



## “The Lust of the Flesh”

### START

As your Connect Group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

***As a kid, what was most influential in your understanding of the “birds and the bees”? How influential were your parents and the church in these early conversations?***

***Martin Luther said of sexual temptation, “We can’t do anything about the birds flying over our head, but we can prevent them building a nest in our hair.” What do you understand Luther’s metaphor to mean? How does this relate to our world today?***

***How do you define lust? How have people’s opinions of lust changed throughout the years, both individually and as a society?***

The Greek word translated “lust” refers to a strong desire or an intense longing. The word was used only a few times in the New Testament to describe a positive longing. Most of the time, the word denoted a negative desire. Paul used the word in this way when he reminded Titus to avoid worldly desires (Titus 2:12). John used this word to describe things opposed to God such as “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16). The word lust can also be translated as “cravings of the flesh” or “desire for something forbidden.” Today we will discuss two proverbs from Solomon that warn against lust and encourage sexual purity. Then we will look at an illustration from the Old Testament and a brief teaching from Jesus.

*“Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.”*

-C.S. Lewis

### READ

#### PROVERBS 5:15-20

*“Drink water from your own cistern,  
water flowing from your own well.*

*<sup>16</sup> Should your springs flow in the streets,  
streams in the public squares?*

*<sup>17</sup> They should be for you alone  
and not for you to share with strangers.*

*<sup>18</sup> Let your fountain be blessed,  
and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.*

*<sup>19</sup> A loving deer, a graceful doe—  
let her breasts always satisfy you;*

*be lost in her love forever.*

*<sup>20</sup> Why, my son, would you lose yourself  
with a forbidden woman  
or embrace a wayward woman?"*

## **PROVERBS 6:24-35**

*"They will protect you from an evil woman,  
from the flattering tongue of a wayward woman.*

*<sup>25</sup> Don't lust in your heart for her beauty  
or let her captivate you with her eyelashes.*

*<sup>26</sup> For a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of bread,  
but the wife of another man goes after a precious life.*

*<sup>27</sup> Can a man embrace fire  
and his clothes not be burned?*

*<sup>28</sup> Can a man walk on burning coals  
without scorching his feet?*

*<sup>29</sup> So it is with the one who sleeps with  
another man's wife;  
no one who touches her will go unpunished.*

*<sup>30</sup> People don't despise the thief if he steals  
to satisfy himself when he is hungry.*

*<sup>31</sup> Still, if caught, he must pay seven times as much;  
he must give up all the wealth in his house.*

*<sup>32</sup> The one who commits adultery lacks sense;  
whoever does so destroys himself.*

*<sup>33</sup> He will get a beating and dishonor,  
and his disgrace will never be removed.*

*<sup>34</sup> For jealousy enrages a husband,  
and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge.*

*<sup>35</sup> He will not be appeased by anything  
or be persuaded by lavish bribes.*

## **REVIEW**

### **Context/Commentary/Background**

#### **PROVERBS 5:15-20 THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY**

5:15–18. The rewards of chastity are a further encouragement to moral purity. A **cistern ... well ... springs ... streams**, and **fountain** control water, keeping it from being dissipated **in the streets**. Similarly marital love with one's **wife** (v. 18) is pictured as enjoying one's cistern or fountain (cf. Song 4:12, 15). Sexual desires should be controlled and channeled in one's marriage, not wasted as described in Proverbs 5:7–14. Some commentators say the word **them** (v. 17) refers to

children; others say it continues the metaphor of streams picturing one's sexual desires. As a person would not get water from his neighbor's cistern because he had his own (2 Kings 18:31), so a man should have his physical needs met by his own wife, not someone else's.

5:19–20. The **breasts** of a man's wife are soft to the touch and **graceful** in appearance like a **deer** (cf. Song 4:5; 7:3). Therefore a husband should be **captivated** (cf. Prov. 5:20; the verb *šāgâh* means "go astray," cf. v. 21; but it may also suggest the idea of being captured) **by her love**, not the affections of an adulteress. By two rhetorical questions (v. 20) the author pointed up the folly of being **captivated** (cf. v. 19) **by an immoral woman** and loving someone else's **wife**.<sup>1</sup>

## PROVERBS 6:24-35 THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY

6:24. Wisdom, acquired from God's Word taught by one's parents (vv. 20–23) helps protect **from** adultery (cf. 2:12, 16–19). **The immoral woman** (lit., "woman of evil")—perhaps unmarried—may be the prostitute mentioned in 6:26. **The wayward wife** (cf. 2:16; 7:5; 23:27) is a sexually promiscuous married woman (cf. "another man's wife," 6:29). In verse 26 she is called an "adulteress," literally, "a wife of a man." On *noḵrîyâh* ("wayward") see comments on 2:16. Such women have **smooth** tongues; they speak seductively (cf. 2:16; 5:3; 7:5, 21).

6:25. This verse gives a warning and verses 26–29, 32–35 speak of the reasons for the warning. Lusting **in** one's **heart** (cf. comments on 3:5; 4:23) after a physically attractive and sexually promiscuous woman, whether married or unmarried, is wrong. Jesus spoke along a similar line (Matt. 5:28). Men who have fallen into the sin of adultery have often begun with lustful looking. If a man looks at such a woman, she may seek to **captivate** him **with her flirting eyes**.

6:26. Immorality is costly! A **prostitute** (cf. 7:10; 23:27; 29:3) can reduce a man to utter poverty, having only **a loaf of bread**, by spending money for her services (cf. 29:3). And a wayward wife (cf. comments on 6:24) can prey on one's **very life**, that is, bring him to ruin and death (cf. 2:18–19; 5:5, 14; 7:22–23, 26–27).

