

Woman Folly (Evening Service)

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we pray tonight that your word would help us to love you more and to turn away from folly and follow after wisdom in your son Jesus.

Amen. Hi everyone. How you doing? Well, we're looking at Proverbs chapter 7 tonight.

You just heard it read on page 531. It's going to be helpful to have that open in front of you. A few years ago, there was a television commercial for Nissan.

And I still remember this commercial vividly because it had a man driving at night through a winding forest road and the windows were rolled down. And as he drove, Van Morrison's song Moon Dance was playing on his Bose stereo.

And I love that song. So from the moment that I saw that ad for the first time, I fell in love with that car. And maybe it had something to do with having very young children and I just imagined myself driving away.

[1 : 12] I didn't even have that written down. I just came up with that. Just this. I love that car. And you know what? That ad, it didn't tell me anything about the fuel economy. It didn't tell me if it had what the safety rating was.

It didn't tell me the price even. But it made me wish that I had one. And it was totally irrational. And 10 years later, here I am talking about it still.

The thing is, the advertising business, it knows something that we very easily forget. They know that we're lovers. That even before we're thinkers or doers, we're lovers.

We're created to love and be loved. And good advertising, it targets your heart, right? Your desires and your longings. And we forget this about ourselves.

But Proverbs, it doesn't. And so we're three weeks into a series in Proverbs, and we're discovering that God's wisdom is actually a gift for us. It's the only path for true human flourishing.

[2 : 12] Following Jesus is a relationship of trust and vulnerability and surrender. It's just like the true love between a man and a woman. Do you remember last week these words from Proverbs 4?

Get wisdom. Get insight. Don't forget. Don't turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you. Love her, and she will guard you. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you.

She will honor you if you embrace her. This is romantic language. And the instruction of the father to the child is, go after wisdom. Woo her.

Fall in love with her. Because that's the beginning of trusting the Lord with all your heart. And that's the path to the good life of peace and shalom and blessing.

But most importantly, it's the best protection against the false loves that are competing for your heart. Proverbs is very practical. It's dangerously practical.

[3 : 09] It warns us that the foolish road is rarely a rational choice. It sweeps us up with the same, the foolish path, it sweeps us up with the same kind of seductive and alluring promises that the advertising agencies are so good at.

And so Proverbs gives us a picture for this foolish way. Her name in chapter 9 is given as woman folly. And here in chapter 7, verse 5, you hear her called the forbidden woman, the adulteress.

And this chapter is actually the fourth and climactic section in Proverbs where the father has been teaching and warning about this woman folly. Chapter 2, chapter 5, chapter 6, and now chapter 7. And if you're wondering why it's always a father to a son, it's important to know that the son is also including daughters.

It's gender inclusive. It's the wisdom of a father and a mother to their sons and daughters. And secondly, if you're wondering why folly and wisdom are female, it's a personification of a feminine noun.

[4 : 19] So it's very simple, really. It's just that the word folly and the word wisdom are in the feminine, so they're personified as women. And chapter 5 says that this woman folly, her lips, they drip with honey.

And her speech is smoother than oil. But in the end, she's as bitter as wormwood. And she's as sharp as a two-edged sword. So this woman is trouble.

And the loving father, he wants to warn his child about the dangers of following after her. So what's the best way to do that? If you were some of your parents, what's the best way?

Are you going to just sit down your child and tell them what to do or not to do? No, you're going to tell them a good story. And that's exactly what we have here in chapter 7. We have the chapter is bookended by two short instructions.

You see it there, keep my words, treasure my commandments. And at the end, the same kind of thing. But in between, from verse 6 to 23, is a long and colorful story. He paints this picture of the seduction of woman folly.

[5 : 24] So tonight, we're going to look at this chapter under two very simple headings. First, the seduction of woman folly. And second, love wisdom. So let's start with the seduction of woman folly.

And if you look at verse 6 to 9 with me right now, you see that we're introduced to a man. There he is at the bottom of the page. He's called a youth, a young man lacking sense.

