

Proverbs Chapters 6-7 - John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, "Don't let this happen to you!" Let me quickly summarize the bible text of this lesson before whatever happens, happens to you. ☺
 - a) First, we are going to have a bunch of verses saying in effect, "Don't be liable for a loan you shouldn't be liable for in the first place." (Chapter 6, Verses 1-5).
 - b) Then comes a bunch of verses saying in effect, don't be lazy. (Chapter 6, Verses 6-11).
 - c) Then comes some verses saying, "This is what an evil person is like". (Chap.6, Vs. 12-15).
 - d) Then comes a list of "seven things God hates". The interesting thing is murder is third. Pride is the first thing on the list! (Chapter 6, Verses 16-19).
 - e) The rest of Chapter 6 gets back to the adultery issue. Chapter 7 gives an illustration of a prostitute who "sets up" men. After he is allured in the trap, he is presumably robbed.
 - f) What does all of this have in common? Beat's me. ☺ (Just kidding!) What all of these verses have in common is about watching one's behavior in various situations.
2. It's best if we stop at this point and talk about where we are in Proverbs:
 - a) Chapters 1 through 9 are a set of do's and don'ts that revolve around the topic of wisdom. The idea of wisdom is the application of biblical laws and rules to one's life. These nine chapters are saying that to live a happy and fulfilled life, one needs to be wise.
 - b) One has to remember that much of the bible is one big instruction book on how to live. Ever notice that the bible has relatively little text about life in heaven? Most of the bible text is telling either the Israelites or Christians how we are to live right now. That's the idea. Most of the bible text is teaching principals to live by in this lifetime.
 - c) Which brings us back to Proverbs: The first nine chapters are on the topic of wisdom. Every now and then Proverbs sort of yells out "Get wisdom! It's more important than money or fame or anything else in this life!" Proverbs Chapters 1-9 makes that statement every now and then and gives examples and illustrations to go with that principal.
 - i) When we get to Chapter 10, the topic doesn't change, but the writing style does. Chapter 10 begins a nineteen-chapter section where Proverbs is primarily two-line "sayings" designed to teach us about wisdom and how life works best.
 - d) With all of that said, we're still in the middle of this opening nine chapter section.
 - i) This chapter deals with co-signing on a loan (I'll explain that later); it deals with the danger of being lazy in life; it gives specific examples of things God hates; and finally tells the story of a woman who uses sexual appeal as a temptation to trap a man and presumably, steal his money.
 - ii) If you think about it, these are all negative examples of behavior to be avoided. That is why I call this lesson, "Don't let it happen to you!"
3. Let's quickly discuss the idea of "Behavior and Christians".
 - a) The idea of this chapter is live in a way that is pleasing to God. That involves behavior.
 - b) A false idea about Christianity is all I have to do is believe Jesus died for my sins, and then I can go live however I want. Some treat Christianity like it's a life insurance policy in which you make your payments and then not think about it very much! ☺
 - c) Since I'm a guy, let me explain this principal use a golf illustration: ☺
 - i) Suppose you and I are on the putting green. I'm 30 feet away. I brag to you that I'm positive I'm going to make this shot and have no doubt I'll miss it. If the other golfer is a typical guy, he will say, "OK, put your money where your mouth is!"
 - ii) In a strange way, that is what living the Christian life is all about. No, it's not about betting on golf. ☺ It's about being willing to "back-up" whatever we say or proclaim in church. If we say Jesus is Lord, then the word "Lord" means He is in charge of our lives. It means we obey what He commands us to do.

- d) Doesn't Paul say in Ephesians 2:8-9 we are saved by faith alone? Yes. James also says (in Chapter 2) that if we are saved by faith, then ones "work" naturally follows. I compare it to breathing. If one takes in a lot of air, one just "naturally" lets it out. If one does call Jesus "Lord", one should behave in a manner that follows that belief. Getting back to the golf illustration, we are "putting our money (and our lives) where our mouths are!"
 - e) This leads us back to Proverbs: The first nine chapters are written in a style of a father talking to a son. That doesn't mean Proverbs is only for young men. It means we should take the advice of Proverbs the same way a good son listens to the advice of a good father.
 - f) These two chapters are full of "negative behaviors" we are to avoid. Part of living a life pleasing to God is not only doing what is right, but also learning to avoid what is wrong. We are going to get some specific examples in these two chapters.
 - g) With that said, let's get started and we'll tie it all together at the end of the lesson.
4. Verse 1: My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have struck hands in pledge for another, ² if you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth, ³ then do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands :
- a) Verse 1 through Verse 5 deal with the topic of being a "guarantor".
 - b) As the son of a bank president, I know this topic all too well. Let's say somebody wants a bank loan. Let's say the borrower is not credit-worthy to get that loan. Sometimes, a second person will also sign on the loan document. That second person is equally as liable for the loan payments as the first person.
