

## **BACK TO SCHOOL: PROVERBS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE**

**Sex, Love and Family**

**Proverbs 5:15-20; 17:1**

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**LISTEN:** <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/back-to-school-proverbs-for-everyday-life-sex-love-and-family/>

When I opened up my folder and saw the texts I had selected for this particular sermon, I thought about calling one of the other pastors, feigning a sore throat and whispering, “I’m sick.” Seriously, I semi-apologize for the frankness of this morning’s reading, but then, maybe that’s part of our problem. The Church has been unwilling to talk about what everyone else does talk about, and which scripture itself addresses. It’s called real life. Remember--this sermon series is about proverbs for everyday life.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote that sexual promiscuity is not the over-valuing of sex but the under-valuing of it. What we’re aiming for this morning is something between the prudishness that never deals with how God made us, and on the other side, the “anything goes” approach on the other. Something in the middle.

Did you know that in the U.S., \$13.3 billion is spend on adult entertainment (that’s more than we spend on sports). There are more sex shops in the U.S. than McDonalds (and that’s saying a lot!). I recently heard a pastor say that he found hypocrisy in so many conservative Christians bashing gays, when the percentage of evangelical males addicted to porn is so high.

The Proverbs 5 text is a clear warning about lust. Water was and is a precious commodity in the Middle East. Proverbs warns us not to waste our sexual beings in any and all directions. Lust desires to have what it has no right to grasp. Followers of Christ do not grasp, but give and trust God’s provision for our needs. Miroslav Volf has commented on the enticing thrill of sex outside the context of committed love. But he notes how quickly it leaves an aftertaste of dissatisfaction, guilt and emptiness [*A Public Faith*, p. 62],. Why share your love with strangers? (v. 17). Sojourner magazine once asked readers to tweet their thoughts about promiscuous sex. One tweeted, “I wish...I knew how unique a bond sex creates between two people.” Another: “Sex is always about another person’s soul.”

Remember the three themes of Proverbs? God’s wisdom takes knowledge and builds character, builds community and honors God. And see how sloppy sexual lives destroy all three. For married couples, the key words are to “rejoice” in our spouses (v. 17) and to be “intoxicated,” to be captivated, to stay in love with your spouse (v. 19). To not be always looking elsewhere (17:1). Stanley Hauerwas once said, “Christians are required to love each other—even if they are married.” Ouch! Never let your love go stale. Do you remember the definition of a wedding band? A small gold band that cuts off circulation! “Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth” (v. 18).

In the early Christian era, there was a pagan doctor named Galen who noted two things that made these follower of Jesus Christ so unique. One was their belief in the bodily resurrection and the other was their sexual restraint in a world that knew none [*Surprised by Hope*, by N.T. Wright, p.

43]. And the two are related! The physical resurrection of Jesus means that our bodies matter and what we do with them matters. He is Lord of all.

As Paul would write in what we believe to be his first epistle, "...this is God's will...that you abstain from sexual sin, that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion...that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister...For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). (Think again about how Paul links the resurrection/return of Christ in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 with sexual restraint).

I heard someone make an observation that God's work in our lives is never even. His grace and deliverance are never level. In other words, you may have great discipline in finances, but not in your sexual life. Or great discipline in patience but a struggle with overeating. All the more reason why we need God's Word! This is what we mean when we talk about the saving work of Jesus Christ, delivering us from our worst selves, from slavery to habits, from destructive life patterns. The continual sanctifying work of God's Spirit can lead us to be people of the resurrection, walking in newness of life.