

What You Get for Adultery



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One Friday night at the Olive Garden, Marie and I met another Christian couple for dinner. They were very good friends of ours for over 20 years. He had made a great impact in a church two hours from here. We placed our order. The couple looked at us with lamenting tears in their eyes and he said these words we never thought we'd hear, "I've had an affair. Everything blew apart last week." They cried a lot. We sat there in smoldering ashes hardly knowing what to say except, "We love you."

Our text in Proverbs today is about adultery and its devastating effects. Listen as I read Proverbs 6:20-35. You might be thinking, "Here we go again. More sex in the sermon." I remember when I first started in the ministry I was scared to death to talk about sex in sermons. I was timid. I was nervous. I used a lot of vague language hoping the people would get it. But over the years, I have seen the damage illicit sex does. I'm not so timid anymore.

Neither was Solomon. Avoiding sexual sins may be the single largest subject in the Proverbs. He comes to it again and again and often in extended passages. We're in a continuing study of Proverbs and here I am again.

Why is there so much material in Proverbs on avoiding sexual sin? I'll give you three good reasons. First,

sexual sin is so pervasive. It was back in Solomon's day. It's even more so today. Sexual sin is everywhere we turn. The Bible makes sexual purity a prominent theme so that we have a continual reminder to stay pure in a world overrun with impure sexual messages.

I want to ask a huge favor of you. Make an agreement with yourself not to entertain yourself on sexual sin. Much of secular music and most of the TV and movie industry is about unbiblical sexuality. I don't care how many Oscar's and awards that kind of stuff gets, it's not good for you. It's a virus that weakens your soul.

Second, sexual temptation is so compelling. It's not just that sexual situations are all around us, they are magnetic. Sexual temptation is an extremely powerful force—especially for men. Temptation keeps knocking. It doesn't let up. David asked the question in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The answer, "By keeping it according to Your word." God gave us lots of Scripture about the allurements of sexual temptation so that we would have a sufficient arsenal for victory over temptation.

Third, sexual sin is so destructive. Sexual sin is more destructive than most other sins. Even in this passage we are told that sexual sin is much more

destructive than stealing (verses 30-32). After 40 years of intensive Bible study, I think I know the four most destructive sins we can commit. In fourth place is lying. Third place is bitterness. Number two is sexual sin. And the number one most destructive sin is murder. Without the Bible telling us the true destructive nature of sexual sin, we would not know how damaging it is. The world presents consensual sex on a continuum from pleasurable to victimless with no harmful consequences. It's a lie.

The sexual sin before us in this passage is adultery. Adultery is the sexual infidelity of a married person. If a married person has sex with someone else who is married, it is adultery. If a married person has sex with a single person, it is adultery. The word we use today is "affair." I use that word but I don't like it. The word is too nice for what it is. By the way, the biblical word for singles having sex is fornication.

This passage tells us what we get for adultery. We get burned—badly. Look at verses 27-28. This pictures the damage that adultery does. Getting burned badly is inevitable and unavoidable. This heater has been on during the whole service. You can see the red. It's hot. I will give anyone over 21 \$500 if you will come up here right now and put your full writing hand on the heating element for 5 full minutes. Do I have any takers? It's just that ludicrous to break a marriage vow and have sex with someone you're not married to! One more time. Who wants to touch this? Someone can walk out of here with \$500.

Parents are supposed to understand how destructive adultery is. They are to teach their kids the positive aspects and the negative aspects of sex. In verse 20, the mother and father are to teach their children "the commandment" and "the law." Certainly this is a reference to

the commandments and laws of God about sexual purity.

I am firmly convinced children should get their primary sexual training from their parents. Parents need to teach their children what God says about sexuality. Yet this is more often the exception than the rule. Most kids learn about sexuality from their peers, the public school, and the entertainment industry. They're not going to learn the truth about the dangers of sexual sin from these sources.