 - i) In other words, if you are the second person signing that loan document, you have gone into partnership for that loan whether you realize it or not. What you have said in effect is, "I'll guarantee the first person makes his or her loan payments. If not, I'm going to make those payments myself."
 - c) What one has to understand is that this verse is not talking about signing a loan document for one's wife or say, one's children. The "loan partner" is described in these verses as a neighbor. The Hebrew word implies this neighbor is well, "flaky" for a lack of a better word. The idea is this borrower isn't credit worthy and we can't make the person a better person by signing on the loan documents.
 - d) The important thing these verses are warning against is getting into partnerships with people who one shouldn't be in partnerships in the first place. Getting back to the banking business, the term used is a "cosigner", as the second person is signing the loan document as a guarantee for the first person.
 - i) There is a Jewish term for a cosigner that I can't resist sharing: A cosigner is, "A schmuck with a pen". (A "schmuck" is someone who does something stupid.)
 - e) I was thinking about this sentence in context of Proverbs. Why now bring up this issue?
 - i) Let me put it this way: Here we are in Chapters 1 through 9, talking about the importance of making good godly decisions in life. The previous chapter dealt with adultery. That's an important topic as two of the 10 commandments deal with the topic of adultery.
 - ii) You would think the next issue in Proverbs would be another "biggie". Maybe the next topic would be on the danger of killing someone or the danger of stealing or maybe bearing false witness. Instead, we get a relatively trivial thing like cosigning on a loan document. Back to the question: Why have this issue now?
 - iii) First, while they didn't have formal loan documents like bankers today, it was a common practice at that time to "guarantee" payments on a loan.
 - iv) The answer to the question of "why bring up this issue" is to understand the important issue at hand: Getting involved with people we shouldn't be involved with in the first place". This part of Proverbs is teaching is about bad business relationships and the danger of forming bad "any type" of relationships!

- f) Paul said that Christians should not be "yoked" with nonbelievers. (See 2nd Cor. 6:14). The idea of a yoke is a harness that connects an animal with another animal. People assume Paul was only talking about marriage (i.e., Christians should only marry Christians.) The point is that topic is broader than just marriage. The idea is Christians should not be partners with nonbelievers.
 - i) Getting back to Proverbs, the topic avoiding partnerships with someone we should not be partners with in the first place. The bible text says nothing about whether or not the neighbor is a God-fearing person. We have to make the discernment ourselves whether or not to partner with that person. The idea of this verse is when in doubt, don't make the commitment in the first place.
 - g) What about the command to "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself"? (Ref.: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19b). Jesus said in effect this is one of the two greatest commandments. (Ref.: Matthew 22:39). The question is, if we love our neighbor, shouldn't we help them in their hour of need? If they are asking us to cosign a document, shouldn't we help them?
 - i) Here is where one has to balance one bible verse with another. Most people have to learn the hard way that we can't fix people's bad habits with money.
 - ii) Let me give an illustration: Suppose someone had a drug problem and you were trying to help them out by cosigning to buy a new house. They end up using what money they made to buy more drugs instead of making the house payments. You are now stuck making those payments. We are not helping them in this situation by buying them a new house.
 - iii) Let's suppose that same person claimed, "They are now born again" and ask you to help them financially. A good "balance in life" might be to give them a small amount of money and see if they use it wisely. The mistake as it applies to this chapter of Proverbs is to give them all one's money just because they now claim they found God. The idea is to test them and work with them a little before becoming partners with them.
 - h) Remember that this whole section of Proverbs is written like a father to a son. The son is young and is naive in his knowledge of right and wrong. Along comes a "neighbor" who says to the son, "Hey buddy, I have a great business proposal for you in which we can both make lots of money!" The idea is not to trust that person until they can prove themselves trustworthy. Don't cosign the loan! (That is, partner with them!).
 - i) In these situations, if a person is "so" trustworthy, why does the person making the loan want to have a second person also sign the loan documents?
 - i) The reason these verses are here in Chapter 6 is God is teaching us the importance of making good decisions of who we choose as friends and business partners. While cosigning a loan appears to be a trivial thing in comparison to say, adultery or murder, the idea is God is teaching us the wisdom of choosing the right people to be with in life.
 - i) The reason these verses are so prominent is to teach us to have wisdom in choosing our friends. Do you know the expression, "You are what you eat?" That also applies in friendship. We become like the people we hang out with! This is especially true for young people.
5. Verse 3: (cont.) Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor! ⁴ Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. ⁵ Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.
- a) The rest of Verse 3 through Verse 5 talk about what to do once one does "cosign" and one is stuck in that situation. The short answer is "Do anything and everything you can to get out of the loan, short of killing the guy!" ☺ Beg the "neighbor" to the point of being obnoxious about it to get out of the situation.
 - b) The idea of these verses is to ask to beg and plead to get out the commitment. Obviously, when the "deal" falls apart, the partner is very unlikely to let you out of the deal.

