

PROVERBS: THE WAY OF WISDOM

LUST & CHASTITY

For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood... Her feet go down to death... her ways wander, and she does not know it. — Proverbs 5:3-6

Read: Proverbs 5:1-23, 6:20-35, & 7:1-27

Lust may well be the most obvious and familiar of the “Big 7.” It’s the one we are confronted with more than the others because our culture is drenched in it. Lust isn’t necessarily confined to disordered sexual desire, although that is the context most of us put it in and what is intended by its inclusion with the other deadly sins. Properly defined, lust is sexual desire that dishonors its object and disregards God. It is the habit of nurturing and cultivating sexual desire outside of God’s design for marriage. At its core, lust has pleasure as its goal in a selfish way; what I want, when I want it, and on the terms I want it. Lust tries to convince us that God will not provide for our legitimate desires.

The challenge with lust is that sexual desire by itself isn’t necessarily sinful. God created sex. It’s his idea. Pleasure is also his idea and gift. The problem comes in what we do with our desires, and how we carry them out. Life in our modern culture doesn’t help us much as we try to understand this vice. We live in a culture that is constantly inviting us to view one another in terms of sexual availability and attractiveness. As though that is the sum total of a person’s worth. We are one of the first cultures in history that is suggesting that the primary way we should understand ourselves and form an identity is around sexual desire.

Most of us, have taken the bait of our sexualized culture in one way or another, and we have stories of regret to go with it. It must be said plainly, God is not anti-desire, anti-sex, or anti-pleasure. God is for all those things in their proper place as gifts to be received. Instead, God is anti-abuse. He is opposed to the abuse we inflict on others through online additions. He is opposed to us reducing those made in his image as mere objects to be consumed by mental fantasy. He is also opposed to the abuse we inflict on our own consciences by participating with our broken desires. God’s commands related to our sexuality and sexual desires are not about keeping us down. They are about fighting for our flourishing.

In place of unchecked and unrestrained sexual desire, the Bible calls us toward a life of chastity. The virtue of chastity has nothing to do with being sexually repressed or begrudgingly pure. Chastity is about the practice of submitting our sexuality to God, aligning our lives to his word, and trusting he knows best.

Discussion/Reflection

- 1. How is God’s wisdom on sex and sexual desire different from the world’s wisdom?**
- 2. Do you find it hard to trust God’s wisdom on this issue? Why or why not?**
- 3. Where do you need to experience the forgiveness of Jesus? Help and power from the Holy Spirit? Support of your community?**