

PROVERBS

Chapter 7

Warning Against the Adulteress

My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; 2 keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; 3 bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call insight your intimate friend, 5 to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words. 6 For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, 7 and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, 8 passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house 9 in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. 10 And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. 11 She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; 12 now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. 13 She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, 14 “I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; 15 so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. 16 I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18 Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. 19 For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; 20 he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home.” 21 With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. 22 All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast 23 till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life. 24 And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. 25 Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, 26 for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. 27 Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

The tenth and final address to a son also concerns adultery. This includes an object lesson (vv 6–23) framed by cautions (vv 1–5, 24–27). (TLSB)

Fools in Proverbs

God often teaches the way of wisdom by using contrast. As a skilled artist sets his or her subject matter against a contrasting background, so the Lord, through His inspired writers, sets the bright gem of wisdom against the dismal backdrop of foolishness.

When the Bible in general—and Proverbs in particular—speaks of foolishness, the first and most important point to remember is that it describes a moral and *spiritual* condition. We should not confuse foolishness with lack of academic prowess or a low IQ. Some people who are brilliant may, in God’s eyes, be fools. For example, Ps 14:1 and 53:1 state, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ ” In Proverbs, the fool is one who does not have a proper fear of the Lord. Consequently, such a person is likely to deny God’s Word.

The Hebrew language in which Proverbs was originally written makes a distinction among different kinds of foolishness or fools. Awareness of these differences will help you more fully appreciate the message of Proverbs.

The simpleHbr *pethi*, the person who is easily lured or deceived; gullible. Of the various types of fools, this one is the least hardened in his or her foolishness. These naive and inexperienced people drift along aimlessly, until they fall easy prey to temptation (14:15). Such gullibility, of course, is not an excuse for sinning. Gullible people are responsible for their actions and may even end up killing themselves (1:32). In Pr 7, Solomon observes the gullible people and notes one who is drifting along aimlessly, ripe for a prostitute's picking. If they are to escape their ways "and live," the gullible need wisdom (9:4–6). Indeed, wisdom invites them by calling out, "Whoever is gullible, turn in here!"

The foolHbr *kesil*; if the gullible person doesn't learn, he or she may well move to the next level of foolishness and become a regular fool. This Hbr word is used 50 times in Proverbs and is the Book's most common term for fool. In the end, "fools die for lack of sense" (10:21).

Stubborn foolHbr *'ewil*, occurs 20 times in Proverbs. What can be said about the "generic fool" can also be said about this fool. As the term "stubborn" implies, however, the individual at this level of foolishness is more hardened and persistent. "Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance" (14:9). This category of fool is connected to the word for foolishness and stupidity, or folly. Sadly, it's a trait often found in children: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him" (22:15). As the child becomes a grown-up, the trait is even more difficult to correct: "Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him" (27:22).

The godless foolHbr *nabal*, appears only three times in Proverbs. This is the word used in the psalms quoted earlier in this article. Those people who say to themselves, "There is no God." Their mind is closed; they have rejected the Lord. This word is used in Pr 30:21–23, which states that one of four things under which the earth trembles is "a fool when he is filled with food." Once such a person's physical needs are satisfied, who knows what havoc he or she will bring to others? We find the epitome of this boorish and domineering

fool in the man named Nabal (1Sm 25). He was “harsh and badly behaved” (v 3), and one of his own servants said of him, “He is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (v 17).

Scripture and the Fool

As we look closely at the fool in Proverbs and the rest of Scripture, we come face-to-face with sinful human beings and with the “natural man.” In other words, we see ourselves. The believer realizes, “There but for the grace of God go I.” Even the author and compiler of Proverbs, wise King Solomon, became such a fool that he fell into idolatry (1Ki 11:4–11). As long as we are in this world, we will struggle against giving in to our sinful, foolish tendencies.

