

Learn to avoid immorality

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[0 : 01] Well, good morning, everybody. We're going to read together from John chapter 8 and verses 1 to 11.

John chapter 8, verses 1 to 11. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts where all the people gathered round him. And he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery.

They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman.

Now what do you say? They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus went down and started to write on the ground with his finger.

[1 : 06] When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

Again he stood down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away, one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? No one, sir, she said. Then neither do I condemn you.

Jesus declared, Go now and leave your life of sin. Amen. And the Lord will bless to us the reading of his word. Amen. So tonight, today's, not tonight, we're not there yet.

Today's sermon is on learning to avoid immorality. Today, we're thinking about the Proverbs. And I read John 8 deliberately at the start, because what I will say today will probably leave most of us feeling very guilty and in need of forgiveness.

[2 : 27] But you must always remember the words of Jesus. Neither do I condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin. There is always forgiveness where there is also repentance.

So the book of Proverbs, today we're going to look at chapter 5 through 7, which is all about the advice, remember, that the very wise father is giving to his son as he contemplates going out into the world and living his life of independence, getting a job, settling down, getting married, having a family, having children.

As he chooses his friends, as he engages in business practice, as he deals with his neighbors, as he faces up to the trials and difficulties of life and the temptations of life, his father is going to give him some very wise advice, learned in his father's case, his father being Solomon, learned painfully over a long period of time and a long series of mistakes.

We noted that Solomon loved many foreign women and he had thousands of wives and concubines. So he knew about women, I would hesitate to say, although I'm sure some of you ladies are thinking, no one knows about women, not really, not any man anywhere.

Yeah. So he's given his son guidelines about how to make wise decisions when it comes to his relationship with women.

[4 : 13] And that's what we're going to be thinking about this morning, particularly around the idea of sexual immorality. Douglas MacArthur was general of the Allied Forces in Australia during the war in 1944.

And as he was awaiting the next stage in his leadership of the Allied Forces, he wrote home to his son, Arthur. And he wrote what is now a very famous, well, piece of advice, probably isn't a poem, but a piece of advice, which acts as a prayer.

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid. One who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds, a son who will know thee, and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm.

[5 : 39] Here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men, one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the weakness of true strength. Then I will, his father, dare to whisper, I have not lived in vain. Build me a son. And that is the prayer of this wise man, Solomon, to build me a son.

Help me to build and develop his character by giving him godly advice that will keep him from the snares of evil in this very dark and evil world.

Proverbs chapters 5 through 7 contain this stark warning against the seduction of sexual temptation and the dangers that come with sexual immorality and the consequences of yielding to sexual temptation.

[7 : 01] And you need to remember, of course, what I said a couple of weeks ago that the interesting thing about the Hebrew language is that wisdom is in the feminine.

And as I said to you last, two weeks ago, you ladies all knew that. Really, the wise ones are the women. So, the word itself is in the feminine.

But equally interesting in Proverbs is that the danger comes from the female. And to the two things, kind of seem to mutually contradict one another.

But the explanation is quite simple. The danger comes from the female because the man, Solomon, is writing to the son. If he was writing to his daughter, the problem would come from the male.

So, we're not excusing the males at all. And, of course, the son going out into the world and having all of that freedom that that brings, which in Solomon's day and in Solomon's culture was not afforded to females.

[8 : 13] That was why he has this kind of predominant role in the narrative. The kind of temptations and challenges that people will face in Solomon's day invariably affected the male much more than the female, who would come by much more parental protection and guardian socially than the male would.

So, it's worth remembering that if this passage appears harsh to the ladies. Remember, too, that for Solomon, there are two paths in life.

There is the path of the godly and the righteous or the path of the ungodly and unrighteous. The path of the righteous and the godly will lead to life. The path of the ungodly and the unrighteous will lead to death and ultimate destruction.

Although Proverbs isn't particularly concerned about the afterlife, it doesn't talk very much about heaven or anything like that. It just kind of says, if you're going to get through this life, you're going to need to apply wisdom every day.

And you're going to need to trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding because in all your ways, if you acknowledge him, he will what? Direct your paths.

[9 : 30] And it will be health for your body and healing for your bones. It's all about this life. If we're wise, we follow the maker's instructions.