- c) Remember the word being used here is "neighbor". We're not talking about one's wife or one's children. The situation is more of a business relationship. The underlying message is the importance of choosing good friends in life.
 - d) Let's suppose one made a commitment and one is now stuck. What should one do at this point? I'll argue there is nothing left but suffer the financial consequences. Another verse to be balanced with this verse is "let your yes be yes and your no be no". (Matthew 5:37). The idea is once one has made a commitment and the partner won't let you out, one is stuck in that commitment.
 - i) Let's suppose we made a loan commitment and then "just walk away" because the deal went bad. The problem is we are committing a greater sin by not sticking to our commitment.
 - ii) Let me put it another way: If we can't be trusted to keep our word in a business deal, how can we be trusted if we tell other people about God? If we have the reputation of being "flaky" in our words and deeds, will anyone ever trust us when we share with them the Good News about Jesus?
 - e) Now let's get back to Paul's issue of being "equally yoked" with nonbelievers.
 - i) Let's say one is in a marriage with a nonbeliever and now we want out. Paul says we are to stick to that commitment to hopefully win over our spouse to Christ. Paul talks about this topic in 1st Corinthians Chapter 7. An underlying point of that chapter is, "if we're stuck, we're stuck". We can't just leave our spouse just because you and I are believers and our spouse is not. Again, we are back to the idea of keeping a commitment. God wants us to have the reputation of sticking to our commitments even when they go bad.
 - ii) Remember the last topic in Proverbs (Chapter 5) was about adultery. Adultery is cheating on one's previous commitment. Here, we are talking about avoiding bad commitments in business and sticking to those commitments once we have made them. In that sense, this topic of "cosigning" is a natural progression from the previous topic.
6. Verse 6: Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ⁷ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, ⁸ yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. ⁹ How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? ¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- ¹¹ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.
- a) Beginning in Verse 6, we change topics. The new topic at hand is laziness. These verses say in effect, "Son, study ants sometimes. They are small creatures, but work hard. Be like them in that they are diligent. If you are a lazy person, you'll end up poor."
 - b) One of the themes of Proverbs so far is that if one follows godly advice, one will live a happy and successful life. Again, it is not a guarantee of how much money one makes or how long one lives. It is a guarantee that one will live a satisfying life and one will make a difference for God in this world. With that said, plain old "hard work" is involved. One cannot be lazy and expect to live a life pleasing to God.
 - i) Let's put it this way: Does being a Christian mean angels come to our house, get us dressed and spoon feed us our meals? Of course not. One has to get out and work to make living to support oneself and one's dependants.
 - ii) Let me "modernize" these verses, "Son, you can't sit around all day lying on the couch playing video games. I don't have a problem with you taking a break, but you have nothing to take a break from! I'm not going to financially support a lazy son. Maybe its time you got your own place. See if you're new landlord will let you play video games in order to pay the rent!" ☺
 - c) The underlying message is not only for the son to avoid laziness. It is also for the father to not put up with it either. We are not helping our children by enabling laziness.

- d) Let's get back to the theme of this lesson, "Don't let this happen to you!"
 - i) Remember the previous chapter (Chapter 5) dealt with the danger of adultery.
 - ii) We just talked about the danger of being partners with a "flaky" person.
 - iii) Now we are talking about the danger of laziness.
 - iv) I don't have a problem with most forms of recreation as time to unwind. The question of any hobby becomes, "Do you control it, or does it control you? If God asked you to give up that hobby tomorrow, could you do it?"
 - v) The older I get, the more I realize the most valuable asset I have is time. This is the most precious commodity we own. The older I get, the more I realize the danger of wasting time. Does this mean I never watch television? No. It does mean that I want to use what precious time I have to make a difference for God in this world.
 - vi) The main point of these verses, using the illustrations of a diligent ant and a lazy sluggard, is the importance of having the self-discipline to use one's time wisely and use it for God.
 - e) I thought of these verses another way: When God punished Adam and Eve, part of Adam's punishment was he had to "work the ground". (Genesis 3:17-19). It is God's intent for men to work hard in life and not be lazy.
 - f) Here's another guilt-ridden exercise: ☺ If you knew today was your last day on earth, would you live it differently? Would you spend a lot of time in front of the television? Remember the only thing we are going to take with us into the next life is relationships. I'm convinced God let's us keep some or all of our memories into the next life. The key is to develop healthy relationships in this lifetime so we can carry them in the next one.
 - i) God put us on this world to make a difference for Him. That requires the diligence and the discipline to follow through with what He commands us to do.
7. Verse 12: A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth,¹³ who winks with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers,¹⁴ who plots evil with deceit in his heart--he always stirs up dissension.¹⁵ Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy.
- a) Remember the theme of this section is, "Don't let this happen to you!"
 - i) We started off with the danger of going into bad partnerships. (Verses 1-5).
