet what a normal person can see at 20 feet). It is usually easy to look back at one's life and see in hindsight what one did right and wrong.
 - b) With that in mind, these verses are all about hindsight. They are about a person who looked back at their life and said in effect, "I was an idiot. I should have listened to my Sunday school teachers who told me not to go down this path. Now that I'm old, I've realized how I have ruined my life."
 - i) To the person reading this and thinking, "This is me", let me stop and say it is never too late to change for the better. One cannot change the past, only the present. One starts by turning to God and saying, "Forgive me for how I have acted and help me to change for the better for now on." It's usually a long road from there, but my point is simply to not to continue being a victim of one's past.
 - c) These verses are designed as a warning. They are not written to an elderly person looking back at their life, but to a young person looking forward. These verses are saying in effect, "Don't let this happen to you! Don't be like this person!"
 - d) If there is an underlying theme to this whole section, it is about thinking about the long term consequences of one's actions. The writer of Proverbs is trying to motivate us to avoid adulterous relationships. One way to motivate us is for us to imagine the long term consequences of such actions. The real scary part about these verses is just how true they become. I have heard of stories of people winding up ruined at the end of their lives that started off as "simply" an adulterous relationship.
22. Verse 15: Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.
- a) The next question one can raise from this issue is, "OK, I understand that adultery is bad. What advice does the bible give on how to avoid the issue?" The answer is Verse 15 and Verses 17-19. In other words, "drinking water from one's one cistern" is not talking about getting a drink of water, it is about sticking close to one's own wife.
 - b) To put Verse 15 a little more bluntly, "If you've got the urge, use it on your spouse!" ☺
 - i) Remember the title of this lesson has to do with picking the right woman. It should be expanded to say not only should you pick the right woman, but also one should stick with whoever one picked!

23. Verse 16: Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares?
- a) Remember that in these verses, sex is being compared to drinking water. In Verse 15, it is a poetic way of saying to stick to one's one spouse as opposed to committing adultery.
 - b) In Verse 16, it is a poetic way of saying, "If you put your sperm in someone other than you're wife, you're going to have other children in town!"
 - c) The idea of the "springs" refers physically to one's sperm or egg, but the idea is one is having sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse. (Think of "spring" as springing new life in the world.)
 - d) The idea of the "public square" refers the fact that others may be calling you mommy and daddy! You're breaking up the family structure as God designed it to be! I can continue the lecture from here, but hopefully, you get the idea.
 - e) Let's apply this verse to those it does not directly apply. In other words, what if you're not married? How do you relate to this verse? What if you're a senior or a widow?
 - i) For starters, it is a reminder to not spend time with a married man or woman. A married man or women willing to cheat with you is willing to cheat on you!
 - ii) If nothing else, one can be a teacher and pass on this important advice to others!
 - iii) Don't forget that adultery is a synonym for idolatry. The idea of adultery is about breaking one's commitment to one's spouse. The underlying point of this chapter is about one's commitment to God and avoiding the temptation of falling away from that commitment.
24. Verse 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.
- a) Verses 17-19 are reminders to stick close to one's spouse. A "solution" to avoiding adultery is to be constantly and consistently enraptured by the love of one's spouse.
 - i) If you do that, you should be too sexually worn out to have an affair! ☺
 - b) Obviously, these verses are written to those who are married. If one is not married and reading these verses, then apply it as a word-picture to our relationship with God. If one is single and reading this, pray these verses for yourself and your future spouse. Ask God to help you prepare for marriage and to have a happy, married life!
 - c) For people who have been married a long time, it may be best to see these verses as commands given by a superior. In other words, make the mental decision to love your spouse first, and then let your actions follow.
 - i) Let's face it, marriage can be a struggle. We're all human, and we all sin. Spouses often hurt each other the worst. At times, one has to say prayers like, "Lord, right now I am really angry at my spouse for (fill-in-the-blank). I am really hurt by what they said and did and the pain is real. Lord, help me to give You that pain. Help me to love that person, not because I want to right now, but because You have commanded me to love them. Help me to trust You in this difficult situation. Help me to be enraptured by my spouse's love even when I don't feel like it.
 - ii) To quote a book I read many years ago, "Love is a Decision" (by Gary Smalley). The idea is love is not a feeling, it is a decision, and then our feelings follow. A healthy marriage requires making the decision to love our spouse despite the actions of the moment. Then we let our actions follow.
 - d) I can just hear people saying, "Yeah, but you don't know what my husband or wife is like!" Read these verses again. They are commands, not options. ☺
 - i) If God wants us to live this way, then we have to trust God is going to make it possible to live this way. It starts with the decision to live by faith that God is going to work in our lives to make our marriages strong, healthy and loving.

