



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

PROVERBS LESSON 4

John Wayne said, "Life is tough ... it's tougher if you're stupid!" Interesting quote, but it does ring true. There is so much wisdom in seeking "wisdom"! This week we will continue our study in chapters 5 and 6 of Proverbs, with Solomon continuing to warn his son, or students, of the dangers of following the wrong path. He spends chapter 5 warning them about the temptation and dangers of sexual promiscuity. Sadly, sexual sin is as much, if not more, prevalent today, and even more acceptable. Even believers seem to think extramarital sex is "ok" because they are in love, because the world says it's ok, and because "everyone is doing it." God created sex, and He has a right to set guidelines and boundaries for it. As Wiersbe wrote, "God created sex not only for reproduction, but also for enjoyment, and He didn't put the 'marriage wall' around sex to rob us of pleasure but to increase pleasure and protect it." I've heard it said, "Sexual folly destroys, but sexual wisdom satisfies." Solomon is urgently reminding them to beware because they were walking into a world of sexual foolishness!

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 5:1-23. Let's break this up into three parts. Write the main point, key verse, and any repeated words from each section.

A. Verses 1-14

B. Verses 15-20

C. Verses 21-23

Wisdom looks ahead and plans accordingly. Wisdom counts the cost and considers the consequences. Obviously, the fool thinks about now and the pleasure of the moment.

2. What does Exodus 20:14 tell us regarding this subject?
3. Solomon's parents committed the very sin he is warning them about. Read their story in 2 Samuel 11-12. How did David's sin affect his life?
4. How do you think his parents' story affected Solomon and his advice to his son?
5. Remember that Proverbs was most likely written in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes when Solomon was older, maybe to express his regret for his folly and his wasted time. Read 1 Kings 11:1-13 to see his history with women.
6. What's your biggest "take away" from chapter 5?

It's pretty clear what Solomon thought about adultery, is it not? Although he didn't seem to take his own counsel, he knew what was right, at least at that time of his life. You may be wondering why you have to study this topic because you already know it's wrong. As Solomon can testify, temptation can come knocking in many different disguises and in various

seasons of our life. This is exactly why we need to be purposeful about staying on the right path, and when temptation knocks, just keep on going!

Memory Verse of the Week: "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths." Proverbs 5:21

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Proverbs 5 again. Describe the words of the "immoral" or strange woman. Explain why they are likened to honey and oil.

2. Describe the many losses you can experience if you follow her, according to verses 9-14.

Honey is the sweetest substance in Israel, and olive oil is the smoothest. Although they may be attractive at first, they become sharp and bitter soon.

3. Solomon speaks about the "delights" of married life. What key phrase do you find in verses 15-23?

Solomon paints a great picture of married life, using words and illustrations they were familiar with. He portrays married life as a time to enjoy your own "cistern" or fountain (Song of Solomon 4:12, 15). As a person would not get water from his neighbor's cistern because he had his own (2 Kings 18:31), so a man should have his physical needs met by his own wife, not someone else's. These verses also tell us that he should be captivated with love for his wife, as well as loved by her. Solomon basically says to "keep your hands off" other women, but "keep your hands on" your wife!

4. If you're married, this question is for you. Are you willingly meeting your husband's physical needs? Are you blessing him with the waters of your cistern or do you withhold sex for reasons of selfishness? Do you see sex as a pleasure, or as a weapon to be used as you see fit?

5. The statistic of men and women engaging in pornography is staggering. How do you think these verses speak to that?

6. Do you strive to make yourself desirable to your husband?

Ortlund says that this chapter encourages us to "Make it fun and frequent!" He also says the word "intoxicated" or "enraptured" in verse 19 is used elsewhere for a man staggering down the street in drunkenness (Isaiah 28:7). The point is to be crazy in love with each other!

7. What two rhetorical questions does he ask in verse 20? What is his point?

8. According to verses 21-23, what is our highest motivation to avoid the consequence of adultery?

9. How can you use this chapter to advise young (or old) people today against sexual sin? How can you make this relevant for today?