 - ii) We talked about the danger of laziness. (Verses 6-11).
 - iii) The next four verses are talking about the danger of evil people.
 - iv) In these four verses, it is describing an evil person, who in the end will die suddenly. The implication is they go hell. The context of these verses is to teach us how to recognize such a person so we can avoid them.
 - b) Let's talk about "winks with his eyes, signals with his feet". The idea is this villain is talking to his victim, but the villain is giving a secret signal to his partner, to say mug him at just the right time. It would be like a villain saying, "When I move my foot to the left for no apparent reason, that is when I want you to strike the victim on the head from behind". The point is we can recognize this evil person because they have the habit of using secret signs in order to accomplish their goal.
 - i) These verses have to do with choosing who our "friends" are. A sign that we have chosen the wrong friend is that use coded messages to commit sins.
 - c) An underlying point is we are to judge behavior. To choose friends, we are to watch people's behavior. Yes, it's ok to start with someone, and then choose to walk away from that friendship because of that person's bad behavior. Remember the previous verses were about avoiding partnerships with bad people. These verses are implying we are to avoid even being around such people.
 - d) Verse 15 says such people will suffer disaster when they least expect it. It means they could get caught and go to jail at any moment. Their "victims" could kill them in self-defense. An unrepentant person like this could die or go to jail at any time.

8. Verse 16: There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.
- a) Verses 17 through 19 give a list of seven "bad things" that God hates. Remember my theme for this chapter is about avoiding bad behavior. Here in these verses, we have a list of seven specific things. Obviously, this is not a complete list. It is a specific list designed to make a specific point, which I'll get to in a moment.
 - b) First, I want to talk about a style of "Hebrew Poetry". Every now and then in the Old Testament one will read a poetic style where it says in effect, "I have a list of six things. No wait, make that seven things on my list". The writer is not saying, "Oh, I forgot something". It is just a poetic writing style of saying in effect, "Here is a list, and now, let me make it complete!"
 - c) The number "seven" in the bible is associated with completeness, as God rested on the seventh day from creating the world. The idea of a "seventh thing" added to the list means the list itself is now complete. Again, this list is not a complete list of all possible sins, it is complete in that this is "all" the writer wants to say at this point in time.
 - d) OK, on to the list of the "sinful seven": ☺ The first on the list is "haughty eyes".
 - i) This is a more literal translation of the Hebrew. The idea is one has a proud look. The idea is one's eyes give off a "holier than thou" look to other people.
 - ii) Pride is all about putting one's one will above God's will. It is about willfully doing something that is not pleasing to God. It is about gratifying one's ego.
 - iii) There is a view that pride is the root of sin. It starts with an internal desire to sin, and then we act on that desire. If one can deal with the internal desire, one cannot sin. Christianity teaches the importance of "taking thoughts captive" (See 2nd Corinthians 10:5) and not act upon them. The idea is when we have such thoughts, we "give them to God" as opposed to acting upon them.
 - e) The second item on the list is a "lying tongue". This is a violation of one of the 10 Commandments to not bear false witness. (Ref.: Exodus 20:16).
 - i) Why is lying listed second? Among this list of things God hates, there is no mention of say, stealing or idolatry. Why is lying singled out second on this list?
 - ii) One reason is that lying is more common than theft and idolatry! I would argue that almost everyone lies at sometimes. One of the keys to living a life pleasing to God is to be known as having a truthful reputation.
 - iii) The key is to put this in context: The subject is to teach us how to have wisdom as we go through life. The first thing that usually causes us to turn from God is "pride". The idea is our ego gets in the way of God's will. The second most common thing is to lie in some situation. Lying is often our "mouth" following through on some sinful desire of our heart.
 - f) The third item on the list is "shedding innocent blood". This is murder. This is a sin we expect to be on the list.
 - i) Again, the key is to see this in context. This list is not designed to be a complete list of all things God hates. The second on the list was lying. The third one here is murder. We tend to think of lying as a small sin and murder as a great sin. I believe that's the idea of putting them together. God is combining "lying and murder" to show what can happen when we turn from God.
 - g) The fourth item on the list is "A heart that devises wicked schemes".
 - i) Before we can carry out any wicked deed, we have to think it up first. The point here again, is that our actions always follow our hearts. Sometimes it happens quickly and sometimes it is long drawn out plans. The point is we "do" what we "think". This is God teaching us to be careful what we think.

- ii) Before I move on, let me take a quick break to give a sample prayer of how to deal with bad thoughts: "Lord, right now I'm angry at so-and-so. In fact, I'd like to hurt them for what they did. Lord, this anger is blocking my relationship with You. Right now, for the next minute, I'll let You deal with that anger. This person is now your problem and not mine. Give me the wisdom to interact with them in the future in a way that is pleasing to You. Help me to have peace through this situation. I ask it in Jesus name, Amen."
