

PROVERBS 5

[PRELIMINARY REMARKS]

- It's week 7 of our series: *Foolproof: God's Wisdom for Your Life*.
- Today we're going to talk about **Wisdom & Sex**.
 - We'll cover a lot of ground, and the goal is to provide a biblical framework for further conversations—at home, with friends, in our small groups and Sunday schools.
 - A sermon can't provide all the nuance that particular circumstances require.
 - Those conversations are best had personally, with people you trust—more on that later.
- One more word before we start—for anyone who's experienced sexual abuse:
 - I know something of what that's like—it's part of my story.
 - And Jesus sees: It wasn't your fault—and the shame is not yours to carry.
 - We're here for you: Reach out to one of our pastors or ministry leaders. Hope and healing are possible.

[Transition]: Let's hear God's word. We'll start where we've started every week—with the foundation of wisdom. Then we'll hear Proverbs 5, a father speaking to his son.

[SCRIPTURE READING]

9:10: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

Proverbs 5: My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, ² that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. ³ For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, ⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; ⁶ she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

⁷ And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, ¹⁰ lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, ¹¹ and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, ¹² and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! ¹³ I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. ¹⁴ I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation."

¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷ Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. ¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹ a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. ²⁰ Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? ²¹ For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. ²² The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. ²³ He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

[INTRODUCTION]

- When you were growing up, what did you hear about sex?¹
 - From your **parents**: Maybe they sat you down for *the talk*. Maybe they never mentioned it.
 - At **school**: Perhaps you got a sterile, biological explanation of how it all works.
 - From our **culture**: We're told sex is an appetite to satisfy, or a way of expressing who we are.
 - Or what about the **church**? Maybe you got the impression sex was some kind of necessary evil—something you should do your best not to think about. Or maybe it wasn't discussed at all.
- Whatever messages we've received, today we want to hear what **God** has to say about sex. And there are at least three reasons we need to have this conversation.
 - **First, sexual brokenness is part of all our stories.** It's certainly part of mine. And by God's grace, something better can be part of our stories too.
 - **Second, it's part of our children's world.** If we don't disciple our kids, someone else will.
 - **Third, God talks about it.** And if God talks about it, we're going to talk about it.

[Transition]: So let's hear from him—and build a biblical framework for the conversations we need to have. Three headings: the gift, the danger, and the hope.

THE GIFT: God's Design Is Good.

[State]

- It's important to remember that sex wasn't our idea. We didn't invent it.
- Sex is God's idea—and his design for it is good.
- Let's ask two questions to understand this design: Who is sex for? And what is it for?

[Who is sex for?]

- The Bible answers the first question in **Gen 2:24: Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**
 - Who is sex for? One man, one woman, within marriage.
 - I understand this teaching isn't always popular:
 - For some, because the Bible says sex is for one man and one woman.
 - For others, because it says sex is reserved for marriage.
- But I want to be clear about where we stand as a church—it's honoring to be upfront about where we're coming from.
 - We are 100% committed to this teaching because it's the Bible's teaching.
 - Whether you agree with it or find it difficult:
 - I'd encourage us all to trust God's wisdom, even when it challenges our thoughts or desires.
 - That's what the fear of the LORD looks like: Believing God knows more than we do about how life works best.

[What is it for?]

- So that's who sex is for—one man, one woman, within marriage.
 - But what is it for? Why did God give it to us in the first place?
 - The Bible identifies several purposes—let me mention three briefly, then the most important reason of all.
1. First, **purity**.
 - The Bible is realistic about desire. **1 Cor 7:2: Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.**
 - Desire is real—and God gives marriage as a holy, healthy context for expressing it.
 2. Second, sex isn't just about purity—it's also about **pleasure**.
 - God invents things for us to enjoy—and Proverbs is pretty direct about this: **5:19: Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight.**
 - Sunsets are beautiful. Music stirs the soul. And sex is fun!
 - It didn't have to be that way, but it is.
 3. Third, sex is also about **children**.
 - Children are a gift from God's hand (Ps 127:3).
 - And sex is the means through which God brings them into the world.
 4. But there's also something bigger going on here. And to understand it, we need another word—**covenant**.²
 - Why do I say it's the most important? Because it's the one that's always present.
 - Sex isn't always needed for purity.
 - It doesn't always bring pleasure.
 - And it certainly doesn't always result in children.
 - But within marriage, it's always about covenant.
 - What does that mean?
 - A covenant is a binding promise.
 - In marriage, we promise ourselves to each other in every area of life.
 - And, as a physical expression of that commitment, God gave us sex.