The remedy for foolishness is for God’s Word to remain our daily companion (Pr 2:1). The foolishness of the world is overcome by the foolishness of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1Co 3:18). It comes down to this: to know Christ and Him crucified is to know God’s wisdom (1Co 1:23–25). His forgiveness destroys our sinful foolishness. Through the Savior, we become truly wise and able to offer that wisdom to others as well. (TLSB)

7:1 my son – The tenth and last discourse for youth (7:1-27) takes up the subject of sexual morality one more. As in the previous discourse, Solomon begins with several verses of encouragement to follow wisdom. (CSB)

treasure up my commandments – mits-vaw’ ; a *command*, whether human or divine (collectively the *Law*):—(which was) commanded (-ment), law, ordinance, precept.

Keeping God’s Law is not mere obedience to external commands; it is a matter of the heart (v 3). When we store God’s words within us, God keeps us from sinning (Ps 119:11). (TLSB)

7:2 live. Life at its fullest comes to those who fear, love, and trust in God and His commands and promises. (TLSB)

the apple of your eye. The pupil, which is cared for and protected because of its great value./ (CSB)

Lit, “the little man of the eye”; refers to the reflection that appears on the eye as a person watches what is precious to him or her. (TLSB)

This refers to the pupil of the eye. It is vital vision and has to be carefully protected. Similarly, we are to guard and keep wisdom’s teachings. And how do we do that? By carefully studying God’s Word and with His help, firmly holding to its teachings. (PBC)

7:3 Bind them on your fingers. As a reminder (see 6:21; Dt 6:8). (CSB)

He says we are to make wisdom both an inward and an outward part of life – written in the heart and tied to one’s finger. As people used to tie a string around their finger as a reminder, so wisdom is to be our constant reminder of what’s right. Unless it becomes a way of life, even the best advice is useless in the face of powerful temptations. (PBC)

tablet of your heart. See Jer 31:33. (CSB)

7:4–5 Once again, wisdom is contrasted with the adulteress. When we keep intimate company with God’s wisdom (“my sister ... intimate friend”), we will be kept from adultery. (TLSB)

7:4 *wisdom.* As embodied in the instructions of the wisdom teacher (vv. 1–3). (CSB)

hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

my sister ... intimate friend. Make wisdom your most intimate companion. “Sister” may be used here in the sense of “bride” (see SS 4:9–10, 12; 5:1–2). (CSB)

This reference to wisdom as “sister” and “kinsman,” prepares us for the next section of Proverbs in which wisdom is personified. It also underscores the closeness we are to have with wisdom. “Sister” was a term of endearment sometimes applied to one’s sweetheart or bride (see Song of Songs 4:9,10,12;5:1,2) (PBC)

7:5 Even as he guard wisdom’s teachings and keeps them in his heart, they protect the young man...from the adulteress wife of another man. (PBC)

7:6 *lattice.* Windows in ancient Israel had no glass. To keep birds out and air flowing, wooden lattices covered the openings. (TLSB)

Looking through the cross strips of wood that formed the lattice to his window, Solomon observed what went on in the busy street below. There he saw a young man who lacked judgment. (PBC)

7:7 *lacking sense.* Echoing 6:32, Solomon singles out one young man who shows his lack of wisdom by approaching the haunts of an adulteress. (TLSB)

Several details are of note. For one thing, this particular youth was not the only “simple” one. There were other young men who were naïve and inexperienced. But unlike others, this one lacked the good judgment to avoid the adulteress. The term translated “young men” in this verse is actually “sons.” This ties to the objects of Solomon’s ten discourses, which are directed to “my son” and in the discourse to “my sons” (see also verse 24). In other words, he’s saying this young man was one of you. (PBC)

7:8 *in the direction of her house.* See 5:8. (CSB)

In 1:20, wisdom was personified as a woman crying out in the streets. Here, Solomon shows that in those same streets, sexual temptation cries out. He presents the struggle between the two in the heart of one young man. (TLSB)

Perhaps the young man was simple enough not to be aware that he was headed into an area of ill-repute. Or he may have known yet felt nothing would happen if he just walked by. But he was playing with fire. (PBC)

7:9 *time of night.* He was hoping no one would see him. (CSB)

Practically, the darkness provides cover for the young man's approach to sin. Spiritually, it symbolizes his lack of wisdom, for wisdom is walking in the light (Ps 119:105). (TLSB)

This verse paints the backdrop: darkness was setting in. The three expressions – “at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in” – describe the succession from later afternoon until night. As the afternoon fades, the cool breeze sets in (The twilight actually refers to the breeze, which rises in the late afternoon.) And then comes darkness. (PBC)

7:10 *dressed as a prostitute*. Perhaps in a gaudy manner (see Eze 16:16) and heavily veiled (see Ge 38:14–15). (CSB)

There was nothing subtle about this woman's appearance. In Bible times, this may have meant she was wearing a veil (see Genesis 38:14,15). She is dressed in a way designed to seduce, or as some might say, she was dressed to kill. (PBC)

7:11 *loud*. Applied to the “woman Folly” in 9:13. (CSB)

The woman is depicted as brash and aggressive toward the young man, oblivious to social customs requiring public modesty by a woman, who should have been home at night. (TLSB)

The woman is “loud,” the same way in which folly is later described (9:13). Behind this brazen exterior, she is crafty. Though she seems to offer love and pleasure to the youth, she is really concerned only about herself. Her interest is in her own enjoyment, not that of the young man. (PBC)

7:12 *lies in wait*. Ready to catch her prey (see v. 22). (CSB)

7:13 *kisses him*. A bold greeting (see Ge 29:11). (CSB)

The bold greeting stirs the young man's sexual appetite. With that aroused, she will help him make excuses for his sin. (TLSB)

She goes right after him. (PBC)

7:14 *offer sacrifices*. Part of the meat could be eaten by the one who brought the offering and by his (or her) family (Lev 7:12–15). (CSB)

The woman presents herself as religious, as having just made a peace offering in connection with a vow. (Cf Lv 7:12–16.) Some of the meat in a peace offering could be eaten by the person making the offering, but it had to be eaten within two days. What a wily invitation! The woman turns her temptation to sin into an invitation to a fellowship meal. Her brashness probably also shows that these religious meals had been secularized over time (e.g., the secularization of the Christmas feast into Christmas parties). (TLSB)

Her first words are striking. She talks of fellowship offerings (also called peace offerings) and vows! Perhaps she had vowed to offer a gift for some blessing, such as a safe trip. In light of the immorality which follows, it seems strange that she should be concerned with vows and offerings. Upon reflection, however, it may not seem so strange at all. We think for example, of our Christmas holidays. This woman mentions to the naïve young man at an office party, “I even made it to church this year.” And then she proceeds to seduce him. (PBC)

today...paid my vows. An offering made as the result of a vow was one of the fellowship offerings, and the meat had to be eaten on the first or second day (see Lev 7:15–16). So the young man had an opportunity to enjoy a real feast, one that ironically had a religious significance (cf. Am 5:21–22). (CSB)

7:15 *seek you eagerly* – Apparently, the young man walked by regularly, since the woman looked for him and had everything ready. He had been flirting with danger and now he would get it. (PBC)

She emphasizes that she has been seeking him in particular, appealing to his pride and prowess. In truth, any unwitting “trick” would have satisfied her. (TLSB)

7:16 *colored linens from Egypt.* Linen is associated with the wealthy in 31:22. Egyptian linen was of great value (see Isa 19:9; Eze 27:7). (CSB)

Very expensive (Ezk 27:7). In what follows, she offers the young man not a cheap thrill but an experience in lavish living, befitting the rich and famous. (TLSB)

7:17 *myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.* Fragrant perfumes that are linked with making love also in Ps 45:8; SS 4:14; 5:5. (CSB)

myrrh. Imported, highly fragrant gum extracted from *burseraceae* trees. *aloes.* Costly imported products made from aromatic resin secreted by older eaglewood trees. *cinnamon.* Imported spice made from the inner bark of a tropical evergreen tree in the laurel family. (TLSB)

The items in verses 16 and 17 are also mentioned in the wedding scene in the Song of Solomon (4:14). What is one setting adds to the joy of the “the marriage bed kept pure” (Hebrews 13:4), in another situation becomes a tool of the devil. (PBC)