A simpleton is another translation. Now, hands up if you think you're a simpleton. Oh, good. We have a few honest folks out there. Not many of us though, right? Proverbs says there's nothing wrong with being a simpleton.

There's nothing wrong with being young. As long as you're eager to grow and become wise. None of us start out wise, of course. And age does not equal wisdom.

But unless we choose the fear of the Lord as the beginning of knowledge, well, we're going to open ourselves up to what this simpleton is about to experience in this story. He meets the forbidden woman in verse 10.

[6 : 24] Turn over the page. Behold, the woman meets him dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. And so what I want to do is slow down here and go blow by blow into looking at how she operates.

How does the seduction of folly operate? Number one, she's aggressive. Verse 11. She is loud and wayward, which means impossible to ignore.

And you know how the commercials are always louder than the TV shows? Just kind of like that.

And in verse 13, you see that she seizes him and kisses him. Bold and forward.

It's like one of those fresh mint gum commercials, right? Where the two just meet in the elevator and inexplicably, next thing you know, they're kissing. And second, she's cunning.

Look at verse 10. She's dressed like a prostitute, wily of heart. She's dressed to get the young man's attention. But this phrase, wily of heart, what does that mean?

[7 : 23] Well, this is an important contrast. Because outwardly, her dress is giving everything away. But inwardly, in her heart, she is locked up. She's secret.

It's closed. Because she's cunning. She's a predator. And she's preying on this young man's longing for deep intimacy. She's promising everything with her outward appearance.

But she'll never deliver true satisfaction. Because her heart is not available to him. Third, she flatters. Look at verse 15. And she says to him, I've come out to meet you, you big hunk of a man. You're the one I want. And she, fourthly, appeals to the senses. Do you notice how all five senses are here in this story? First of all, she's dressed like a prostitute.

There's your eyes. She's loud and wayward. That's how you hear her. Verse 16, she says, I have a waterbed with silk sheets. There's touching. Verse 17, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh and aloes and cinnamon.

[8 : 25] There's smelling. And finally, she seizes them and she kisses them. There's tasting. All five senses are there. She's sensual. Fifthly, she lies.

She's a deceiver. Verse 18, look with me. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love. Well, you know, in our culture, we call sex making love.

But it has nothing to do with real love. Woman folly, she promises love, but her heart, like I said, it's not available.

She's lying. What she's done is she's twisting a good gift from God. She's taking the word love and she's twisting it into a perverted and distorted meaning. And sixthly, she offers reassurances.

Look at verse 14. She says this kind of strange phrase. I had to offer sacrifices. Today, I had to pay my vows. She's been to the temple. Basically, in our context, she's saying, I just went to church on Christmas.

[9 : 25] It's a special occasion today. Hey, I have a roast turkey in the oven. Come back to my place. That's kind of what she's saying. And verse 19 and 20, she says, we won't get caught.

You don't have to worry. My husband's out of town on a business trip for at least another two weeks. So finally, in verse 22 and 23, the young man surrenders.

But he doesn't really stand a chance, does he? So that's a blow by blow of how the seduction of woman folly works. But the next question is, what is at stake here?

What's at stake? Look at verse 26 and 27. For many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng.

Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death. Ouch. You know, our culture would say, what's a little harmless fun for a young man, right? But I want you to picture this.

[10 : 26] It's like he thinks he's going home with a hot young movie star. And then he finds himself in bed with Shelob, the spider from Lord of the Rings.

Okay? It's a house of corpses and bones. You know, the lights come on, and it's scary stuff. Folly is a predator, and she's caught her prey in her web.

Now, right now, we need to stop, and I need to say that if you find yourself, at this time in your life, losing the battle with sexual temptation, if you're involved in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, if you're addicted to pornography, if you have anything like this going on in your life, I mean, don't kid yourself.

It's a deadly path. It's a dangerous path that you're on. And there's dangerous, deadly consequences. And this road, it will never fulfill the longings of your heart. But, you know, you're not alone.

Because we live in such a promiscuous and hyper-sexualized culture. And we need to help one another out in fleeing from temptation. I mean, there's two things, really, that are key. Number one is honesty, and number two is accountability.

