

Proverbs 4-6 • Guard your heart

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Chapter four of Proverbs. This continues the exhortation of a father to his sons. Follow along with me here as we look at the first couple of verses. It says,

"1 Hear, O sons, (and that is in the plural) a father's instruction, (to) be attentive, that you may gain insight, (correction- and be attentive,)

2 for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching."

Now I want you to pause there, if you would, just for a moment. We'll go through the chapter, I promise you. But what we're seeing here as we just begin again, this section of Proverbs is something we've seen before. And that the most important instruction for a child begins at home. And that is so important to remember.

Personally, I got to be honest with you. I think one of the biggest mistakes that we've made as a society is essentially backing away from our role of instructors in the home and giving that role to professionals. We live in a very professional centric society. And we've gotten to the point where we've all but abdicated our responsibility of instructing our children.

Because... And I'm not saying that professionals may not be helpful. And that people like teachers, we, teachers come into our children's lives and they play a very significant role and a very wonderful role. And I'm not demeaning that or belittling that at all. But I think even teachers who are teaching our children would say, that if there's not the support of the parents at home, their job is an uphill battle. And when teachers are truly successful in what they do, it's when the parents are behind them supporting, helping, guiding and being there for their own role, their own responsibility to teach their children.

But unfortunately, I think parents today have kind of been conditioned to believe that there's really not a lot they can do in their parents lives, or their children's lives rather. Your kids go through a traumatic situation and we immediately turn to professionals to help them as if parents can't do anything about it. So, anyway, so the whole idea that the Bible says here that kids need to be taught by their parents. They need to be trained by their parents.

I got to tell you something. When I read through the Proverbs, I wish I could go back and do it again. I really do. I wish I could get a do over. My kids are all grown and I've even got teenage grandkids. I know I look so young that doesn't look possible. But anyway... But I really do; I wish I could do it over again. Because if I could, I would spend more time instructing and training. And not expecting my kids to automatically get it.

I think I put a lot of pressure on my children as a, as a younger dad thinking that they were supposed to know things right out of the chute. And I got frustrated with them if they didn't respond the way I thought they should and I regret that. I wish I would have been more of the proverbial father from the standpoint of instructing my children. Sitting them down, giving instruction, saying this is how you do that. And not just instructing them in things about like, how to paint a fence or change the oil in your car. But instructing them in areas of right and wrong and why.

Do you know how many times we as parents will say something to our kids and they kind of look at us. They give us that kind of blank expression, which if it could be voiced it would say, why? Why are you telling me that? And you know, we come back with this ridiculous thing we heard from our parents that we learned, "because I said so." Right? Which is the dumbest thing in the world to say to your children. Rather than explaining moral values. The value of doing this or not doing that because we care about people. Because we care about...we respect other people. We respect other people's property. We respect their concerns. We respect and care about their needs and so forth and so on. I wish I would have spent more time doing that.

Solomon is doing that. And he even goes on to say that it was that way when he was a young boy. Look what he says in verse three. He says,

"³ When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,

⁴ he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

⁵ Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth."

So, and you know when a when a parents, and Solomon's remembering what his father said, and that would be David. But when a parent says to a child, "don't turn away," do you know what they're inferring? That there is a strong

temptation to turn away. And I think we all know that. We see that in our kids, don't we, when we're raising children. We recognize that, that rebellious nature that can very easily rise up in the heart of a child, and some more than others.

Some kids, I understand, they're more compliant. And they really want to please their parents. And boy, if we get one of those, God bless you. But a lot of kids are looking for ways to kind of get around mom and dad's insights, and warnings, and Wisdom, and so forth. And so the command is given here, "don't turn away, don't forget the things that I'm sharing with you here."

So he says in verse six, and again, wisdom is personified here in the female gender. He says,

"6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you."

I want you to notice there. Wisdom is said to do two things: keep and guard. And actually those are essentially the same thing. So how exactly does that happen? Have you ever thought? I mean, it says wisdom... He promises wisdom will guard you. How? How's wisdom going to guard you, exactly?

Well, having wisdom, which as we've told you before, is the application of knowledge. Really its more than just having insight into problems and so forth. Wisdom is like kind of having a trusted friend who is really smart. And who's an advisor to you. And when you're going through challenging times and difficult situations where you don't really know how to turn, you've got that person that you can go to. And they're always at the ready to give you sound advice. That's what wisdom is like.

