

## **Notes from Sermon given by Ian Stackhouse - Sunday September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007 Proverbs 5: 1-23 Warning against Adultery**

Someone has said: there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are interested in sex, and liars! For some strange reason we are embarrassed about this, as if it is one of those taboo subjects. What father has not had to take a deep breath when it comes to telling his children the facts of life?

However we cannot forget this subject – we must address it, both the positive way in which the Bible speaks about sex within marriage, and also the destructive aspects – pornography, extra-marital affairs, fornication etc.

You will encounter it at some time and what is university for except for many young people to go completely wild. And to be totally ignorant of this world or pious about it is to be unprepared for what is a major issue.

In Proverbs the Father takes his son in hand on the eve of his coming of age. He shows him the mob, the swindlers, the idle, the spongers, and also the perils of the wayward woman.

Not that women are wayward by definition, or that every woman is a seductress, no - women are wonderful. But there are certain women, just as there are certain men, who sit loose to commitments, have no sense of loyalty or honour, whose lips 'drip honey'. Whoever 'enters' her, or is lured by her experiences the opposite of what she promises. Her feet (the lower part of her body) will lead to the grave. Such is the end of all who taste at the fountain of illicit sex. In the short term it may look wonderful, but in the end it is the way of death.

Ian gave the example of a businessman away from home at a hotel where the receptionist asks if he would like someone to visit his room. And he is horrified when that someone is his own daughter, trying to earn some money while at college. What the girl did was bribe him so that she would not tell her mother, his wife. He lost everything, in that moment!!

The woman in Proverbs 5 has no moral compass. She has no sense of what is at the heart of true Israelite faith, namely fidelity to covenant. And so to pull back from God is also to pull back from human commitments. The Father says to keep well away from her because after you have paid your alimony payments, or worse still, contracted some sexual disease, you will be ruined in the midst of the whole assembly, shamed among the people of God. Now this may not be the best reason to stay sexually pure, as it sounds as if the only reason to stay pure is not to do with God, or love, but simply to keep my reputation and my bank balance in the black. And yet that's it. What is going to enable me to walk away from the heat of the moment is the simple knowledge that if I did this I would lose everything. I think that is what the Bible calls wisdom, or the 'fear of the Lord'.

With the Lord there is always forgiveness, but this passage in Proverbs is about Prevention rather than Cure, not putting yourself in the way of temptation to see what might happen. To leave oneself vulnerable to temptation is a decision in itself. If you linger in the wrong places at the wrong time you cannot claim innocence; you are naïve, a simpleton, a fool. Sometimes the only way to address this problem in our sex-obsessed society is to just walk completely away from it.

And I am not saying you should not have friends of the opposite sex. Church should be a place, THE place where we can discover deep friendships across genders. We should also recover in the Church the vocation and call to live in an unmarried and sexually chaste state that is a rich and fulfilling way of living.

Some men cannot relate to a woman unless it's a sexual thing. They should get help, maintain proper boundaries. The prospect of illicit sex is very real. Do not go near, cut off the friendship. Watch and be accountable to one another.

There is an antidote to this temptation – sexual pleasure with your wife. Be intoxicated by your love. Sex is not about technique, great sex presupposes fidelity 'I am going to be with you all of my life'. So you should be constantly straying with you wife, 'going wild with your wife' and you won't be tempted to stray with another man's wife.