[11 : 41] And this goes for all of us, whether we're currently struggling with this or not. Honesty and accountability. So the question is, who is a Christian friend that you can trust? We have men and women leaders at this church who would be happy to speak with you about this confidentially, to pray with you, for you to receive accountability from someone.

And I would encourage you to reach out. Because none of us are immune to these struggles. On the other hand, there are some of you who are sitting out there and are thinking, well, this doesn't really relate to me tonight.

This seems like helpful advice for some people, but it's not my issue. And here's the thing. There's a twist. Proverbs 7 is not really about sex.

It's not, at least, it's not just about sex. Remember I said that woman folly is a personification, which means that she's a representation or just a picture of the foolish path.

She demonstrates the way in which sin works to trick and deceive us into turning away from wisdom. And this is important. Listen. Proverbs 7 is relevant for all of us because in the same way that lust can lead us to turn away from real love and go after physical urges, the same principle works out in all the other areas of your life.

[13 : 04] Let me give you one example. We're all consumers, right? We buy stuff. Most of us go to the shopping mall. Well, seems innocent enough.

A little shopping. But woman folly operates in the very same way at the shopping mall as she does in this father's story. She uses all five senses. You see the beautiful mannequins dressed up nice. You smell the food court. You touch the soft fabrics. You hear the flattering words of the salespeople. The mall flatters you. It's a special occasion.

The mall says it's Black Friday. It's Boxing Day. It's a Tuesday lunch hour shoe sale. Right? Buy, buy, buy. You're worth it. You're worth it. She makes promises she can't keep.

You'll look better. You'll feel better. You'll be more lovable. You'll be more popular when you have these new things. And the mall promises that the same rush that you get when you try it on in the change room, that when you get home, you're going to have that same feeling forever.

[14 : 07] But it doesn't last, does it? You get home, the feeling fades, and you get your credit card bill. And reality hits home. But that's just one example. And it hardly seems like life and death, right?

But shopping is not as harmless as you think. Being a consumer is not as harmless as you think. Because what's not harmless here is the direction of your love.

When our hearts begin to be pulled away from Jesus and the deep affection that we ought to have for Him and towards anything else, we're just as doomed as that young simpleton who's hypnotized by woman folly.

So my question for you tonight is, what do you love most? What do you love most? If you're a Christian, you know what the answer should be.

You know what the right answer to say is right now in your mind. But it's your actions and your choices that truly demonstrate what it is you love. I mean, researchers claim that we make something like 35,000 decisions a day.

[15:20] Did you know that? And most of them are so mundane, right? Which shirt am I going to wear in the morning? You know, which am I going to brush my teeth or not? Well, probably you should.

But biblical wisdom is making decisions, big and small, being in touch with reality from God's point of view.

Because God has revealed in His Word the path for the good life. And the question is, can you trust the Lord's path with all your heart? And woman folly, she says, no, you can't.

You can't trust her. And her smooth tongue, it's the very same voice that Adam and Eve heard in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Because there Satan came and he said this, Did God really say, you shall not eat of any tree in this garden?

Well, that's not actually what God said at all. I mean, he said, he invited Adam and Eve to eat of every tree except for one. But now the serpent has introduced this little seed of doubt.

[16:35] And he continues this way. He says to her, you won't die. For God knows that when you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

And Satan says, God's holding back something good from you. You can't trust him at his word. There's a better reality out there. And his rules are preventing you from real fulfillment.

And maybe you know what happens next. But did you ever look closely at the exact words? So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. You see, wisdom is at the very heart of the universe. The tree was desired to make one wise.

It's literally to give one insight. We long for the good life. We all do. But when we turn away from God's best way to live, we don't find freedom there.

[17:41] I mean, we only find broken relationships and shame just like Adam and Eve did in the garden. Well, we've spent a long time on this first point.

So, let me just summarize. Folly is after your heart. She masks her deadly intentions behind sweet promises.

She promises to fulfill all your desires. But she can't deliver on that promise. Instead, she plants this seed of doubt about the trustworthiness of God's wisdom.