But it guards us in two ways. It guards us against situations that are worldly, and unstable, and just dumb. Foolish to be involved in. And it guards us against people that are worldly, and foolish, and unstable. And wisdom guards us by saying don't do that. Or don't connect with that person. That person is going to lead you astray. That person is going to lead you down the wrong path. Be careful there. That's what wisdom does.

It's that it's that voice in our heart that says this isn't smart. This thing that you're entering into. This agreement, this plan, this decision that you're faced with; this is not a good one. This is not a good decision. This is not going to bode well for you in the in the days and months to come and so forth. So that's how wisdom guards a person. All right? It sounds that alarm, if you will.

Verse seven. Now this kind of comes out a little bit weird in the English. It says,

"7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,"

Which kind of sounds fairly circular, doesn't it? But it's being translated, remember, from the Hebrew. And essentially what it means is the first step to gaining wisdom is to make up your mind to pursue it. That's what it's saying. That's the very first step to having wisdom. Make up your mind I want to be wise. I want the wisdom of the Lord. I need God's wisdom for life. And that is a humble decision on our part.

We like to think that we're perfectly capable of making all of our own decisions. And if I have things that are, I'm confronted with, it's like I can handle it. Right? Well, that's pride. That's human pride. So, the first step to being wise is recognizing that you're not very wise in and of yourself. And then pursuing wisdom; going after it. Okay?

He says, *"and whatever you get, get insight.*

8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; (And that word exalt means to bring advancement. Wisdom will bring advancement into your life. All right? He says,) she will honor you if you embrace her. (And that means wisdom will bring you respect from other people.)

9 She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

And those are poetic ways of just talking about unnamed blessings. He's mentioned a few by name, but now he's just being more general. She'll just bless you. Wisdom will bless you. It'll bring blessings into your life and so forth if you embrace wisdom.

Verse 10,

"10 Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many."

And of course, this has been said before. Speaks of avoiding bad decisions that could potentially cut short the life of an individual.

Verse 11,

"11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence."

When I read these verses I think to myself that some of the best advice that we as parents can give to our kids is just to forewarn them about the things that we've dealt with in life. And the temptations that we've dealt with to just kind of say, "I've been down that road and I've seen the allurements, the enticing way that those things in the world can just lay hold of you. But I want to warn you about that because this thing's going to come back and it's going to bite you. That's good instruction for a child. They... And it's important that we tell our kids.

I think it's even important to admit to our kids that we've made bad decisions. I've been down that road. I messed up. I don't stand here before you as a paragon of virtue. We ought to say to our kids, I stand before you as a fallible human being whom God has forgiven, thankfully. But man, I wish I had some of those years back. I wish I could get back some of the heartache, some of the pain. Some of the things I've lost because of my foolish decisions.

Because I found some things in the world in my younger years to be very alluring. And I found those temptations to be more than I could handle at the time. And I was drawn into decisions that have been very hurtful to, not only myself, but people who are close to me. I've hurt a lot of people with my bad decisions. And I want you to be able to see those things coming.

So this is a father advising his kids that when they see this stuff. He says just keep walking. Notice he said just pass it by. When you come to this, these kinds of temptations, just keep walking, just pass by.

He says in verse 18,

"18 ...the path of righteousness is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; (He says,) they (don't) even know over what they stumble." So, he turns to the metaphors of light and darkness to kind of help us to understand.

You and I don't hear these things like the people in Solomon's day heard them. Or even as much as a couple of hundred years ago. The darkness isn't as dark as it used to be from the standpoint of the artificial light that we are able to produce today.

When you think about in Solomon's day that at nighttime, the only light that they had to go by was like the light of a candle. Or the flame of some fire that maybe someone had made. The darkness meant more to them from the standpoint of understanding that it's dangerous to venture out in the dark.

I mean, you and I, we hop in our cars, we flip on our headlights. Our halogen headlights or our LED headlight. And they shine the way in front of us. And we just go barreling out into the night and think nothing of it. They didn't do that. In their, in their culture, to go out at night was to really open yourself up to great vulnerability and serious danger potentially. Because you couldn't see where you were going. And there were things... They didn't have sidewalks and places to traverse that you and I that are a bit safer and so forth.