Things really get muddy in homes when parents don't have a healthy marriage. If there are underlying sexual tensions between parents or if there is an affair going on, it will not translate well to the children. You can't teach Biblical sex and violate it at the same time.

What's more, parents need to set up a guard around their homes. If parents are permissive about sexual themes on TV, music, and movies, they in essence are saying, "The coals will not burn you." I am of the school of thought that in constructive ways, you block sexual themes and content from your home. I don't think any kid should have a TV or the Internet in their bedroom. I think you should block MTV and anything like that from entering your home. Friends, it is a damaging fire.

We need a grounding of Biblical sexuality that starts early in a child's life so that verses 21 and 22 happen. The child will have an operating biblical view of sexuality so that as he or she live their life and you as a parent aren't with them all the time, they have adopted the teaching of God's Word as their own. It's in their heart. It's around their neck (verse 21). So when they are getting a video or buying an album or going to a movie or getting on-line or romantically relating to another person, they will make good moral decisions (verse 22).

They will remember what their parents taught them.

Parents, do not shrink back from teaching Biblical sex to your children. And teens, don't turn a deaf ear to your parents. You need their coaching about Biblical sex more than ever.

Now today, I am going to act in the role of a spiritual father. I'm going to ask you to observe the teaching and the commandments of this passage. My hope is that all of you who call yourselves a Christ-follower will follow Him completely in the area of your sexuality. You cannot be a fully devoted follower of Christ and live in sexual compromise and sin. But beyond that, to involve yourself in sexual sin is to touch the heater. I don't want any of you to get burned.

From this text, there are four statements of truth that can spare you a burn. Get them in your head. Get them in your heart. These statements are not just for the younger generation. People at any age are vulnerable. Here's the first statement:

I am susceptible to an affair (verses 24-25)

The first mistake someone can make is to think that they are above adultery. Paul tells us plainly in I Corinthians 10:12 that if we think we stand above any sin to be careful, lest we fall. It's surprising who falls prey to an affair. Some pretty unlikely people. I have seen godly people fall. I have seen unattractive people fall. I have seen some close and beloved relatives fall.

If you are married, the last thing you were thinking about on your wedding day was the possibility of an affair. It may be the last thing you are thinking

right now. Most people don't intend to commit adultery. But it happens. And it happens a lot. These verses show us that adultery can happen when three things are true.

Adultery can happen when someone else has designs on you.

It is clear that the woman in these verses had unlawful intentions for someone. She was already married and had no right to flirt. She is called an evil woman (verse 24). It's not necessarily that she was wicked. Most people aren't drawn to wicked people. But she was pulling some-one in an evil direction. I will guarantee you. At some point in life, there is going to be another married person that will have some fantasies or intentions about you. Sometimes they make advances. You must keep your guard up.

Adultery can happen when someone else is attractive to you.

Smooth words and fluttering eyelids (verses 24-25) have power. It's not just that there is an explicit invitation to go to bed here. It is often more subtle. You have needs that aren't being met. You work with another person who begins to meet those needs. One shares a problem. The other one comforts with their words. They dress nice. They pay attention to you with their eyes. Anything attractive about a person you are not married to is potentially trouble. Little by little you can go down a road you should not travel.

Adultery can happen when you start to feel something for another person.

At this point, something has moved to the heart. You desire their beauty (verse 25). You desire to be with them. They make you feel good when you are in their presence. Thoughts about them begin to dominate you.

Let me tell you when an affair develops. A friendship develops from a special willingness to care for each other. That's dangerous. But that's not an

affair. It becomes an affair the moment a man and a woman express the special feelings they have to each other. That's the ignition point. Here's a word of advice. And I plead with you. Never, never under any circumstances tell another person you are not married to that you have feelings for them. That is fuel to the fire.

The text is clear here. In verse 24, the unlawful person is identified as literally, "a foreign woman." In verse 26, she is literally called "a man's wife." This is not just about females. This is equally true about a man. Any person you are not married to is a foreigner to you. Any person married to someone else is automatically off limits. You can never allow anyone but your spouse to get within range of you. You have to put safeguards around you. You have to be brutal with yourself. We are all vulnerable to an affair. We cannot play around with fire.