[Illustrate]

- Think about an engagement ring.
 - You ask someone to marry you, and they say yes—*an invisible commitment has been made.*
 - Then you put a ring on their finger—a *physical sign of that invisible commitment.*
- Sex does something similar in marriage:
 - *I've promised to give myself to you, completely and exclusively.*
 - *So now I give you my body—a physical expression of that promise.*
 - What we're doing with our bodies represents what we're doing with our lives.
 - As we unite our bodies, so we're uniting our lives.
 - As we become one flesh, so we're becoming one in every other way.
 - And every time we have sex in marriage, we renew that covenant again: *I still belong to you, and you still belong to me—physically and in every way.*

[Apply]

- Incidentally, this is why we believe sex outside marriage is wrong.
 - Not because God doesn't want you to have fun!
 - But because we should only do with our bodies what we're prepared to do with our lives.
 - If you're not there yet, it's not time for sex yet.
- Perhaps you've experienced something of this yourself.
 - Maybe you've had sexual relationships outside marriage that hurt you.
 - Because sex isn't just physical. It binds us to another person in a way that can leave deep wounds when the relationship comes apart.
 - If that's you, hold on—we'll get to hope before the sermon is done.

[Summary]

- That's the gift of sex—and God's design is good.
 - He gives us a place to express our desires.
 - He gives us pleasure to enjoy.
 - He gives us a way to bring children into the world.
 - And above all, he gives us a beautiful way to express and deepen the lifelong commitment of marriage.
- Our own Mike Ford introduced me to this quote from Christopher West: *"We are free to choose whether to engage in sex. But if we choose to engage in sex, we are not free to change its meaning."*³

[Transition]: If we do—if we depart from God's good design—the consequences can be destructive. Which brings us to...

THE DANGER: God's Warnings Are Wise.

[State]

- Sex is good, but there are ways of using this gift that aren't good for us.
 - What might that look like?
 - Quite simply, anything that twists or departs from his good design:
 - Sex outside marriage (Heb 13:4).
 - Infidelity in marriage (Ex 20:14).
 - Homosexuality (Rom 1:26–27).
 - Polygamy (Gen 2:24).
 - Pornography (Mt 5:27–28).
 - Lust (Pro 6:25).
- And Proverbs is very clear about how dangerous this kind of folly can be.
 - **5:3–4:** For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey... but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.
 - **6:27:** Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?
 - **6:32:** He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.
- Do you see the pattern? Sexual folly promises pleasure... conceals consequences... and ultimately leads to destruction.

[Illustrate]

- The classic illustration is that sex is like fire:
 - In the fireplace, it warms the whole house.
 - On the living room rug, it burns the house down.
- And interestingly, secular research backs this up—stepping outside God's design has real consequences.
 - Couples who **live together before marriage** are about a third more likely to divorce after their first year of marriage.⁴
 - When researchers asked divorced people why their marriages ended, the most common answer was **infidelity**.⁵
 - **Pornography** use has been linked with:
 - Increased loneliness, anxiety, and depression.⁶
 - And decreased relational and sexual satisfaction.⁷
- Think about the irony:
 - Something that promises intimacy can leave us feeling more alone.
 - Something that promises pleasure can leave us less satisfied.
 - Honey up front. Bitterness in the end.

[Apply]

- How do we respond?
 - **Proverbs'** answer is to run from sin: **5:8:** Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.
 - **Paul** says the same thing: **1 Cor 6:18:** Flee from sexual immorality.
 - And **Jesus** is even more intense: **Mt 5:29:** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

- Here's a principle worth remembering: **You can't be near to sin and safe from it at the same time.**⁸
 - The wrong question is: *How far can I go?*
 - The wise question is: *How far away can I stay?*
- What might that look like?
 - Know when you're vulnerable—when you're bored, lonely, stressed, or tired.
 - Put boundaries around your devices. Maybe keep them out of your bedroom.
 - Step back from any friendship or work relationship where you feel a charge you shouldn't.
 - And if you're struggling, reach out for help. You don't have to fight this alone.
- God's warnings aren't meant to keep us from something good. They're meant to protect us from harm.

[Transition]: So, 1) God's design is good, and 2) God's warnings are wise.

- But what happens when we've ignored those warnings? When we've stepped outside his design?
- To one degree or another, all of us have—which brings us to...

THE HOPE: God's Grace Is Enough.

In the gospel, there is hope—*For Your Past:*

- In **1 Cor 6**, Paul includes sexual sins in a big list of sins: the sexually immoral, adulterers, those who've practiced homosexuality.
- But then Paul says: **1 Cor 6:11: And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**
 - Did you catch the tense? **Such were some of you.**
 - Your past doesn't define you.
 - And by "past" I mean anything that happened before this very moment.
 - Whatever you've done, forgiveness is available in Jesus.
 - If you have faith in him, you are not dirty. You are not damaged.
 - You are washed. You are sanctified. You are justified.
 - All in the name that is greater than any sin.
- Jesus did this again and again:
 - The woman at the well (**Jn 4**); the woman caught in adultery (**Jn 8**).
 - He's done that for me—and he'll do the same for you.
- The most defining thing about you is not how you've failed—it's who you belong to. And if you have faith in Jesus, you belong to him.