The picture of darkness that Solomon paints here as he speaks to his sons, is a picture of danger. It's a picture of vulnerability. It's a picture of risk. And so he's basically saying don't risk it. Walk in the light. Wisdom is walking in the light where you can see. It illuminates your path in front of you. You can see where you're going because you've allowed wisdom to illuminate the path for you.

And you might say, well, what does somebody do if they just aren't very wise? Or they just, maybe they're just starting to seek wisdom? Well, that's why God put people around us. People who have experience. People who are older in years. People who've walked with Jesus for longer in their lives. And you can go to those people and say, I'm dealing with a situation and I'm not sure how to deal with it. I'm not sure how to walk. This, this is a risky thing in my mind. Well, that's great time for somebody to speak into your life words of wisdom that will bring the illumination of being able to see how you're, where you're going so that you won't stumble.

Verse 20,

"20 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

21 Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh."

Look at this next verse. This is I think, a critically important one. Verse 23. If this isn't underlined in your Bible, it should be.

"23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

I'll tell you why this is such an important verse. Because it begins with this exhortation to be, to do something with all vigilance. You and I would say above all else, or whatever you do, focus on this one thing. That's what he's saying when he says, with all vigilance, do this. Do what? On what are we to focus? He says keep your heart. And again, the word "keep" means "guard or protect." He's saying guard your heart, protect your heart. And do it above all else.

Why? Here's his answer, *"from it flow the springs of life."* In other words, it affects everything you do. It affects all of life. All of life issues forth from the heart.

You know we... I got... we got to be careful sometimes. We hear the word heart and we naturally kind of think of it in our modern American sort of a way of understanding it. And for us, it has a lot to do with emotions and feelings. But biblically speaking, the heart is so much more than that. The heart encompasses really the desires and affections that move a person forward and really shape their personality.

When we're being told here to guard our heart, we're being told to put up boundaries on the desires of our heart that may run contrary to the Word of God, the will of God, and in fact put us into some kind of danger. Put up boundaries around your heart, don't allow things to happen, right? Don't allow your heart to go places where it's going to get hurt. Where it's wrong, where it's just not the stuff you ought to be doing. You know what I mean?

Now that's...aww man! I don't mean to say this to you like this is easy. Because matters of the heart are not easy, are they. We can sit and we can say all day long, we can quote verses to people like, "do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers." Right? You guys know that passage from the New Testament. Right? Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14)

And you can say that to people all day long. But once the heart is engaged in a relationship with an unbeliever, now try to give them that verse and see what happens. Because once the heart is involved in the process of affection, and appreciation, and respect, and perhaps even love just try to turn them around. So that's why we're told here with all vigilance, guard your heart. Because everything in your life is going to flow from it.

It's going to affect everything. It's going to affect all your relationships. It's going to affect your entire family. It's going to affect your friends. It's going to affect your job and your job performance. It's going to, and here - the biggie, it will affect your relationship with God. Bottom line. And you cannot, you cannot get into a situation that is unbiblical without it affecting your relationship with God. You see, it's going to happen. Right?

He says here don't run after everything you see. Don't get sidetracked by sinful desires that put you into danger and lead you into sin. Guard your heart. Now listen, that's one of the reasons why we in the body of Christ are supposed to be encouraging one another to walk according to God's Word. And we're supposed to be helping to look out for danger zones.

When somebody's getting close to a danger zone hopefully there's somebody in your life who is willing to speak into your life and say, whoa, hold her there, Newt. What are you doing? Where are you going? Where are you heading here? Because this looks dangerous to me. I got a red alert going on in my heart about this direction you're on. That's not a mean thing to say to somebody. In fact, it's a very kind thing. It's a very caring thing to say to someone. I'm concerned. Is this the direction that the Lord would have you take?

Like I said, once somebody's heart is engaged, it's almost impossible. And they really have to kind of, in most cases, they have to walk it out. And they got to get to the end of it. And they have to, they have to see just how miserable they can be at the end of whatever journey that area was. In fact, I've, I'll have a short story here for you in just a moment about that very thing.

Verse 24,

"24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you."

We're going to have a whole lot more in the Proverbs to come to say about words and how our words affect things.

Verse 25,

"25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

26 Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure."