For he made us and he knows what is best for us and he knows what is also very dangerous for us. So this is the kind of background to what we're looking at today.

And then we need to say a word about what sexual immorality is. Sexual immorality, and we used to use the word deviance, suggests that you have gone against the rule and gone in the wrong direction.

That's what deviance means. It doesn't have to refer to anything like really outlandish that you wouldn't want to talk about. It simply refers to going in a direction sexually that is not intended as best for you by Almighty God, your creator.

When God created Adam and Eve, he created them to be one flesh. And the very interesting thing about the early chapters of the Bible is that one flesh was almost a simultaneous occurrence, marriage rather, was almost a simultaneously occurrence with a man going into his wife and laying

with her.

[10:46] In the act of sexual union, there was the act of one-fleshing. And it was the equivalent of marriage. Now, life is complicated because the state can mandate and does mandate marriage.

And when the state mandates marriage, the state can make its laws and its rules. Some of them we as Christians can follow and some of them we can't because they go against the creator's best for human beings.

Marriage is, in the Bible, the union of one man and one woman for life till death do us part.

That doesn't mean to say people don't get divorced. Of course they do, and sometimes without any choice in the matter, sometimes legitimately. But it is not God's best for people to get divorced.

It is always a tragedy when that happens. And Jesus always mandates forgiveness. He said, well, you heard it say that you can get a divorce and you can give a certificate of divorce and send her away.

[11:55] That's the way the Jews got to. Marriage became a contract. All I need is a certificate to say that she's displeased me in some way. And in Jewish society, you could displease your husband in some people's eyes by burning their breakfast.

Now, the stricter rabbis, well, sorry, I'm not kind of advocating here. If you burned the breakfast this morning, ladies, don't worry. The stricter rabbis said you can only get a divorce if there's adultery. And people wanted to know where Jesus stood. Jesus was very strict on the matter. This was not so in the beginning. Okay, he says, there is a permission for divorce except for marital adultery, unfaithfulness, he says.

But this was not so in the beginning. It was not God's intention. Sadly, of course, in society, we have strayed far from God's intention. God's intention was the union of one man and one woman for life.

And any deviance from that is sexual immorality. Now, there's not a hierarchy of sexual sin. You know, it's very easy for us to pick on the particular types of sex that we disapprove of.

[13:10] But sexual sin is any sexual action, including Jesus makes it very hard. Our Bibles, our life group study have been doing this last Tuesday.

Jesus gets it very hard at the matter. He makes it very hard because he says, even if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have committed adultery against her. That's why I say we might all feel guilty today.

If we have ever lusted, and it's not just men, of course, women can do the same. If we have ever lusted and desired that which is not lawfully ours, to use the language of John the Baptist when he said to Herod, it is not lawful for you to have her.

If we have desired a woman other than our husband, other than, wow, could easily get this wrong, other than our wives, or desired a man other than our husband, we have committed the sin of adultery.

God have mercy on me, a sinner. Yeah? So, I hope you understand this will be hard for some of you to hear, but none of us can sit smugly, unless we've been made eunuchs for the kingdom of God.

[14:23] None of us can sit smugly and say, I am free of this sin. We all are in the place of the woman, and we could easily throw stones at one another and ourselves, but that's not my intention.

So, that must be said, first of all, any kind of sexual immorality, the Greek word is, guess what the Greek word is? Pornia. Pornia. Pornography. The graphic depiction of sexual activity.

Pornography is not like, you know, a nude statue in an art gallery or a nude picture on a wall. It is the sexual, it is the explicit sexual revelation of a sexual act that is designed to create lust in the person looking at it.

So, we can easily get into things that we ought not to, and maybe the Holy Spirit will put his finger on something in our lives that we need to stop. But who can keep his heart pure when it comes to things like this?

Thank God that Jesus says, neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. Okay, let's have a look at the advice. Next slide. The first thing I want to look at in Proverbs chapter 5, verses 1 to 14, is what I've described as perceiving the pitfalls of immorality.

[15:56] Chapter 5, verses 1 to 14. Let's have a read of it together. My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion, and your lips may preserve knowledge.

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil. But in the end, she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death.

Her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life. Her paths are crooked, but she knows it not. Now then, my son, listen to me.

Do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her. Do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others, and your years to one who is cruel.

Lest strangers feast on your wealth, and your toil enrich another man's house. At the end of your life, you will groan. When your flesh and your body are spent, you will say, how I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction.

[17:00] I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly. And then note his advice.

Drink water from your own cistern. Run in water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares, should you be sowing your wild oats, young men?

Should you be going round, looking to sleep with as many women as you can find, and degrade yourself in that way? It's a metaphor of spreading your seed, quite literally, and not worrying about the implications of it.

The sexually transmitted diseases, the unwanted pregnancies, the tragic number of abortions, because people did not take precautions and did not consider the consequences of their actions. Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth, a loving door, a graceful dear.

[18:19] May her breasts satisfy you always. Who would have ever thought you would find that in the Bible? Yeah? May her breasts satisfy you always. May you ever be captivated by her love.

See, the Bible is not prudish at all. Read the Song of Solomon. It's quite a read. Quite a read. You had to be 30 before you could read it in the old Jewish society.

It's 30, because you might not be able to cope with it. But you see, that is not pornography, though it is very erotic. It's not pornography, because sex is good.

You know, if God didn't want us to enjoy sex, He wouldn't have made it so nice. But the fact that sex is good, and the fact that sex is nice, means that in the right context, it is something He blesses, not in the wrong context.

So, it's not prudish. The point is, let your wife satisfy you. Let your husband satisfy you.

[19:24] Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 actually gives advice to Christian husbands and wives, even to a Christian partner who's married to a non-Christian, about sexual life. And he says, you mustn't deprive one another.

You might stop having sex for a period of time so that you might pray, or for other reasons, perhaps medical reasons, whatever, or just natural biological flaws, as it were.

But, don't deprive each other, not for too long, and come together, lest Satan tempt you. Because the devil knows, the problem with anything that's nice, is that we desire it.

And the devil knows that we desire it. And so, we've got something called an eye gate. We've got our eyes. We've got an ear gate. We've got a touch gate. We've got all of these gates that the devil can exploit.

He can tempt us and lead us astray very easy in this realm. And sex is everywhere in modern society.

[20:30] It is sold as a commodity. You get people boasting, even setting records, have you noticed, recently in the news, for the number of people you can bed in a single night.

Over a thousand men. And somehow, this can make the newspapers shocking. Not because sex is degrading, but because sex has been degraded.

It has become nothing but a pleasurable activity, where in the Bible, it is an act of covenant love and union in thanksgiving to Almighty God who created something so beautiful to be expressed so wonderfully in a loving, committed relationship.

And then he says, Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.

The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him. The cords of sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. Remember David?

[21 : 47] Godly man, man after God's own heart. He loved God so much. But when he kind of got a bit complacent and he forgot how much he needed the Lord, he then was on his roof one night and he saw a beautiful woman bathing.

Now it's interesting to think, why was he on the roof? Well, he'd slept in the afternoon. He'd got up from his bed, so he'd had a long siesta. He should have been at war, but he sent his army to do his bidding.

He didn't go, and so he was there having his long siesta. He got up, and maybe he'd had a glass or two of wine. Who knows? His guard was down. There he was looking out from the roof. And actually, Jews went to the rooftop, interestingly, at the turn of the evening to pray.

Perhaps he went to pray, like Daniel who prayed on his rooftop. Perhaps he went to pray. And then he was distracted so quickly, so easily by this beautiful woman.

And then he needed to make inquiries, find out who she was. She came to him. He had sex with her. Was she a willing participant? It seems that she was, but she could hardly refuse a king.

[22 : 55] She was another man's wife. A good man called Uriah who served in David's army. And David thought, this is a one-night stand. There's no consequences. News came, I'm pregnant.

Oh dear. David thinks, I have to cover this up. This will be a scandal. And so, he kind of arranges for Uriah to come home.

And he gives, you know, he encourages him to feast and then to have some wine, to get himself drunk and to go in with his wife. But Uriah is a man of integrity. He will not go in with his wife and enjoy this pleasure while the army is fighting somewhere else where he should be, where David should be.

And so, it doesn't happen. And so, David arranges with his commander that Uriah be left on the front line and exposed in an attack and be killed. And he was. And David became a murderer by complicity.