 - a) There, don't you feel better already? ☺ OK, back to the list.
 - h) The fifth item on the list is "feet that are quick to rush into evil".
 - i) Again, it's best to read this in context. The previous verse was about "thinking out" bad things against others. The fifth item here is acting out those thoughts. God is trying to teach us to deal with those thoughts in the first place so we don't act them out.
 - ii) Remember a purpose of this list is so we can recognize others who are on the list, as to not associate with them. Some of these items are behaviors we can recognize. Other items are about thoughts and we can't read people's minds. Other things on this list involve "actions" and we are to judge people's actions as right or wrong.
 - i) The sixth item on the list is "a false witness who pours out lies".
 - i) Remember the second thing on this list is a "lying tongue". The question becomes, "How do you know when a person has a lying tongue?" The answer here is in the sixth action, when this false witness "pours out lies".
 - ii) When a person lies in a situation, it is rarely just one lie. There is usually a bunch of other lies to cover up the first lie. That is why the text says, "pours out lies".
 - iii) Again, it's hard to know if a person has a "lying tongue". It's a little easier in a public situation when we know someone is "pouring out lies".
 - j) The final item on the list is, "A man who stirs up dissension among brothers."
 - i) In other words, this is a person who say, spreads rumors in a group in order to cause debate. It is a person who picks a fight or starts a debate and causes dissension among people who normally get along.
 - ii) The idea is one who already has hatred in his or her heart, and then finds some way of letting it out. Remember the expression, "Hurting people hurt people".
 - k) Remember the point of all of this is not only to watch our own behavior, but to avoid those who have these behavior traits. This list is designed to be a poetic way of saying, "Watch people's actions. If you want to know what is in a person's heart, watch what they do as their actions always follow their heart."
9. Verse 20: My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. ²¹ Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. ²² When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. ²³ For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,
- a) This text is reminding us to keep God's commandments close to our heart.
 - b) Verse 20 says, "Your father's commands and your mother's teachings". Our parents may or may not have been good Godly parents. The idea of this verse is to treat God's words as if we were children and were listening to good parental advice.
 - c) The text says in Verse 21, to "fasten them around your neck". The idea is not to literally wear one's bible like a necklace! The idea is to study these laws and apply them in a way that is close to you at all times.
 - d) Let's put these verses in context of the chapter: So far, this chapter warned against: 1) The danger of getting into partnership with a bad person; 2) warns about the danger of laziness and 3) warns us how to recognize evil behavior. Given those warnings, the follow up question should then be, "How do I prevent from being like these people?"

- i) The answer to that question is in Verses 20-23: It is about sticking close to God through prayer and study. The way to avoid such behavior is not just to recognize bad people and think, "OK, that's wrong, I'll just avoid those people". Self-discipline is not enough to keep us away from evil. The key is to stick close to God and rely upon His power to make the right decisions in life. That is why this paragraph is saying God's word teaches us right from wrong and we should study it as if it was "fastened around our neck".
 - e) Does this mean I have to study my bible around the clock? Of course not. The idea is we make God's word a significant part of our lives so we can make good decisions in life.
- 10. Verse 24: keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife. ²⁵ Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, ²⁶ for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.
 - a) Now we are back to adultery. Remember that this whole section is written like a father to a son. The father needs to bring up sex every now and then to keep the son's attention. ☺
 - b) The specific warning of these verses that if one turns from one's wife to a prostitute, one is "reduced to a loaf of bread". The warning means that one becomes poor. This man is now supporting two women! This can be literal in the fact the prostitute can rob one of one's wealth. That is the direct context as one reads through the remainder of these verses.
 - c) The end of these verses warn that the "adulteress preys upon your very life".
 - i) Remember that criminals use adultery for robbery or as a form of blackmail.
 - ii) This idea can refer to the fact if one turns to adultery as a way of life, then that person no longer cares if they are accountable to God. It is a subtle way of saying one is going to hell based on the fact one is turning from God in their life.
- 11. Verse 27: Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? ²⁸ Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? ²⁹ So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.
 - a) These verses say in effect, "If you play with fire, you are going to get burned". The context of these verses is still on the topic of adultery.
 - b) There are those who think, "I can get away with this for a little while, no one will know." These verses are teaching us the biblical principal that sins, sooner or later get exposed. To quote one of my favorite frightening bible verses, "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23, NIV). The underlying point of that verse is God loves us too much to leave us alone. If God cares for us, He exposes our sins so we have to deal with them!
 - c) Does this mean every single relationship of adultery in the history of mankind gets publicly exposed? I don't think so, but I'll argue the odds of getting caught are pretty high. People have a tough time keeping secrets. Remember that Proverbs are often "generalizations", meaning the Proverbs is generally true in most cases. God's point of these verses is in effect, "Don't try to beat the odds! Most likely, you will get caught!"