I don't want you to think that sexual sin is the unforgivable sin. God's heart is always ready to forgive. If you have, or are presently committing sexual sin, repent today and ask the Lord for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). He wants to wash you clean and make you white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). Take heed to the strong words of Solomon, and get ready, because he's not done!

Third Day

What's your memory verse? Repeat it to someone today.

1. Read Proverbs 6:1-35. Focus on verses 1-5. Solomon moves from warning against sexual entanglement to foolish financial entanglements. Summarize this section in your own words.

2. Read Exodus 22:25 and Leviticus 25:35-37. Was interest supposed to be charged to an Israelite?

The word "surety" was a guarantee or collateral for someone else's loan. It is "taking responsibility for a debt." (New Bible Dictionary) In this context, it's thought to refer to a person who cosigned a note involving high interest rates for their loan. Here the cosigned is urged to get out of this obligation as soon as possible. In this situation, there doesn't seem to be any witnesses or legal documents, but seems more like a verbal agreement.

3. What does this agreement seem to be sealed with?

4. Solomon compares it to an animal being caught in a trap. Why does he use this analogy?

5. Do you think Solomon was against borrowing or lending at all?

6. We are called to help each other, and be generous to the needy, right? (Proverbs 3:27-28) Does this mean paying their credit card debt or guaranteeing their loans? How is this section relevant for today?

7. Just as a matter of interest, read Philemon 17-18. Who does Paul promise to become "surety" for?
8. We'll look more at the topic of finances in some other Proverbs, but what do you think the Bible says about debt? Is debt good or bad? Does it depend on what kind of debt it is, or to whom it's owed? Is it a moral issue or just a risky/foolish one?

This mention of a "gazelle" is the only one in Proverbs. There are two kinds of gazelles in Israel; one that lives in the desert and the other is more of a mountain type. I read that they can't be bred as domesticated animals because they are adapted to quick flight, and they panic when contained. Gazelles would be driven into these corrals that were shaped like triangles, but they could not jump the walls. Here they would be trapped and killed, like a bird trapped in a cage. Once they understood they were trapped, all their attention went to escaping. Solomon used this picture to convey his sense of urgency and intensity towards getting out of being a surety.

Solomon proceeds to warn his readers about another thing that causes foolishness ... laziness. Solomon uses creation to illustrate his important point.

9. Read Proverbs 6:6-15. Name some of the characteristics of ants that he uses to express his thoughts about laziness.
10. What do the following verses say about laziness? Proverbs 10:4-5; 18:9, 24:33-34, and 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

The Hebrew word for " sluggard " is used 14 times in Proverbs, but nowhere else in the Old Testament. It refers to more than laziness. " In 15:19 a sluggard is contrasted with the ' upright ' and in 21:25-26 a sluggard is contrasted with the ' righteous . ' A sluggard is associated in 19:15 with the " shiftless . " A lazy, irresponsible person is challenged to learn from the ant and to be wise . " (Zuck)

11. The ant is being praised for its initiative. What verses tell us that?
12. How do ants work in anticipation of future needs? What example does that set for us?
13. So ... are you more like an ant or a sluggard? Do you take initiative on your own? Do you think ahead and make plans for the future? Do you do your best, whatever you do? Describe your work ethic.
14. If you have children, what practical ways can you teach them about the importance of having a good work ethic? How do "chores" play a part in this?
15. Last question. Are there any areas in your life where you tend to be lazy? What changes do you need to make?

See you tomorrow, my little ant friends!

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Proverbs 6:16-19. List the six, I mean seven, things the Lord hates. What is the definition of the word "abomination"?

2. Why do you think he says the phrase "These six ... yes, seven"?
3. Which one of the seven had Solomon just described in 12-15?
4. Does adultery fall into any of these categories? How does this show a continuity of thought, rather than some "random" exhortations?

Notice that every body part is mentioned in this section, showing the total involvement of the wicked person in his schemes. All of these sins hurt others. The way it is written infers that it is not an inclusive list, but rather an example of some of the things God hates. It's like saying "for example." Usually when an Old Testament writer uses this literary style, it is the last item in the list that matters the most. So the last one on the list can provide the key to understanding the other six.

5. What's the last one on the list? How does this open our understanding? How does it fly in the face of Psalm 133:1?

"A proud look" can also be described as having "haughty eyes" as in Psalm 101:5 and 18:27.