If things are happening at the level I have just talked about, you need to stop it right there. You haven't crossed a line. But you have hit a red light. Don't run it. Because if you do, the second statement comes into play.

I cannot escape damage if I have an affair (verses 26-29)

All adultery does damage. In fact, nothing is more dam-aging to human relationships than adultery. We do not get this idea of damage from our entertainment. And the idea of damage is not present when you are in the midst of an affair. But God wants us to be clear. Adultery will hurt you.

There is no way to come into direct contact with fire without being burned. There are no exceptions. The same is true with adultery. Those who commit adultery will get injured.

Verse 29 says whoever has sex with somebody else's spouse will not be innocent. They will be guilty and damaging consequences will come to them.

Isn't it interesting where adultery flourishes? It flourishes in secrecy. Ordinary people become masterful liars to cover up their sin. They think that no one will find out. They think that as long as it is in secret, nothing bad will come their way. It is a lie of the devil. The affair will be discovered. Damage will come. There will be pain—a lot of it. No one escapes without it.

For starters, verse 26 says that adultery will reduce you to a loaf of bread. It is a metaphor for poverty. Adultery will take the richness of life from a person. Adultery will ruin you. Sometimes it takes your wealth. Just ask people who lost bundles due to a divorce because of adultery. Adultery will rob you of your dignity, your purity, your trust, your integrity, and the richness of your relationships.

There is no way to commit adultery with impunity. You've got to think, "If I get involved with another person's spouse emotionally or physically, at some point I'm going to experience a lot of pain."

Does anyone want to guess who inflicts the damages? If you said, "God," you are wrong. Here's the third statement:

I will have only myself to blame for my pain (verses 30-33)

The text is clear in verse 32. The one who commits adultery destroys himself. It is a form of suicide. He cannot say, "The devil made me do it." He cannot blame his actions on his spouse. I must say this. Quite often, the spouse created deficiencies that led to the adultery. But whatever pain results from

adultery comes from a person's own actions.

In the thick of an affair, a person cannot see pain. Verse 32 says that the one who commits adultery is lacking sense. He has lost his rationality. Selfishness has clouded his ability to reason. And for the moment, it seems like the right thing to do. All they can think about is their own pleasure and happiness. They twist their theology and their values. They are so absorbed with euphoria that they cannot see any pain. They proceed and justify their behavior and think they will escape the consequences.

A person in an affair is crazy. You can't reason with them. They are in the process of burning themselves and they can-not see or feel it. They are in the process of self-ruination.

What kind of pain will come to the adulterer? There are many kinds of pain. Three are listed in verse 33. First, he will get wounds. The word is used of getting stripes from a beating with a whip. What kinds of wounds are we talking about?—wounds of the emotions—wounds of the spirit—sometimes physical wounds. There will be the pain of separation from the lover. There will be feelings of deep guilt once they come to their senses. There will be regrets.

Second, he will find disgrace. His reputation will be shattered. He will no longer be above reproach. People will feel great disappointment in him. His good name will suffer.

Third, he will never shake the reproach. There is a branding that goes along with sexual sin. A person may be forgiven. A person may do good things from that point forward. But always in the memory of those who know him or her will be the thought—he cheated. That

does not go away. Listen, sexual sins are worse than other sins. They do more damage. The damage lasts a lifetime.

Under the desk mat in my office is a sheet of paper I got from a Randy Alcorn book years ago. It's called "24 Consequences of a Moral Failure." Each one of them is scary and painful. I look at that sheet on a regular basis to remind myself that's what I'd do to myself if I ever got so foolish.