And that...when it says "*ponder the path of your feet;*" again that's poetic. You and I would say, hey watch where you're going. It's simple. But what it means, it means, think about where you're going. And not just think about it, but think about the consequences.

Do you guys know that if we really, truly did that, if we really thought through the consequences of our actions, we probably wouldn't make a lot of the foolish decisions that we have made in life. If we had the ability to sit down reasonably, rationally say, I wonder where this is going to end up. I wonder where this is going to end me up? Right? A month down the road, two months, six months, a year, two years, five years, 10 years. Where am I going to be for having made this foolish decision?

If we could see ahead as God sees ahead, and we could see all of the devastation that a particular decision brings into our lives, there's no question about the fact that we would change it. We'd say, well, I'm not going to do that. We don't have that ability of absolute foresight, but we can ponder our path. That's what we're being told to do here. "*Ponder the path of your feet;*" Where is it heading? Where is this going to go? And rather than that eternal optimism that we love to project into our own sinful behavior to say it'll all work out. We need to look realistically and rationally and see where it is truly heading.

Verse 27,

"27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil."
(Keep going straight. All right.)

Proverbs chapter five. This returns to the subject of avoiding sexual immorality. And a lot of these verses are very actually poetically graphic, describing the intimacy of a relationship between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife, and so forth.

"1 My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding,

2 that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.

3 For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil,

4 *but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword.*

5 *Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;*

6 *she does not ponder the path of life; (That's the opposite of what we just talked about. Instead of pondering her path, she does not ponder it, and) her ways wander, and she (doesn't even) know it. (correction-and she does not know it.)*

7 *And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.*

8 *Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,*

9 *lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless,*

10 *lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner,*

11 *and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,*

12 *and you say, "(Oh,) How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!" (which is a rebuke)*

13 *I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to (their) instructors. (correction- to my instructors)*

14 *I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation."*

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

16 *Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?*

17 *Let them be for yourself alone, and (for) not for strangers with you.*

18 *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,*

19 *a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.*

20 *Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?*

21 For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths.

22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the (coils) of his sin. (correction- cords of his sin)

23 He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray."

Wow! What a powerful chapter, but a great warning against marital infidelity. And the word is, to his sons is, don't give this away. This is yours. This is yours to enjoy in the intimacy with your wife and not to share it with others. Because the word intimacy means "something I share with someone and share with no one else." That's the idea behind intimacy.

And there should be abundance of intimacy in marriage, lots of intimacy. Not just physical intimacy. There should be emotional intimacy. Things I share with my wife that I share emotionally with no one else. Spiritual intimacy. Praying in front of my wife in ways that I would pray in front of no one else. Right? So, all these different kinds of intimacy should be in the marriage and vastly enriching our relationship with one another.

Unfortunately, we share too many other things with other people. I've even seen couples where there's faithfulness in marriage, but there's infidelity in areas of emotions. Sharing emotionally, spiritually, with someone else in ways that you wouldn't with your spouse. It just shouldn't be. We should maintain and retain that intimacy within the confines of marriage.

Marriage is intended, by God, to be a blessing. And it becomes a blessing when we make the determination in our hearts that we're going to love and appreciate the person to whom we are married.

I want to pass along a story that was shared by J. Vernon McGee many years ago. Of course, he's with the Lord now. But he shared this, and I'll just read it for you because this is out of his writings.

He said, "When I was the pastor of a certain church, a man of our congregation came to me and announced that he was leaving his wife and son and going to be running off with another woman who was also a member of the church.

Whether or not they were Christians, only God knows. I was a young pastor at the time and I really laid it on the line to him. He rose in indignation and said, 'Are you trying to rob me of my salvation?' I answered, 'Brother, if you have

salvation, I'm not trying to rob you of anything. But I do want to say this to you and I want you to remember it. If you are not God's child, then you are acting according to the way the devil's children act. If you happen to be a child of God, one of these days God's going to take you to his woodshed and he's going to whip you within an inch of your life. I'm not sure, but that he might even take your life.' The fellow just sneered and he went ahead and married the other woman.

The years have gone by and those two are the loneliest, saddest, most frustrated, most unloving people I know. I'm confident they would both say, 'If only we could go back and do it over.'"

What a powerful testimony of pondering our path. And not being prideful, but obeying God's Word, regardless of how it made us feel at the time. But just pressing forward in obedience.