And God was not pleased. David repented of his sin, wrote that wonderful psalm, Psalm 51, have mercy upon me, O God.

[24 : 04] But there were consequences. He was scandalized. His child of the adultery died as an act of judgment on the act of adultery, not as an act of judgment on the child.

Because David, when he mourned for the child, and after he found news of the child's death, said, I will go to him, but he will not return to me.

Now, where is David going? I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. David believed that his child would be taken to the house of the Lord to be with God forever.

But he understood that the law said that God would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. This was a public sin by the man who should represent God best, and so he was punished for it.

And the child was taken. And Solomon later was born of Bathsheba's marriage to David. Solomon, who writes these words, was the son of a father and mother who committed adultery.

[25 : 26] He knew the consequences, the dangers of adultery. Sadly, he committed many at one himself. It always leads to a bad end.

A little dalliance with the other woman that nobody would find out that leads to a divorce. I've already mentioned the other possible consequences of sexual immorality.

Perceive the pitfalls of immorality. Sex is exciting, in the words of my favorite film character. Sex makes people crazy.

That's Simon Birch. Very clever film about consequences. It makes people crazy. It's always, always dangerous to veer from God's intended route for a loving sexual relationship within marriage where he is honored and where people are committed and love one another deeply from the heart. Satan, says Billy Graham, next slide, Satan fails to speak of the remorse, the futility, the loneliness, and the spiritual devastation which go hand in hand with immorality.

[26 : 48] Sorry, I thought I had that quote, but it's gone. Satan fails to speak of the remorse, the futility, the loneliness, the loneliness, and the spiritual devastation which go hand in hand with immorality.

Don't yield to that temptation. Ask for God's help that you may not be led into that temptation. For what are temptations?

Well, John Owen said, temptations put nothing into a man but only draw out what was in him. Temptations put nothing into a man but only draw out what was in him.

It's important for us to realize that. You couldn't tempt me with macaroni cheese. You could wave it under my nose and say, there you go, this lovely macaroni cheese, and I will tell you, I hate the stuff.

But you could tempt me with a curry, as long as it's mild, or fish and chips, or bacon sandwiches. Yeah? In order for temptations to have an impact on me, there has to be a desire within me that wants it.

[27 : 58] That's why we must never underestimate the temptation of sexual desire because all of us, most virtually all of us, have that desire.

And like David, we must realize that we're at our most vulnerable when we are not on our guard. So be on your guard. There have been lots and lots of scandals in the Christian church with lots and lots of ministers who have fallen because they have committed adultery with somebody in their congregation.

No one is immune from such temptation. Be on your guard. Yield not to temptation. Put on the armor of God so that you may take your stand against the devil's schemes.

He knows how to get into us and we must guard ourselves. I remember one time listening to a preacher and he was telling the story of how he bumped in.

Oh, it was Louis Palau and he was telling the story about he bumped into an old minister in America and they were talking about this subject and at the end he went to the old minister and he said to him, tell me, he said, do you ever struggle with that temptation?

[29 : 17] I can't imagine you do now. You're so old. He said, Louis, don't you believe it? Don't you believe it? He always remembered that, Louis Palau.

Followed the Billy Graham principle of making sure that he was always accountable to his wife by whenever he could always resisting the urge to be alone with a lady that was not his wife.

Interesting. Now, some people think that's a very old-fashioned kind of concept, but maybe it's wise, especially if you know yourself, to put God in place so that you will not yield to that temptation.

Secondly, pursuing purity in relationships. We've already seen this in chapter 5 through 1523, so I'm not going to say very much more about this.

But that need to find satisfaction in your own marriage is perhaps the thing to emphasize here. Just because people are married, as you know, it doesn't make the marriage good or a happy one.

[30 : 28] And sometimes there can be sexual frustration in marriage. And I would again remind you of 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul says, the wife's body does not belong to herself, but also to her husband.

And the husband's body does not belong to himself, but also to his wife. And that is why there should be no depriving of one another.

A mutual understanding, a mutual acceptance, and a mutual giving of one another in relationship is required throughout married life. Now, when you get older, things change, of course.

When you've had children, things change, I understand that. But nonetheless, there is a responsibility and a duty within marriage for sexual needs to be met.