It would be bad enough if the adulterer was the only one who felt the pain. Pain is inflicted on many others as well. And those injuries do not heal quickly. That leads to the fourth statement:

I may not be able to repair broken relationships (verses 34-35)

Verses 34-35 are pretty strong. They speak about the jealousy and anger a betrayed spouse feels. When a spouse finds out their mate has been unfaithful, there is tremendous stress and upheaval in their lives. Adultery is no small thing to them. They are going to want a day of vengeance. That is, they are going to want answers and they are going to want justice. If you think a simple apology and some nice gifts will appease a betrayed spouse, you better think again.

When an affair comes to light, you have to deal with your own wounded spouse. I have a great, loving, and understanding wife. But Marie has already told me that if I ever cheat on her, she would kill me. And she told me the other woman wouldn't be around long either. Working through an affair is not easy.

Then there's the spouse of the other party. The same kinds of things hold

true for them—anger, jealousy, heartbreak. These are very difficult circumstances to work through. Very often they are not willing participants and then telling the children and seeing them go through their trauma and then the church. At every level, there are these kinds of raw emotions at work.

These two verses make it sound like reconciliation is impossible. I'm here to tell you that with God, there is mercy, grace, and forgiveness. And spouses can forgive and reconcile with their unfaithful partners and have a great relationship. Some even go deeper than before the affair. But it's never easy.

The point in verses 34 and 35 is not that there isn't any hope. The point is that others are deeply wounded by adultery. It will take a long while to work it through. There are no short cuts. There are no guarantees. Some couples won't weather it. And some good friendships may be irretrievably broken. Adultery absolutely jeopardizes marriage relationships.

Conclusion

The passage today is very clear on what a person gets for adultery. You get badly burned. I want you to remember the four powerful statements that can keep you from adultery. I want you to make them part of what you think about as you live life. I want you to repeat them with me.

- ÿ I am susceptible to an affair.
- ÿ I cannot escape damage if I have an affair.
- ÿ I will have only myself to blame for my pain.
- ÿ I may not be able to repair broken relationships.

Today I am talking mostly to Christians. So I want to add one more dimension to this before I close. From other Scriptures, we know that adultery is first a sin against God. When Joseph was being seduced by another man's wife in Egypt in Genesis 39, he said, "How can I do this great evil and sin against God (verse 9)?" When King David was confessing his adultery with Bathsheba in Psalm 51, he said, "Against You and You only have I sinned (verse 4)." When we commit adultery, we have not only cheated on our spouse, we have cheated first on God. We are His bride. And we have played the harlot against Him.

The New Testament puts this into imagery that the church seldom talks about. In I Corinthians 12:27, we are told that if we are Christians, we are Christ's body and individually members of it. I Corinthians 6:15 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with someone else in immorality?"

Brothers and sisters, do you know what Paul is saying? When we have sex with someone who is not our spouse, we are actually joining Jesus in some sense to an unlawful person. We are to join ourselves physically only with our spouse. We are never to join a member of Christ's body with another person through adultery. If you are a Christian, I never want you to forget the imagery of truth that if you have sex with someone who is not your spouse, you are joining a part of Christ's body to someone in an adulterous act. That's pretty serious. Our bodies are members of Christ and we must walk in purity before Him!

Friends, adultery is always wrong, senseless, destructive, and disgraceful. I don't want anyone in our church to get hurt. And I don't want to see innocent

parties get hurt. And I don't want to see God get hurt.

As we conclude, I'm going to ask the power of God sweep across us. I am asking you to respond to the Lord in some fashion. Perhaps it is an expression of praise because God has spared you the trauma of an affair. Perhaps it is an act of thanksgiving because God has forgiven you from sexual immorality. Perhaps it is an act of confession and repentance. Perhaps it is a resolve that you will not compromise yourself to sexual sin.

I don't know what the Spirit of God is asking you to do. But I believe that many of you need to express something in your heart along these lines to God. May God keep us all far from the burning heat of adultery.

Scripture References

- **Psalms 119:9**
- **Proverbs 6:20-35**
- **I Corinthians 6:15, 10:12, 12:27**

Notes: