

False Intimacy

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Date: 10 January 2021

Preacher: Martyn Thompson

[0 : 00] So our reading today is from Proverbs chapter 6, and we'll be reading from verse 20, chapter 8. So our reading today is from Proverbs chapter 6, chapter 8.

So the one who touches her will feel unpunished. People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry. But if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold. He will give all the goods of his house.

He who commits adultery lets sense. He who destroys himself. He who gets wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

For jealousy makes him imperious, and he will not spare what he takes for advantage. He will accept no compensation. He will refuse, though he will multiply the gifts.

Dear Lord, we ask for your help this morning as we come to your word. A passage which would be controversial in our society.

[1 : 49] But Lord, we want to hear what it has to say to us, and we need your spirit to help us understand it, and to be changed by it Lord. So that a meditation of my heart and my words will be pleasing in your sight.

Amen. Adultery, infidelity, cheating, unfaithfulness. It's everywhere in Proverbs. It just keeps coming up.

Proverbs is sex craze, it seems. But it also comes up in all of the Old Testament, doesn't it? Unfaithfulness. Abraham, Jacob, Samson, David, Solomon, and so many more were all unfaithful, and it caused a lot of problems.

And it's just as pervasive in our society, isn't it? On Netflix, I don't know if you found this, but it's so hard to find a show which isn't full of sex.

It might look good, and then you click on it and see the ratings, and it's MA15, full of sex. Our politicians, all sides, even conservatives, like Barnaby Joyce, Alan Touch, people who stood up for family values, have been embroiled in sex scams and cheated on their wives.

[3 : 10] Now, we can be self-righteous and complain about society, but what about in the church? Is it just as pervasive? Recently, the celebrity pastor of Hillsong, New York, Karl Lentz, was discovered to have had multiple affairs.

Apologist Ravi Zacharias, who passed away recently, has been found to have been sexually abusing some of his staff. Billy Graham, his grandson, Presbyterian pastor, Tullin Tavijin, resigned in 2015 due to having multiple, for having an affair.

A pastor who used to be one of my favourite creatures to listen to online. Aunt Azerdia was stood down in 2018 after it was revealed that he had had multiple affairs.

To bring it even closer to home, how pervasive is unfaithfulness among us here today? Hopefully, God willing, we aren't sleeping around, but there's a good chance a bunch of us here have recently watched porn, an inappropriate TV show or movie.

How many of us have read an illicit romance novel or look lustfully at another person while going about our day? Unfaithfulness is so pervasive in the world and in our lives.

[4 : 35] Everyone knows that it's wrong, but we all struggle with it in one way or another. We see the goodness of faithfulness, and yet we so often fall into unfaithfulness.

What is at the root of our unfaithfulness? How can we be faithful? Well, the passage today will show us that God's wisdom can protect us from adultery and unfaithfulness.

So far in Proverbs, the author's been laying out a choice between wisdom, reflecting God's character, or you can choose folly, living life your own way.

He wants the reader to choose wisdom, and he makes the choice really tangible by painting a picture between two women, Lady Wisdom and Madame Folly.

Lady Wisdom is easy to spot. We see her whenever wisdom is called sheep. And so we see her in chapters one, three, four, six, eight, and nine.

[5 : 40] And she's great. Lady Wisdom, she brings guidance, protection, and life. But where do we see Madame Folly? Well, she's named exclusively in chapter nine, but in chapters two, five, six, and seven.

She's represented by an adulterous woman. She brings pain, death, and destruction. What the author does is use adultery to be representative of all sin and folly.

David helpfully introduced us to this topic last week, this idea last week. This symbolism is something we see throughout the whole Old Testament. We see it in books like Hosea and Ezekiel, and even in the New Testament, adultery being representative of all sin.

And it's not minimizing adultery, making it go away, but it's probably utilized because all throughout the Old Testament, adultery often leads to and is connected to idolatry.

And Solomon, who wrote a bunch of the Proverbs, is a great example of that. How did idolatry come in? Through his adultery. Now, if we don't see this overarching layer to this part of the Proverbs, we can let ourselves off the hook.

[7 : 00] We can say, oh, I would never commit adultery. This proverb doesn't apply to me. But if we do that, we are being foolish and are failing to see that we so often are adulterous.

Commentator Gary Brady says, It is important to get into our minds the picture of God and ourselves as being in a marriage covenant with the other.

When we read of an adulteress, therefore, we should think of anyone or anything that would lure us from God and His Word. All adultery is wrong, whether it is physical adultery or adultery of a more spiritual nature.

End quote. Whenever we sin, we are being unfaithful to God. Sin is spiritual adultery. Sin is cheating on God.

So, as we look at this passage, we need to decide who will we be faithful to. Who will we only have eyes for? And who will we give the cold shoulder to sleep?

[8 : 04] Lady wisdom or madam folly? God or the items of our hearts? One will lead to blessing, the other to ruin. One will lead to life, the other will lead to death.

With that, let's get into the text. We start off by saying in verses 20 to 24, the call to be faithful to wisdom with our hearts because she is everything we need.

Where does faithfulness start? Is it just a change in behaviours? In verses 20 to 21, we see it takes place in our hearts. Look at verses 20 to 21. My son, keep your father's commandments and forsake not your mother's teaching.

Find them on your heart always. Tie them around your neck. Now, you might be thinking, where do those verses talk about wisdom? Well, the terms commandment and teaching get personified in verse 22.

They lead, watch and talk, or things a person does. Bruce Waltke translates the they in verses 22 as she. And the NASV translation does the same thing in his footnote.

[9 : 19] So we can read verses, verse 22 as, When you walk, she will lead you. When you lie down, she will watch over you. When you're awake, she will talk with you.

Now, this brings the personification to another level and makes it clear that once again, lady wisdom has appeared. The commandments for teaching is just another way to refer to wisdom. Now, how do we be faithful to wisdom with our hearts then? Well, verse 21, we're called to bind it on our heart always and tie it around our neck.

The biblical use of heart, it's not the same way we use it today to refer just to our emotions and feelings. That's how our society uses the idea of heart. In the Bible, our heart is our feelings, but it's also our thoughts, intellect and personality, which makes us who we are and drives everything that we do.

Binding it to our heart symbolises the act of constantly embracing wisdom closely with our thoughts, wills and feelings. Tying it to our neck symbolises it as being like a valuable necklace, which we keep as close as possible, so as to always be aware of it, not to lose it and take it wherever we go.

[10 : 39] Essentially, what this is saying is we need to constantly meditate on, soak on, think about and value God's wisdom so that it becomes part of who we are.

Tim Keller says, one way we do this is by asking these questions when we come to God's word. How would my life be different if I really believe this from the bottom of my heart?

How would this change my thinking, feelings, actions? How would it change my prayer life, my feelings and attitudes towards God?

Now, why would we want to be faithful to wisdom then? What does the author tell us? Well, look at verses 22 to 24.

When you walk, they, she, will lead you. When you lie down, she, they, will watch over you. When you're awake, she will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and a teaching a light and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.

[11 : 41] To preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. We see here, wisdom is everything we need. She's the complete package.

If you have her, you have comprehensive help for all of life. Charles Bridges says that she is a friend for all times and circumstances. A guide by day, a solace by night, a friend for my waking moments.

That sounds pretty good. And why can wisdom offer this? For she is a lamp and a light. Verse 23. She lets us see the way.

She shows us dangers which we might not have seen. She shows us things the way they really are. See, God created the world and us. God knows what is best for the world and us.

His wisdom shows us the best way to be and reflect his character in his world. Now, this won't always be pleasant. It involves reproofs of discipline.

[12 : 48] Corrective discipline. Review. I can get dressed in the dark. I can get dressed in the dark and think I look fly. But then when I turn the lights on, I realize I might have my shirt on inside out.

I have a stain on my pants or I've worn blue and green together. And so I have to change. If we have the light of wisdom, it's going to reveal things that are wrong with us that we couldn't see before.

It will reveal parts of our being which aren't reflecting God's character. But while discipline isn't always pleasant, it's for our best. It leads to life.

In verse 24, it protects us from falling gray to the evil one, to folly, to idolatry against God. If we are faithful to God's wisdom, if we only have eyes for her, seeing that she is everything we need, we will be protected from letting other things take over our hearts.

We won't look for false intimacy in other things and go down the destructive path which that leads to this one. So, we've been given the call to be faithful to wisdom, but how does folly and sin lure us in?

[14 : 08] What are the consequences of cheating, of adultery? The author warns us in verses 24 to 35 to not be unfaithful with folly, for we are in our hearts because punishment is severe, certain, and will cost everything.

Faithfulness is contrasted to unfaithfulness. When we see how bad being unfaithful is, we'll only want to be faithful to God and his wisdom even more.

When we see how much of a world of pain and drama that girl folly will bring, it will help us see how great of a catch lady wisdom is.

We see the call to not be unfaithful with wisdom in our hearts in verses 24 and 25. So, just like faithfulness takes place in our hearts, unfaithfulness, cheating takes place in our hearts.

Before anyone finds themselves in bed with another person, something has first happened in their hearts. This is exactly what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 where he said, You have heard it said, You shall not commit adultery.

[15 : 37] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

We've seen that the best defense is a good offense. That if we only have eyes for God and who infatuated with his wisdom in our hearts, we'll be protected from falling prey to folly.