- 12. Verse 30: Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. ³¹ Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house.
 - a) We interrupt this illustration on adultery to give an illustration on stealing. ☺
 - b) The context is still about adultery, but Solomon, the writer of Proverbs is making a point. The point is a thief may have a "legitimate excuse" for stealing food, but that excuse does not mean the thief can avoid being punished for stealing.
 - c) If a thief says, "I was starving", that is not a God-permitted excuse for stealing. That thief must still pay the punishment for the sin.
 - d) In the bible, the penalty for stealing is not specifically stated as seven times the amount of the original theft. I believe the idea of "sevenfold" is that one must make a complete restitution for the crime. The number seven is associated with "completeness".

- e) OK John, I get the idea the theft must be punished. What does this have to do with adultery? Glad you asked. The point of these verses in context of the topic of adultery is that no excuse is acceptable. The idea of adultery is still sin. One cannot say, "This woman tempted me and I couldn't help myself" or one cannot say, "My wife is so terrible she drove me to this point". Whatever the excuse, it is still a sin.
- f) Let's take a quick breather and discuss why Proverbs Chapters 1 through 9 spends so much text on the topic of adultery. Why is that?
 - i) One reason is that adultery was Solomon's downfall. He married lots of foreign women that lead Solomon to worship other false gods. (See 1st Kings 11:8). There is an old saying that a preacher spends most of his time on the sin that affected him the most. I suspect that is true with Solomon. He is warning from his personal life of the danger of being attracted to more than one woman.
 - ii) Remember these chapters were written from a father to a son. The son has to deal with his hormones! ☺ This is the area of life where a young man is a weakest.
 - iii) Adultery is an excellent example of "sin in general" in that it is initially appealing, but eventually leads one to a downfall.
 - iv) Finally, as I've stated in other lessons, adultery is a synonym for idolatry, as in both cases, we are turning from our committed relationships.
 - v) Meanwhile, the main character of this section is still in big trouble. ☺
- 13. Verse 32: But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. ³³ Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away; ³⁴ for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. ³⁵ He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse the bribe, however great it is.
 - a) These verses warn the adulterer about revenge. The text is saying in effect, "You know that married woman you are fooling around with? Her husband will want to kill you for wrecking his marriage. He can't be bought off and he's got a gun!" ☺
 - b) The point here is the warning to the adulterer in effect, "Look, if nothing else motivates you to avoid adultery, remember that her husband is going to want to kill you."
 - c) So, are all these verses designed to scare us into avoiding adultery? Yes, that's the idea. Remember Proverbs is about having the wisdom in life to make the right decisions. Proverbs warns us through both positive and negative truths about life. An expression for the Book of Proverbs is "this is a book about the way life works". One way it works is that when one commits sins, there are consequences for those sins. Those consequences will more likely happen sooner than later.
 - d) On that happy note, we can move on to Chapter 7. ☺
- 14. Chapter 7, Verse 1: My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. ² Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your kinsman; ⁵ they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words.
 - a) Every now and then, Proverbs takes a break from the illustrations of the moment and yells out in effect, "Get wisdom!" That is what is happening in these verses.
 - b) I want you to think about these verses in the context of the discussion of adultery. The son can turn to the father at this point in the lecture and say, "How do I avoid this temptation in the first place?" The answer is in these five verses. It is God saying in effect, "Stick close to Me and follow My rules, and then you can avoid these sins."
 - c) These verses say in effect if we stick close to God, we can avoid the sin of adultery.
 - d) Does this mean if we stick close to God, we will never be tempted? No. These verses are saying that if we stick close to God, He gives us the wisdom and the discernment to make the right decisions in life.

- e) The two key elements are back to prayer and study. We pray for God to give us the strength to avoid temptation. Remember that three times in the Gospel accounts Jesus asked Peter to pray with him. One gets the impression Peter failed to do so. Then came Peter's denial of Jesus three times. The other element is studying God's word. We can't know right from wrong if we don't know this stuff in the first place.
- f) OK John, I know all of this. It is basic stuff. Now tell me how do I deal with temptation?
 - i) When those moments come, fire up the quick prayer. It's hard to concentrate on something tempting if we are focusing on God in the first place.
 - ii) Remember the bible promises there is always some way of escape. (Ref.: 1st Corinthians 10:13.) Look around for that escape route! Ask God to show you how to get out of the situation. If God is making an unconditional promise to provide a way of escape, ask Him to show you that way!
 - iii) I will add that if you're not in the habit of starting one's day in prayer, do so. One prepares for battle before the battle begins, not after it starts. It is important that the Christian starts his or her day on their knees. It is not a requirement, but I've learned that being spiritually prepared for the day makes a world a difference!
 - iv) Let's say you or I are in the middle of something wrong. How do we deal with it? First of all, get help. I've learned it is best to never try to deal with it alone. The hardest step is getting past the embarrassment of telling someone our problem. If we can overcome that, the rest is downhill.