And this leads us to turn away onto this path, which ultimately only leads to death, spiritual and physical. It's heavy stuff.

But our next question is, what protection do we have against this kind of seduction? What advice could this father have for his son? What hope do you and I have of ever doing any better than Adam and Eve did in the garden?

[18:39] So, second, love wisdom. Love wisdom. Because if woman folly is after your heart, it's not going to be enough to just learn more stuff about God.

Or to just practice the five principles of temptation-free living. The father's advice, therefore, is relationship advice. Look with me at verse 2. Turn the page back.

Verse 2. He says, keep my commandments and live. Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. This is an idiom. It just basically means it's the pupil is the apple of your eye.

It's the source of sight. It means treat wisdom as the most precious possession you have. Keep your eye on the prize, son. And then in verse 3, he says this.

Bind them on your fingers. Yeah, on your fingers here. That's kind of weird. But I think it means memorize God's word. I mean, like write it on your hands like it's a cheat sheet.

[19 : 43] In case you forget. And then he continues in verse 3. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Let God's word etch itself onto your heart. Which is, your heart is the center of all your decision-making.

Of your will. And it's also the center of your affections and your attitudes. So it's like he's saying, get a neck tattoo so everyone can see what you really believe. Let it be known to everyone.

And in verse 4, he says this. Son, say to wisdom, you are my sister and call insight your intimate friend. Well, this one loses something in translation.

Because apparently, saying you are my sister is saying, wisdom, you're my wife. Sister, wife, I don't exactly get it.

But the point is that he says, say to wisdom, you're my most intimate possible, it's the most intimate possible relationship. Say to wisdom, in other words, I love you.

[20 : 43] Fall in love with wisdom. Because then when woman folly comes knocking on your door, you won't be available. That's the father's advice. But there's one problem.

Because if you were here two weeks ago, when we were in Proverbs 20, we learned that the heart is powerfully self-deceptive. And so, we don't always actually love the things that we claim we love. And that's why it's so important as we read Proverbs, that we read it through the good news that we have in Jesus Christ, and what he's done for us.

Because my willpower is never going to be enough to overcome temptation. My good habits aren't going to be enough. And trusting the Lord with all my heart is impossible on my own. But, do you know that when Jesus began his earthly ministry, the first thing he did after he was baptized, do you know what it was?

Where did he go? He went out into the desert. And do you know who met him there? Satan. The very same one who was in the garden. And he tempted Jesus in the same way that he tempted Adam and Eve.

[21 : 55] He said to God's son, Can you really trust your father to provide for you? Why don't you just turn these stones into bread? And then you won't ever be hungry again.

But Jesus rebuked the serpent using God's word. He said this, Men and women should not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. And so, twice more Satan tempted Jesus.

And he resolutely trusted his father with all his heart. And then he finally dismissed Satan with these words. He said, Be gone, Satan, for it's written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.

Where Adam and Eve had distrusted God's wisdom, and they turned away onto the path of folly, Jesus alone kept the Father's commands, and loved wisdom as an intimate friend.

And when Jesus Christ gave himself on the cross in order to crush the serpent's head, and rescue us from the way of folly, he opened the way for God's wisdom to be written on the tablet of our heart so that we could follow the way of wisdom.

[23 : 07] He did this by the power of the Holy Spirit. And Paul declares in the book of Colossians chapter 3, he says this to us, In other words, through our new life in Christ, we're given everything new.

We're given a new mind, new heart, new attitudes, new decision-making abilities, new affections. It's all transformed and conformed to Christ. And Paul continues.

He says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Friends, loving wisdom is really loving Jesus.

And if we don't cling to him and the power of his cross, we don't have a hope of resisting the false advertising of folly. But Jesus' victory has secured a new life for us.

[24 : 30] You are loved by Jesus. You are loved by your heavenly Father. And through Christ, therefore, we can say to Jesus our wisdom, I love you.

I long for you. I cling to you. I trust you. I want to know you more and follow you. And I never want to stray from your path. Amen.

Amen.