6:27–29. One cost of sexual unfaithfulness is stated in verse 26, and another in verses 27–35. Dire consequences are inevitable (vv. 27–29) and severe (vv. 30–35). As it is impossible to hold **fire** on one's **lap** without burning **his clothes** or to **walk on ... coals without** burning one's **feet**, so it is impossible to commit adultery **with another man's wife** without being harmed. Illicit sex is like playing with fire! Such a man will be punished, possibly by the woman's husband (cf. v. 34).

6:30–31. People may sympathize with (but not approve of) **a thief** if he is attempting to avoid starvation. However, he had to repay **sevenfold** even if it cost him everything (similar to the man being reduced to a loaf of bread, v. 26). The thief's punishment, though difficult, is less severe than the adulterer's. One who "steals" another's wife finds no forgiveness and no leniency.

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<sup>1</sup> Sid S. Buzzell, "[Proverbs](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 915.

6:32–35. Involvement in **adultery** shows one’s stupidity (cf. 7:7; 9:4, 16); he goes ahead in his sin while knowing that severe consequences will follow. He **destroys himself** (cf. 6:26b; Deut. 22:22); adultery is a kind of “suicide.” Also he is disgraced and shamed; in contrast with a thief (Prov. 6:30), an adulterer is despised. And the wife’s husband, learning about their conduct, becomes jealous, furious (cf. 27:4), and vengeful against the adulterer (apparently blaming the guilty man more than his wife). The anger of such a husband cannot be dispelled by bribery, no matter how **great it is**. Bribery is frequently condemned in Proverbs (6:35; 15:27; 17:8), in the Law (Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; 27:25), and elsewhere (e.g., Job 36:18; Ps. 15:5; Ecc. 7:7; Isa. 33:15).<sup>2</sup>

## Content

As Solomon led Israel to greatness as a kingdom, he developed quite a reputation for himself in terms of marriage. Along with guiding God’s people to construct the ornate temple in Jerusalem, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). In Proverbs, however, he didn’t encourage his son to follow his example when it came to marriage relationships. He instructed his son to remain devoted to one woman alone—the wife of his youth.

*“You were created to love God...not pleasure. Loving pleasure is all about one person...YOU”*

-Paul Coleman

**Ask a volunteer to read Proverbs 5:15-20.**

***What is the message of this passage about sexual purity?***

***Why was the analogy of drawing water from your own well powerful in that society? What would be a comparable metaphor for sexual purity today?***

The main idea in verses 15-20 is clear, but the way it is expressed comes from a culture that is foreign to most of us. We usually take for granted a ready and healthy source of water, but water was far more precious to the people who first read the Book of Proverbs. People in Bible times often provided water for their families by digging wells or devising cisterns to catch and hold rain water. Ideally, each house had its own cistern (2 Kings 18:31). Therefore, the metaphor of drinking water from one’s own cistern or well was especially appropriate for a husband’s satisfying his sexual thirst with his own spouse.

***What distractions can undermine finding fulfillment in our spouses?***

***For those of us who are single, what lessons can we take away from this proverb?***

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<sup>2</sup> Sid S. Buzzell, “Proverbs,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 918–919.

***What boundaries has God set for His children in regards to sexual purity?***

***How do the boundaries God has set for sexual purity protect you?***

We all know too well the sexual temptations this world throws our way. The only hope we have of remaining faithful to our spouses and sexually pure in our singleness is by living within the boundaries God has laid out. All of His boundaries are designed to benefit us. They protect us from damaging attitudes and actions we inevitably regret, and preserve for us life's best. A promiscuous lifestyle may appear fulfilling, but it is hollow.

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions – is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

1John 2:15-16

Once Solomon taught his son the positive lesson about faithfulness in marriage as the sole source of lasting and growing sexual fulfillment, he didn't stop there. He spoke candidly with his son about the consequences he would face if he committed adultery.

**Ask a volunteer to read Proverbs 6:24-35.**

***What specific warnings did Solomon give concerning adulterous affairs in marriage?***

***What are some dangerous consequences Solomon pointed out in these verses?***

In his warning to his son, Solomon gave some wise advice about not letting lust for another woman take root in his heart. As Solomon explained, the price to be paid will be the man's very life. Solomon used two visual images to impress upon his son the certain consequence of lust—being burned by fire and stealing food. As Solomon warned, lust always has certain, inevitable consequences.

***What are contributing factors to the common occurrence of adultery in marriages?***

***How can we be aware of the cost and become proactive in protecting our marriages from being torn apart by lust and the actions that follow?***

***Again, what is the takeaway from this proverb for those of us who are single?***

## **APPLICATION**

***What are some ways you can combat lust? Where do you turn?***

***How is Christ our only hope in regard to lust and sexual purity?***

***What role does personal accountability play when it comes to sexual purity?***

***How can we as a group encourage one another to live lives of purity and self-control?***

## **RESPOND**

### **PRAY**

Close your time in prayer by asking God to help you be vigilant and aware of the temptation and lusts of the flesh/world. Pray that God would keep your group far from lust and that you would rely on the power of the Spirit to fight against lust. Pray for the people in your church and in your community who are struggling with lust—that they would find freedom in Christ.

### **MERGE IDEA**

Open-ended questions you can ask your children:

Why is it important to be careful about the way we see or look at others? How would God want us to think of others? What does it mean to have a pure mind (or pure thoughts)?

#### *Paul Coleman's 3 Points*

##### *The Lust of the Flesh is...*

1. Short-Sighted (Lamentations 1:9; 1 Peter 2:11; Proverbs 6:32, 7:22-23)
2. Self-Indulgent (2 Timothy 3:2-4)
3. Shaming (Proverbs 10:9; Ephesians 5:3; Matthew 5:8-*Secretive*)

Additional helps and information: [www.mobberly.org/extra](http://www.mobberly.org/extra)