- 15. Verse 6: At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice.
 - a) From Verse 6 to Verse 23 in this chapter, we are going to get a story. It is Solomon saying in effect, "Let me tell you a story of something I once observed." It is probably an incident that Solomon himself once watched. The story is basically of a guy who was enticed to commit adultery. The text implies this guy was then robbed after he fell into her "trap".
 - b) The point of this story is not whether or not it is literal. The point is to learn from the details how to avoid the temptation of adultery.
- 16. Verse 7: I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment.
 - a) Remember the term "simple" refers to one who is naive. The idea is a person who lacks good discretion to discern right from wrong. How did Solomon know this one young person lacked judgment? Solomon can't read minds. He knew this by his actions that followed! The point here is we are to judge people by their actions.
- 17. Verse 8: He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house ⁹ at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. ¹⁰ Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.
 - a) So here is this guy, "minding his own business", walking down the street. The woman spots her prey and sets him up.
 - b) The application of these verses is to understand we never know when and where temptation and sin will come. A prayer I say occasionally is, "Lord, I don't know what is going to happen to me today, but You do. Prepare me for what will happen today. Help me to make the right decisions about whatever I face today, Amen."
- 18. Verse 11: (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; ¹² now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.)
 - a) Remember the big point of this section is how to avoid adultery in the first place. This section is teaching us "warning signs". Here is this woman being loud and defiant and wandering around looking for prey. That alone should be a sign of trouble.
 - b) The idea of defiant is about defiance against God. Notice the progression of her actions. It starts out as vocally defiant, and then it progresses to where she is "out and about".

19. Verse 13: She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: ¹⁴ "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. ¹⁵ So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you! ¹⁶ I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. ¹⁷ I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. ¹⁸ Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love!
- a) Notice what this woman does not say to this guy: "Come have sex with me so I can ruin your marriage, ruin your reputation and steal you of all your money." One can pick any type of temptation and describe the final output if one fails to turn from that sin.
 - b) Notice how the temptress appeals to the guy's ego and his naivety about life.
 - i) First, she boldly kisses him. A typical guy thinks, "Wow, of course I understand how she couldn't resist me being as good looking as I am." ☺ Giving in to temptation usually beings when our egos get in the way.
 - ii) Next, she makes the statement about "fellowship offerings". This is a type of Jewish sacrificial offering described in Leviticus. Part of the requirement of this offering is that it must be eaten before morning. (Leviticus 7:15). The point is this woman pretends to be religious. She is saying in effect, "Hey, you can trust me! Look, I'm obeying God's laws and I want you to join me."
 - iii) The point to be aware of is the danger of trying to cover sin with a "religious blanket". An adulterous affair is never an excuse if say, both of those people are religious Christians in other aspects of their life. As I stated in the introduction, behavior does matter in the Christian life and it matters in every aspect.
 - c) The next method of temptation has to do with material benefits.
 - i) This woman bragged about her colored linens from Egypt. She was trying to entice the guy by saying in effect how wonderful and comfortable is her bed.
 - ii) The woman also bragged about the scents associated with her bed. Obviously, it is designed to cover up the stink of her sins! ☺ While this may not work with all men today, the idea again is she is using material "things" to entice the man.
 - iii) All of this is the woman's way of saying, "Come on honey, I've got everything all ready for you at my house, just come on over! It will be great!"
 - iv) The man being tempted can visualize how the bed looked and smelled. The woman got the man's focus off of God and unto "things". The lesson is temptation comes when we get our focus off of God and unto the things at hand.
20. Verse 19: My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. ²⁰ He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon."
- a) In these verses, the woman admits she is married. In an indirect way, she admits she wants this man to commit adultery with her. She is using the excuse that her husband is gone on a long journey and it is "safe" to come over to her house.
 - b) The point of this whole exercise is for us to recognize the techniques used to entice us to sin. Yes, this is about adultery, but the applications can be for any type of temptation. Our minds and hearts should say, "Wait a minute, this is a sin. I can't do this as I'm accountable to God and this is just plain wrong!"
 - c) What we are to learn from this is that temptation comes when we get our focus off of God and onto "things". What is alluring to our senses is what can draw us to sin.
 - d) OK John, I get the fact all of this is wrong. I can't focus on God every moment. How do I practically deal with this? The answer is not to try to focus on God every moment. The idea is to learn right from wrong and recognize these moments when they come!
 - e) One of the reasons we are encouraged to study our bible is to constantly compare it to our lives. Even if adultery is not the issue of the moment, the bible has a way of applying its commands, points and stories to what we are dealing with at any given moment. While adultery is the illustration of the moment, wisdom applies to every aspect of our lives.

21. Verse 21: With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. ²² All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a snare ²³ till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.