I'm not going to say any more than that, but just to point out that that is what Scripture teaches. And that is perhaps something that people here may need to work through. If not, wonderful.

[31 : 39] If it's still like Romeo and Juliet 40 years on, fantastic. Well done. That's how it ought to be. Perhaps not the adoration and the worship of your wife being the stars and him being the moon, but you know that kind of thing.

find satisfaction in God's design for your life. Enjoy what God created you to enjoy and be grateful and thankful for one another.

And if you're not married, but you'd like to be, we pray that you soon will enjoy that wonderful blessing, that wonderful union of married life with somebody who loves the Lord and loves you passionately and in a committed and honorable way.

Remember, though, overall, that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And the reason, the ultimate reason, according to Paul, why we ought not to stray is because we ought not to contaminate the temple of the Holy Spirit that he has made.

And in 1 Corinthians 6, we notice that not long ago, Paul says, you should not commit sexual immorality or go to a brothel and have sex with a prostitute.

[33 : 05] Would you ever dream of uniting Christ to a prostitute? that's how stark it is. The Lord watches over the ways of the righteous and our sexual purity is also a gift of our commitment to him

and our desire to honor him first and not destroy that which he has made, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

So, cleanse my heart, keep me pure within. We've sung about that and David speaks about that in Psalm 51. And you know, you're in a place where you can be helped with this.

If this is really hard for you to hear because you know that it is not an area of your life that is under the discipline of the Lord, the community is here to help you. We don't deal in shame.

We don't cast stones. We try to help people to walk closely with the Lord. And if this is an area of struggle for you, come and talk, come and pray.

Come and seek help. We will walk patiently with you because sometimes it is easier to get into sin than it is easy to resolve it. And that takes time.

[34 : 22] But pursue purity in relationships. Thirdly, protect your heart with wisdom. Proverbs chapter 6 verses 20 to 29.

Proverbs 6, 20 to 29. My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever. Fasten them around your neck.

When you walk, they will guide you. When you sleep, they will watch over you. When you are awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp. This teaching is a light and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her eyes captivate you with her eyes. For the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread.

It's quite funny, though. The prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread. It does. Sex makes you crazy and it also makes you look ridiculous sometimes. And the adulteress prears upon your very life.

[35 : 26] Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife.

No one who touches her will go unpunished. A man who commits adultery lacks judgment.

Whoever does so destroys himself. Think about the marriages and the houses and the families and the children and the relatives who have been destroyed because of one lack of judgment that ruined a marriage.

Protecting your heart with wisdom. Let the Scriptures speak to you. Let them be your guide. Let them be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Apply Scripture every day to your relationships. Apply it to your heart so that your heart loves the things of God. And it's not then a case of saying I'm not going to do that because it's wrong but I really would like to do it.

It's your heart is so transformed in love to God that you no longer want to do it because it is dishonoring to your heavenly Father. And then fourthly preserving integrity through discernment.

[36 : 46] The last part Proverbs 7 chapter 7 verses 6 to 27 quite an amusing little piece this.

At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice I saw among the simple I noticed among the young men a youth who lacked judgment. He was going down the street near her corner walking along in the direction of her house.

At twilight as the day was fading as the dark night set in then out came a woman to meet him dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. This was not in Amsterdam. She is loud and defiant her feet never stay at home now in the streets now in the squares at every corner she lurks.

She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said I have fellowship offerings at home today I fulfill my vows so I came out to meet you I look for you and have found you I covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt I have perfumed my bed with myrrh aloes and cinnamon come let us drink deep of love till morning let's enjoy ourselves with love my husband is not at home he's gone on a long journey he took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon with persuasive words she let him astray she seduced him with a smooth talk all at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver like a bird darting into a snare little knowing it will cost him his life now then my sons listen to me pay attention to what I say do not let your hearts turn to her ways or stray into her paths many are the victims she has brought down her slain are a mighty throng her house is a highway to the grave leading down to the chambers of death young men young women be careful in this world that makes a commodity a sex that will allow you to visit its red light districts will appeal to all your pleasures and the satisfaction of all your desires its way is a way of destruction preserve your integrity through discernment think about who you mix with think about what you do think about