- ii) You may not have the ideal relationship in the next 24 hours, but one can start by praying and trusting God to make it better and then taking the steps to follow through with the "decision" to love our spouses as the bible commands us.
 - iii) Obviously marital happiness is a far bigger topic. My main point here is that it begins with a commitment, not a feeling. The "feelings" should follow, not lead.
 - e) Let me make a technical point before I move on: The term "A loving doe, a graceful deer" is Solomon's way of describing beauty. Solomon also wrote "Song of Songs" and used those same terms to describe the one he loved. (Ref.: Song of Songs 2:7, 2:9, 3:5, 8:14). The idea is a deer is a graceful in the way it moves, and it was Solomon's idea of a compliment to compare a deer's movement to the way a woman "moves". The term has sexual overtones in graceful movements in lovemaking. I'll stop there. ☺
 - f) Getting back to the verses, notice Verse 19 says, "captivated" by her love. Verse 18 also says to "rejoice in the wife of one's youth". The word literally means, "intoxicated". It is like when a young man or woman has a crush. It is a "high" of love from one's spouse.
 - i) Remember this chapter is written to "young men". The point is for them to focus on the beautiful gift that is their wives and not waste their time on other women. To put it more crudely, "If you are married and are getting horny, use it on the spouse and not somebody else!" ☺ (Hey, if Verse 18 can use the phrase, "breasts satisfy you at all times", I can mention horny!")
 - ii) To state another point that should be obvious by now, God is not "anti-sex". He designed it to be a loving act between a husband and wife. These verses pretty much state that as a fact.
 - g) An older married man may ask at this point: "You said earlier love is a commitment, not a feeling. Now you're telling me I should have the same feelings for my wife of ninety three years that I had when I was a teenager? Get real!" ☺
 - i) The first point is not to take one's spouse for granted. Like most men, I've had to learn this the hard way. Marriage requires a constant effort to make it work.
 - ii) The next point is that if we make that commitment to love our life, then the feelings should follow. We don't wait for our spouses to improve before we love them. We do it because God commanded us to. The feelings will follow. When bad moments come, give them to God through prayer, then get back to the commitment and feelings that we are commanded to do.
 - h) To sum this all up, the advice to the young man is to avoid adultery and stick close to the woman who is one's wife. Remember the title of this lesson is about picking the right woman. The follow up is to stick to that commitment.
 - i) What if I'm not married? What if I'm too old to relate to this?
 - i) Remember that this text is literally dealing with marital commitment, but the underlying word-picture is our commitment to God. One can also read this text allegorically about our commitment to serve God at all times.
25. Verse 20: Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?
- a) Verse 20 gives us one more related point. It says in effect, "Think about the consequences of having sex with another man's wife. Even if your own wife doesn't kill you, the other husband may!" The main point is to teach young people to think about the long term consequences of one's actions.
26. Verse 21: For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.
- a) This verse is one more reminder that God is always watching us. Combining this verse with the previous verse, it is saying, "Look son, even if you are not motivated by the fear of the husband of the woman you want to sleep with, think about the fact there is a God, He is always watching you and the fact you have to give an account to Him.

27. Verse 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.
- a) The final two verses say in effect, "If a man goes down the wrong path, eventually it will catch up with him. It may not happen in one day or one week, but sooner or later, one's bad deeds will catch up with him."
 - b) Verse 22 says that one's evil deeds ensnare him. Think about people who become addicts. Think about those who start down a life of sin. Most adults can name one person who it appears becomes obsessed with whatever sin they "lightly" started with.
 - i) Remember this chapter is about "warnings". The idea is to warn a young person about the choices one makes in life and the consequences of bad choices.
 - c) I want to talk about the phrase, "Die for a lack of discipline" in Verse 23.
 - i) The New King James Version says, "Die for a lack of instruction".
 - ii) Personally, I have never read an obituary that read, "Bob was found dead after a lack of insufficient discipline". ☺ The text is implying that if one doesn't have the discipline to say no to an adulterous relationship, one could get shot by the husband of that woman. If one doesn't have the discipline to avoid stealing, one could be killed while breaking into someone's house. My point is people do die from what starts out as a lack of discipline or application of God's wisdom.
28. Some final thoughts: Chapter 5 goes back and forth with the positive attributes of a healthy sexual commitment to one's wife versus the dangers of adultery.
- a) Chapter 4 was about "sticking close" to wisdom as if it was one's wife.
 - b) The word wisdom is described as a "she". We had a few hints of that in Chapter 4.
 - c) Putting all of this together, the idea is about having a healthy, long term commitment to God. It is about sticking close to that commitment in order to live a life pleasing to God.
 - d) The bible often compares our relationship with God with a marriage relationship. In both types of relationships, a strong commitment is needed first, prior to any feelings. In both relationships, there are struggles at times, but it is worth the effort to work one's way through those struggles. In both types of relationships (again, one with God, one with a spouse), the idea is to make every effort to keep that commitment strong. This is about obedience to God's laws for the sake of our own long term happiness.
 - e) "Picking the right woman" does include our spouse, but it begins with a "female" named wisdom. Wisdom is about applying God's laws to our lives. These chapters are giving us a set of instructions on how to please God in all that we do. The illustration on adultery is the first of many examples in Proverbs. We'll get to more examples in the next lesson.
29. Let's pray: Father, through the Holy Spirit, draw us close to You. Give us the boldness, the discipline and the guidance to stick close to You and apply your laws to our heart in all that we do. Give us the discernment to know how to be obedient to You in all that we do. For those of us who are married, help us to apply that to our marriage as well. Help our struggles in our marriage as well as our struggles with obedience to You. Forgive us of our rebellion. Help us to remember that we are forgiven and to start fresh with each moment of our lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.