And this gospel that gives hope for the past also gives hope—*For Your Future:*

- The gospel forgives—and then it gives us a new way to live.
 - If you belong to Jesus, **1 Cor 6:19–20: You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**
 - In other words: It's possible—the Spirit is in you, and you can live for him.

- If you're **single**: Pursue God's good design.
 - Sex is a wonderful gift, but it's not essential to a wonderful life.
 - Jesus never married or had sex.
 - And he lived the fullest life imaginable.
 - If you're not married, the Bible calls us to self-control—and, where appropriate, to pursue marriage, where sex finds its proper home.
 - This involves sacrifice—but it's possible: You can glorify God in your body.
- If you're **married**, the application is the same: Pursue God's good design.
 - Proverbs is remarkably direct about this.
 - **5:15: Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.** Don't go looking for fulfillment anywhere else.
 - **5:18–19: Rejoice in the wife of your youth... be intoxicated always in her love.**
 - Enjoy the spouse God has given you.
 - One of the Bible's happy antidotes to sexual temptation is to cultivate sexual delight in your spouse.
 - This too involves sacrifice; it takes work—but it's possible: You can glorify God in your body.
- For **everyone**: Trust God's wisdom.
 - We're choosing to believe he knows better than we do.
 - We're choosing to live according to his good design.
 - And whenever we fail, we can always return to him—because his grace is enough.

[THE CLOSE]

- So, what's the closing application?
 - You know, that coaching moment where I suggest we all try something this week?
 - Feels like I need to be careful with this one!
- But seriously, as I said at the beginning, this sermon was meant to start conversations—not finish them. So let me encourage you to have some of those conversations this week.
 - **If you're married:** Have an honest conversation with your spouse about how things are going.
 - Are you prioritizing your marriage? Are you enjoying one another? Are there things you've been avoiding talking about?
 - Maybe there's a step you need to take to strengthen your sex life. Maybe you need to get some help.
 - **If you're single:**
 - Is there someone who really knows how you're doing in this area?
 - If not, who could that be?

- **Parents:**
 - Have you talked to your kids about all this? What do they already know, and where are they learning it?
 - If you're not sure where to start, join us this Wednesday for our Partnering with Parents event: Melissa Haun from Hope Resource Center will give us practical, age-appropriate ways to have these conversations. Details are at cspc.net/news.
- **And for everyone:** Is there a conversation you've been putting off?
 - Maybe something you're struggling with, something you're ashamed of, or a question you've been afraid to ask.
 - Find someone you trust and bring it into the light.
 - And remember, our ministry leaders would love to have those conversations with you.
- Dear ones, the light is our friend.
 - And that's what this church can be.
 - A community where we're honest about our struggles.
 - Where nobody has to pretend they've got it all together.
 - Where we help each other walk in the light.
 - Let's be that for each other this week.

**We can be wise about sex because
God's design is good, his warnings are wise, and his grace is enough.**

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*.
- Tim Keller, *Proverbs: True Wisdom for Living*.
- Ray Ortlund, *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works*.
- Logos Bible Software.

Endnotes

¹ I owe the framing of this introduction—particularly the cultural and church messages about sex—to my colleague Mike Ford, “The Bible and Sex,” a teaching given to the CSPC young adult community.

² I owe the covenant framing in this section, including the engagement ring illustration, to Tim Keller’s teaching on sex. See, for example, his sermon “Purity with Passion.”

³ Christopher West, quoted in Mike Ford, “The Bible and Sex,” a teaching given to the CSPC young adult community.

⁴ See, for example, Michael J. Rosenfeld and Katharina Roesler, “Cohabitation Experience and Cohabitation’s Association With Marital Dissolution,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* (2019).

⁵ See, for example, Paul R. Amato and Denise Previti, “People’s Reasons for Divorcing: Gender, Social Class, the Life Course, and Adjustment,” *Journal of Family Issues* (2003), where infidelity was the reason given most often.

⁶ See, for example, Jun Yi Tan et al., “Association Between Self-Reported Pornographic Consumption Habits and Anxiety and Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Clinical Medicine* (2026).

⁷ See, for example, Paul J. Wright et al., “Pornography Consumption and Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis,” *Human Communication Research* (2017).

⁸ I’m not sure where I first heard this principle, but I don’t claim authorship.