But what the author gives you is an explanation of how adultery takes hold of someone in their hearts so that we can know what to look out for and be better equipped when it happens.

So, what are the ways the adulteress gets through to her heart? Well, first, she has a smooth tongue. Verse 24. Maybe she's good at making the cheating seem okay.

She's also beautiful. Verse 25. At least on the surface. And then she uses her appealing features, her eyelashes to capture us. It's like she puts on some eyeliner and curls her eyelashes and is fluttering her eyes at us, trying to lure us in.

[16:48] She uses the senses and the physical to try and lure us in. And this really just shows what lust is. Only wanting the beautiful body of someone, the self-satisfaction.

The person is irrelevant. It's what they can give us, which is important in lust. The exact opposite of love, which is seeking the good of the other over yourself.

Being self-giving instead of selfish. And so we have to be on the lookout and not let her seduction even get into our hearts because she's evil.

Now, we need to remember, as we talked about in the start, this adulterous is representative of folly and sin.

Therefore, just like we need to be able to look out for these things to not commit adultery, we need to be on the lookout for folly and sin because it captures us in the same way. In the garden of Eden, Satan used his smooth words to convince Eve that it was actually okay to eat the fruit.

[17:59] And when she looked at the fruit, it was a delight to the eyes. And so she and Adam gave him and they ate. They chose to cheat on God.

We need to be immersed in God's wisdom so that we can see when it's happening. So that we can see the signs and not let it get into our hearts.

What are the lies about sin you're being told? What's luring you in? What are you thinking about a lot? What are you valuing and can't live without?

See what it's trying to do. For the rest of the chapter, there are no commands.

It's just warnings. And the first we see that we shouldn't cheat with folly because punishment is severe and certain. Look at verses 26 to 29.

[19:00] For the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.

Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burnt? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife.

None who touches her will go unpunished. Versus 26 is apparently hard to translate and you can see an alternative footnote in the ESV.

But it's essentially saying sleeping with a prostitute is cheap, but adultery with a married woman will cost you your life. It's definitely not saying sleeping with a prostitute is okay.

But it is saying that sleeping with a married woman is even worse. It's like being a deer and just coming up and laying down in front of the determined hunter who has been stalking your precious life.

[20:07] He then builds on this idea by comparing adultery with playing with fire to show how certain the punishment is in verses 28 and 29.

He uses rhetorical questions to which the answer is so obvious. Kids don't do so well with rhetorical questions. You see that sometimes in the kids talk.

If I was to read verses 28 and 29 out to my ESICs class last year, they wouldn't be able to help but call out, No!

You can't do that. There'd be some smart aleck boy who'd come up with a reason why you can hold fire and stuff. But they would say, most of them would say, no, you just can't do that. If you carry and walk on fire, you are going to get burnt.

And verse 29, it's the exact same for the person who has sex with someone who is married. None who touches them will go unpunished. It is severe.

[21:12] It's inevitable. It's playing with fire. And finally, verses 30 to 35, we see being unfaithful with folly will cost everything. Look at verses 30 to 35.

People do not despise a thief that he steals to satisfy his appetite when he's hungry. But if he is caught, he'll pay sevenfold.

He'll give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery lacks sense. He who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor.

And his disgrace will not be wiped away. For jealousy makes a man furious. And he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation. He will refuse, though you multiply gifts. He starts off with an argument from lesser to greater. Look at a thief. People understand that he steals because he's poor and hungry.

[22:13] But verse 31, even if he's poor, he'll still need to pay back sevenfold. It will cost him almost everything. But verse 32, unlike the thief, the adulterer doesn't have any good reason to commit adultery.

And if his crime is even worse than stealing, the punishment will cost him everything. He is destroying himself, which the KJB translates as, he destroyeth his own soul. His punishment is spiritual. Verse 35, his punishment will be physical as he gets wounded. It's also social.

He has this dishonor and disgrace that can't be wiped away. Even today in our society, adultery still has this social cost. Family and friends will often shun someone who cheats.

Recently, Newcastle Knights player Mitchell Pears had his wedding called off because he was sending flirtatious texts to a woman who works for the Knights also.

[23 : 21] Now, it turns out a lot of the players are friends with the partner of that woman who Pierce was texting. So, he's dishonored himself, stood down as captain, and it looks like he's lost the respect of a lot of his fellow players.

And won't be able to get it back. The punishment is social. In verse 34 and 35, we see the main person who will be making sure the adulterer loses everything is the husband of the adulteress. His jealousy has made him furious. He won't be merciful to the person who touched his wife. He's going to get revenge and can't be paid off.

The thief can do that, but not the adulterer. The penalty for adultery is death. Leviticus 20.10 says, If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Now, to be clear, this is a judicial law for the nation of Israel, which went away with the new covenant. But for the original reader, for the children listening to this, this was very real and serious.