7:18 *take fill of love.* Making love is compared to eating and drinking also in 9:17; 30:20; SS 4:16; 5:1. (CSB)

She makes her proposition, inviting the man to sexual pleasures likened to a sumptuous meal (cf Sg 4:10–5:1). (TLSB)

7:19 *my husband* – She literally refers to him in a derogatory way as “the man” – has enough money with him for an extended journey. (PBC)

not at home. So he will never know (cf. 6:34–35). (CSB)

Lest the young man fear being caught by the woman’s husband, she assures him that he is gone on a long business journey. She continues to anticipate his reasons for rejecting her offer. (TLSB)

long journey. Perhaps he was a wealthy merchant. (CSB)

7:20 *money.* Pieces of silver of various weights were a common medium of exchange, but not in the form of coins until a later period (see note on Ge 20:16). (CSB)

full moon – This reference reminds us that the Jewish calendar was lunar. (PBC)

No doubt that was days away. (TLSB)

7:21 *seductive speech ... smooth talk.* Lit, “smooth lips”; may also refer to her kisses. Her mouth breathes seduction. In v 5, her words were said to be smooth. (TLSB)

compels him. The woman has appealed to all five senses. She dressed provocatively (sight), took hold of him (touch), prepared a meal (taste), and perfumed her bed (smell). With flattering words she continues her appeal to his sense of hearing in the coming verses. (PBC)

7:22 *as an ox going to the slaughter.* Totally oblivious of the fate that awaits him. (CSB)

caught fast. See Isa 51:20. (CSB)

The downfall of the young man is immediate; he is unwittingly trapped and killed. (TLSB)

A decision made in a moment of passion will affect the rest of his life. (PBC)

7:23 *pierces his liver.* The terrible fate of the wicked is similarly described in Job 20:24–25. (CSB)

The arrows that will pierce him are not Cupid’s. Disease, remorse, financial loss, emotional upheaval, a vengeful husband, and perhaps an early death are some of the arrows in the quiver of the adulterous woman. (PBC)

7:24–27 Solomon summarizes the point of the illustration, describing the deadly consequences of a turn off wisdom’s path. The repetition enhances learning, as Solomon restates from 2:18 and 5:5 that this woman’s road leads to death. (TLSB)

7:24 *O sons* – Solomon closes this discourse with this address. Everyone should heed these warnings. (PBC)

cost him his life. The young man has left behind the life God’s wisdom brings. To choose sin is to choose the way that leads to death (14:12; 16:25; Rm 6:23). (TLSB)

7:26 *Many a victim.* See 9:18; Isa 5:14. (CSB)

One of the great tragedies of Bible history is that Solomon himself fell prey to the sins of the flesh. Having gathered a large harem to himself, he let his wives lead him into idolatry. It’s possible that he repented later in life. Yet the damage had been done. Strife haunted his senior years and following his death, the next generation saw Solomon’s mighty kingdom split into two divisions. (PBC)

7:27 *way to Sheol.* The word translated “grave” in this verse can also be translated “hell” (Hebrew, sheol). That is the final destination of un-repentant sin. (PBC)

Ch 7 Whether male or female, husband or wife, the one who commits adultery chooses immediate gratification over faithfully keeping one’s commitments to God and spouse. The breaking of the Sixth Commandment has repeatedly brought death to marriage, family, friendships, and career. More significant, this willful sin walks away from God and God’s order in His creation, in which He reserves sexual intimacy for the marriage of one man and one woman. No talk of love, youthful naiveté, or even shared religious values can camouflage the destructive force of the sin of sexual intimacy outside marriage. The One who is faithful in all

things offers forgiveness for all who have taken this deadly turn. The apostle Paul likens God's relationship with us to a marriage characterized by service and sacrifice (Eph 5:22–27). God's Word and wisdom light the way to sexual purity and marital faithfulness. • Lord Christ, Wisdom of God, plant Your Word in my heart that I may be faithful in my sexuality. Save me from wanton sins of immediate pleasure, which make no sense for those who live by Your light and truth. Lord Jesus, be for me the way that leads from death to life. In Your strong name. Amen. (TLSB)