- a) We are now at the tragic end of this story. Somehow, somehow, the guy who was enticed into this adulterous relationship was trapped. His sin is being described like an animal being caught in a trap. Like that animal, he didn't know he was being trapped.
 - b) My personal view is that this whole thing was a "set up". Her goal is to rob innocent men by enticing him into her house.
 - c) It is equally possible these verses are less literal. Solomon's point could be that the man who commits such adultery will eventually lose his reputation, his wealth, and eventually go to hell for a failure to obey God's commandments.
 - i) I should also state again that it is not one particular sin that sends a person to hell, but a lifelong denial of a desire to obey God and be accountable to Him. Yes, salvation is about accepting Jesus and that is a related issue. My point here is that behavior "counts" in the fact that if we believe Jesus is God, then we want to live a life pleasing to Him and that means to avoid sin.
22. Verse 24: Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. ²⁵ Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. ²⁶ Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. ²⁷ Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.
- a) Solomon ends this little tale with the warning of, "Don't let this happen to you!"
 - b) Do I believe this story was something literal that Solomon saw one time? Yes. Do I also believe this story is designed to teach us lessons? Of course. The point is not whether or not this story was a literal event. The point is throughout history, there have been many men enticed by the temptation of adultery and prostitution. That lifestyle eventually lead to the ruin of that's man's life.
 - c) Remember my title for this lesson is "Don't let this happen to you!" That is pretty much what Solomon is saying at the conclusion of this section. The main point of this story is to teach us the warning signs to watch out for: This includes appealing to our ego. This includes the fact the adulteress may be "religious" in other aspects. This includes the fact that they use material things as a form of temptation. The idea is to watch for these signs as to know when to avoid them.
23. Let me say a few words to any reader who is currently dealing with the issue of adultery.
- a) First of all, I assume you want this relationship to end. To be obedient to God is about pleasing Him in every aspect of our lives and turning away from sin. No particular sin is beyond the reach of God. The only unforgivable sin is the lifetime denial of Jesus as payment for our sins. The first step is to acknowledge to God that our sins are wrong.
 - b) As a practical step, I would then turn to some outside person for help. It may be a pastor, or it maybe a "godly" friend. Ask them to pray with you to help bring this to an end. Again, the hardest part is dealing with the embarrassment of having to face the spouse over the sin. As painful as that is, it is still less painful then living with the guilt.
 - c) If you have a friend going through us and they claim to be a Christian, Matthew 18:15-17 lays out a model of how to approach that person. If you know someone who has been tempted, offer to form a two (or more) person accountability group to deal with it.
24. Now let me talk to the "average reader" who is not dealing with the temptation of adultery.
- a) If you only see this chapter as dealing with adultery, you are missing the big picture. The same methodologies used to entice us to commit adultery can be used for any other sin. The appeal to our ego, the appeal of material things, etc. can draw us away from God's desire for our lives. That's the underlying message of this chapter.

- b) Now let's tie these principals about adultery to Chapter 6: We had verses on avoiding bad partnerships (i.e., cosigning on a loan). We had verses on not being lazy. We had verses on avoiding evil people. Finally, we have this big discussion on avoiding adultery. The point here is Proverbs is teaching us, through "negative examples" on how to live a life pleasing to God. Part of pleasing God is avoiding things that are not pleasing to Him in the first place.
 - c) Why do these things exist in the first place? Part of the answer is sin exists in this world. The other answer is, if we are to choose God out of our free will, then there must be "other choices" out there as to know we choose God out of our free will.
 - i) To put it another way, if there is no appealing alternative to choosing God, we would choose God because we don't have a choice. Part of "walking by faith" is learning to make the right decisions in life and daily decide about choosing God's way to live versus alternative ways that inevitably lead to sin.
25. With all of that said, this is a tough section to face head on. Even if we have never committed adultery, all people face temptation in some forms and we are all guilty of some sort of sin. A point is to never let that guilt block our relationship with God. That is why confession is so essential not only to our relationship with God, but to our own health.
- a) This section of the bible deals with issues to avoid. Most of us can look at parts of this section of Proverbs and say they've "been there" themselves or have been through the pain of dealing with someone who has been knee deep in one of these issues. Let's not kid ourselves. This is a painful section to read face as the sin itself is painful.
 - b) The good news is to comprehend how much God loves despite all of this. If God never loved us, He would have never taken the time and trouble to warn us about these sins! There are other sections of the bible that deal with remedies. This section focuses on recognizing the sin in the first place as to avoid it.
 - c) On that somber note, we can end the lesson.
26. Let's pray: Father, Help us in our times of temptation. Help us to study Your word as to develop the knowledge we need to make the right decisions in life. Lord, those moments do come when we face some sort of temptation. Give us the boldness, the wisdom and the strength to turn from such temptations and turn toward You. Further, when we are knee-deep in sin, help us to remember that we can always turn to You. Give us the strength and the wisdom to confess those sins and turn back to a life that is pleasing to You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.