[24 : 38] The punishment is severe. It is certain and it will cost everything. It will be spiritual, physical and social and eventually it will take our lives.

Brothers and sisters, it's the same for all sin and folly. We think it won't have any consequences, but it always does. I said before, God created this world and knows what is best.

And so when we don't reflect his character in his world the way he intended it, it has consequences. It's going against the instruction manual. It's pouring a coffee over your laptop.

It's just not the way it's supposed to be used. And so it's going to cause problems. Sin's punishment is spiritual, physical, social, and eventually it will cost us our lives.

For the wages of sin is death. Who will ensure the punishment? The one we ultimately sinned against. All throughout the Old Testament, God refers to himself as a husband.

[25 : 41] And his people are his wife. We've cheated on him and played the whore. He says, don't worship idols because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

The punishment for sin will cost us everything. And it will be dealt out by God, the one sin against. So we see how being unfaithful in our hearts is and its terrible cost.

And we see how good being faithful to God in our hearts is. But if we're honest with ourselves, we so often have chosen sin and folly over God and his wisdom.

We don't give sin this cold shoulder. Instead, we desire in our hearts. We let it capture us. Even though we know it's evil, it will cause us so much trouble.

We've had to face the consequences here and now of our sin, of our folly, of our adultery. We've caused pain to ourselves and the ones we love.

[26 : 47] Our hearts lust after anything we can think that will give us meaning, value, significance and security.

And so we can say that we deserve God's punishment for being unfaithful to him, for cheating on him. What are we to do?

We need new hearts. We need forgiveness for our adultery. We find ourselves in a situation like King David. He was a man who was after God's own heart. And then we see even he commits adultery.

The best guy in all of the Old Testament commits adultery. While his army was off fighting, his wars, David slept with one of his soldiers' wife, Blastriva.

He impregnated her and covered it up by getting her husband, Uriah, killed in battle. Eventually, God confronts David through his prophet Nathan.

[27 : 46] And David is devastated. He has been devastated. All he can do is pray. And we see what he prays to God in Psalm 51. In his prayer, he confesses his sin and acknowledges that ultimately he was sinning against God.

He knows he deserves punishment, but he asks God essentially for two things. One, he asks God to forgive his sins. And two, he asks God to create in him a clean heart.

To fix him from the inside out. David would have struggled with a tension that goes right throughout the Old Testament. He knew that God was just and holy and did not let sin go unpunished.

But he also knew God was loving and merciful and could forgive and renew him. He'd be thinking, I know I don't deserve it and I don't completely understand it, but I fall upon the mercy of God.

How can God forgive us yet satisfy his justice? How can we be given a new heart which can actually be faithful to God? God told the answers that kids didn't.

[28 : 58] We find the answer to these questions in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the son who was faithful to wisdom with his heart.

In Luke 2, 52, we read that Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature and favour with God in them. We saw a few weeks ago when Dave preached and we saw that when Satan tempted him with everything, the whole world, he did not give in and cheat but stayed faithful to God.

He lived the life we should have lived. Jesus was also the faithful husband. When we were faithless, he remained faithful. We cheated on God and he had every right to punish us, but instead Jesus took our wounds.

He took our dishonour. He took our death. We cannot pay the cost of sin, judgment and death, but Jesus paid that on behalf of his bride, the church.

As it says in Ephesians 5, 25, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Jesus died the death we should have died and he lived the life we should have lived so that we can be made right with God even though we were and are unfaithful to him.

[30 : 19] Brothers and sisters, God calls us today to come to Jesus. Who as it says in 1 Corinthians 1, 30, is wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, redemption.

All the promises in Proverbs find their yes in Jesus, their fulfilment in Jesus. He gives them to us. Everything we need is in him.

If you have not trusted in him, he can make you a son of God. His spirit can give you a new heart. He can forgive you of your sin.

And so trust in him. Have faith in him. If you have trusted in Christ, you have been given new hearts and now his spirit helps you to be faithful with your heart.

Remember that in here we have everything we need to live our life. He is the light of the world. He is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is the one who leads us through life.

[31 : 20] He watches over us. He teaches us and empowers us to reflect God's character. As we constantly meditate on, love and trust him, we will be protected from the idols of the world.

And when we're faithless, he lovingly disciplines us, brings us back to himself, assures us of his love and continues to change us slowly, day by day, into his image.

Be faithful to trust in Christ, the wisdom of God with your heart, because he is everything we need. Let's pray.

Dear Lord, we thank you for your son, Jesus. We've been unwise. We've been adulterous. We've cheated on you, but through him we can have wisdom.

We can be forgiven. We can be faithful to you. Keep changing our hearts, Lord, so that we can be faithful to you this week. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[32 : 24] Amen.