

From Seduction to Destruction

The Harlot Highlights the Path to Spiritual Death

Introduction. From the writings of the wisest man that's ever existed comes a narrative like no other: an upfront and personal look at the moment an affair is devised (Proverbs 7:6-23). Though this account has been told and retold, preached and re-preached countless times, the intricacies have to be re-examined if for no other reason than to drill into the minds of a new generation what to be on the lookout for, and to save countless more marriages that might fall prey to seduction.

The prologue (vv. 1-5) shows once again that the best advice is useless against strong temptation unless it's thoroughly taken to heart and translated into habits.

The narrative unfolds beginning in v. 6 with the observation of an off-guard youth strolling along the streets at night. He's young, naive, and inexperienced. The narrative then in vv. 10-11 introduces the seductress who comes out to meet the innocent youth. She has the "attire of a harlot" and a "crafty heart."

Sun Tzu said, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." That's a wise statement, so we're going to look into the five steps that are detailed beginning at v. 12 which lead to this sin.

I. Acts Without Warning (7:12-13)

- A. Already acknowledging that he's "naive" and "lacking sense" (7:7), the adulteress has already selected her mark, "lurking in the corners" until the time is right. While he may be about his way at work, at school, walking through the grocery store, she has it in her mind what will come to pass, and waits for the opportunity when he's at his most vulnerable.
- B. And when the time is right, as she's sitting in silence and he's approaching, she "seizes him and kisses him," already breaching that first barrier of contact before he can even dispute the moment. She's seized the emotional upper hand, and it's now that much harder for him to refuse.
- C. Whether they're men or women, they can have "eyes full of adultery" that "cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:14). This sounds like what happened between Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7).

II. Appears to Be Religious (7:14)

- A. Any trepidation he may have about her integrity, or any scruples about how God feels about it are immediately soothed by the first thing she says to him, claiming that she's already made her religious sacrifices for the day, and they are now spiritually free to embark on whatever path they choose.
- B. Solomon is right to describe her face as "brazen" as she invokes the name of religion to calm his fears about his eternal soul, and, believing her to be religious, not imagining that what's about to happen is the worst kind of anathema to God.
- C. James expressed such a simple idea when he declared that truly religious people keep themselves "unspotted from the world" (1:27). We can't be wicked from Monday through Saturday, and then pretend to be holy saints on Sunday.

Righteous people aren't hypocrites, lying in wait under the guise of spirituality to act on their immorality and worldliness.

III. Appeals to the Senses (7:16-18)

- A. With that hesitation out of the way, now it's a matter of enticing and luring him in with the expectation of what's to come: colored linens from Egypt, myrrh, aloes and cinnamon — all things that delight the body and appeals to the eyes.
- B. With that, she pounces on the moment of opportunity by describing the encounter as a feast, drinking their love together and letting their emotions take over — after all, isn't that what life's about? His mouth begins to drool at the prospect of such an exciting rendezvous, imagining the pleasure that's at his doorstep, ready for the taking — all for him.
- C. The devil definitely knew what he was doing when he perfected the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16; cp. Genesis 3:6; Matthew 4:1-11). The Hebrew writer called for mutual exhortation which sustains and strengthens our faith against temptation and sin (Hebrews 3:13).

IV. Acknowledges Possible Fears (7:19-21)

- A. "And don't worry about my husband," she continues. "He's gone on a far off journey, miles away from here, with his mind occupied by a lot of things, and he won't be back anytime soon." In that moment of desire, when all you want is her and all she wants is you, logic goes out the window.
- B. They're both are convinced that no harm will befall them for their actions, and there's no rational excuse now for them not to engage in the utmost desires of their heart.
- C. Seduction can be done in several ways, including enticing speech. Jesus said we'll be judged by our words — not only gossip and profanity— but also words that lead to temptation and destruction (Matthew 12:33-37).

V. Acquiesces Without Protest (7:22-23)

- A. And off they go. What started as a seizing kiss concludes with him willfully following her to the depths of depravity, with no mention in the entire passage of him speaking up or protesting what's about to happen. It justifies Solomon's description of him as a bird to the snare or an ox to the slaughter.
- B. If only he had been able to see what she was really saying, and what the eternal implications of that one night would've been, then he would've never walked down that street in the first place.
 - 1. As this narrative pictures the young man falling prey to a beautiful, aggressive woman who pursues what she wants, real life and real marriages can be more complicated.
 - 2. This young man was alone naive, but the reality is that many married couples start a downward slide by not taking care of each other's emotional needs. This leads to negative, belittling behavior that builds resentment and drives a wedge between them. In those circumstances, it only takes a tiny trickle of attraction (as opposed to the fire hose this woman used) to lead a husband or wife down an ungodly path.

C. Sin is deceitful and deadly (Hebrews 13:4), and so many people fall into it and will continue to fall into it until the world ends (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Conclusion. In this situation, we're like Solomon, unattached observers who can see all the myriad of negatives to this situation, both physically and spiritually. But when you're in that moment, if you aren't spiritually ready to stand up against what's going on, the fate will be the same for you. Such is the necessity of preparing our hearts towards our God and our spouse, with eyes only for them in the pursuit of holiness and caring for one other's needs, and rejecting the pleas of Satan (Proverbs 5:15-20; 6:32).

Lest any man or woman wants to write this sermon off because they're not tempted by the opposite sex, I want to remind you that the path of destruction works the same no matter what transgression you speak of or are tempted by. Therefore, remember that each of us will give account of ourselves to God (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). God wants holy people!