6. We are quite familiar with the meaning of pride. But what does it mean to have a proud look or haughty eyes?
7. Where does lying originate and why is it universal? Read Jeremiah 17:9 and John 8:44.

8. What is the remedy for this condition according to Ephesians 4:20-24?

God is a God of truth, and He hates lies (Exodus 20:16). Since satan is the father of lies we want to make sure we don't follow in his ways!

9. Right away you most likely crossed a "lying tongue" off the list of things you do. But expand the box a bit. Do you exaggerate to make a point or manipulate? Do you tell partial truth? Do you falsify facts in order to maintain your reputation, or to ruin someone else's?

In Exodus 20:13, God says "Thou shall not murder," or translated here as "hands that shed innocent blood."

10. What is a "heart that devises wicked plans"? Give some examples of that. Have you ever been guilty of this?

"Feet that are swift to run to evil" expresses the urgency or intensity involved in whatever they are planning and doing. "A false witness who speaks lies" refers to telling the truth in court, or falsifying facts about someone (Exodus 20:16).

All these sins cause discord among friends, right? Discord divides the brethren, driving a wedge between the body of Christ. Lying is referred to twice in this section, which is significant.

11. Contrast the wicked person in this section with the Godly person described by Jesus in Matthew 5:1-16. How does it compare?

12. Take some time and search your heart on these seven abominations. Make sure there is no intent or seed of discord, strife, envy, jealousy, or pride lurking in there. If you find some, repent and ask God to help you begin to display the attitudes found in Matthew 5 instead.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Let' take a look at our last section from Proverbs **6:20-35**. Solomon warns his son again to heed his counsel. His words before were a little more simple, but now he calls for his son to really pay attention and remember and do all that his parents taught him. In fact, he hopes their instructions are so much a part of him that he wears them around his neck like a pendant. Solomon had been diligent in teaching him God's Word so he could speak with authority. God's Word is so important. Verse 23 tells us that His Word is a lamp and a light. (See also Psalm 119:105) It corrects what is wrong, trains us in what's right, and helps keep us on the right path.

1. Are you faithful to read God's Word? Are you diligent in spending time reading, meditating, and seeking wisdom and guidance? Are they so much a part of you that you wear them "like a pendant" around your neck? Any changes you desire to make? What struggles do you have in being faithful to this?

Solomon goes on to say how God's truth will guard him from the temptation of sexual sin. Verses 20-35 reminds the reader of the high price again of committing adultery. Flirting with immorality is like playing with fire.

2. What different things did Solomon write in this section about adultery and guilt that he didn't mention before?

3. Read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 and compare it with Proverbs 6:25. What is He saying?

4. Verse 26 shows us that immorality is costly. Why? What are some of the costs?

5. I love verses 27-28. What's his point? How have you seen this principle true in your own life or the lives of others?

6. What are the consequences of this folly, according to verses 30-35? (Read also Song of Solomon 8:6.)

7. I read somewhere that adultery is a kind of "suicide." What does that mean? Do you agree with this statement?

In the Old Testament, the punishment for the crime of adultery was very harsh (Deuteronomy 22:22). The New Testament does away with these punishments, but certainly the effects of adultery will be the same. I read a question that I thought was interesting and thought provoking, so I'm going to throw it out to you and see what you think.

8. "While we cannot expect the state to punish sexual sin as Israel did, do you think society takes it seriously enough in comparison with such things as robbery and violence? Why do you think this?"

9. What role do you think the media plays in promoting various types of immorality? Why do you think it's crept into the church in such a significant way?

I pray that the Holy Spirit spoke to your heart in a radical way this week. There were so many topics to think about! I pray that we continue to hide His Word in our hearts so we won't sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). This truly is a wicked and perverse generation, among whom we should shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15). Ortlund wrote, "God wants to help us walk through the brothel of our modern world." Interesting way to look at it; pretty accurate I'd say. But because we are all sinners, this quote also pierced my heart, "The difference between an unconverted man and a converted man is not that one has sins and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins." (William Arnot). Which camp are you in? Do you hate sin?

See you next week!