Proverbs chapter six deals with several different topics. One of which is wise financial counsel in the first five verses check this out. He says,

"1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger,

2 if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth,

3 then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor.

4 Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber;

5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler."

What is he talking about? He's talking about the lack of wisdom that, in those days, was connected with cosigning on a loan. That's what it's all about. Wisdom would counsel against helping out a neighbor or a stranger. And the idea here is obviously that if your neighbor, or if a stranger for whom you have cosigned defaults on the loan, then you're the one who's going to get stuck with the debt. And you got to understand that back in those days, being in debt was no small issue.

Today... I mean, they couldn't file bankruptcy. There was no such thing and being exonerated basically from the debt. When you got into debt back in those days you went to debtor's prison. And that was frankly the case up until the last couple of hundred years. So yeah, 200, 300 years. So this was a very serious matter to encumber yourself unnecessarily by signing on to a loan for somebody else because they lacked the capital or whatever to be able to sign for the loan themselves.

Now what this passage isn't saying is that cosigning is always a bad idea. It's not saying that. Don't read this passage and come up with thou shalt not cosign a loan. That's not what it's saying. Remember, Proverbs is a book of wisdom. It's generalized. It's not necessarily specific.

Frankly, if you have the financial means to help somebody out with their loan, that even if they did default on it, it wasn't going to cause you a problem. You had the financial means to either pay it off or make the payments. Then it's really not a danger to you, right? Secondarily, I have often seen parents cosigning on loans for their kids. Their kids may not have the means to be able to buy a house or buy a car. And so the parents will cosign sometimes on a loan.

Frankly, I don't see anything wrong with that. And this verse is not forbidding that practice. It is simply saying that wisdom would advise against securing the loan of someone who could easily send you into financial ruin. So, if the defaulting on that loan would be, would create a financial ruination for you, wisdom would say, don't do it. I know it feels good to help people. But don't do it. It's just not smart.

Next, he goes on to talk about hard work. Interesting here he says,

"6 Go to the ant, O sluggard; (And by the way, a sluggard is a Biblical term for a lazy person who is unwilling to work. Okay? He says, Go to the ant, O sluggard;) consider her ways, and be wise."

Verse 7, still talking about the ant,

"7 Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,

8 she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest."

And by the way, this isn't your aunt as in married to your uncle. This is your ant as in the little crawly things on the ground. Have you ever sat and just watched them? They are amazing.

I remember as a young boy just sitting, when I had all the time in the world to sit, and just watching ants. And they are just incredible the way they work, and work together, and work hard. So they're so much a picture of a hard work diligent ethic in the ants that God created, that His word says, consider them, think about them, ponder them. Right?

Verse nine says,

"9 How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?"

10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,

11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."

Well this is not a difficult passage to understand. The message is very simple. And that is that laziness leads to poverty. The problem we have in our culture is that there are people that don't even care. They don't care that it leads to poverty. They're actually comfortable in their poverty. And that's very challenging when you're dealing with that sort of a person.

Verse 12 goes on to speak of the scoundrel. He starts off by saying,

"12 A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, (You think, wow! How can you have crooked speech?)

13 winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger,

14 with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord;

15 therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing."

So, Solomon refers here, talks about the worthless man, the wicked man. The bottom line in this particular proverb is that when tragedy comes, he's got nothing to fall back on. Because his life has been one of wickedness and in the blink of an eye, he says he's simply broken beyond healing.

Verse 16,

"16 There are six things... the Lord hates, seven that are that are an abomination to him: (correction-that the Lord hates)

17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil,

19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers."

You might call these the seven deadly sins of the Old Testament. By the way, starting with a list of six and then adding a seventh was a very common literary device in Hebrew poetry. Sounds strange for you and I to say, there are six things God hates, oh wait, there's seven. But that was a common way that they would express themselves.

And if we take these seven things and kind of convert them into modern language, or situations, or attitudes they probably go something like this: "*haughty eyes*," that refers to a, an attitude of prideful superiority. It's people who look at others and they think everybody's an idiot except them; "*a lying tongue*," obviously, you know what that is. That's somebody who never tells the truth; "*hands that shed innocent blood*," we'd call them simply a murderer; "*a heart that devises wicked plans*," obviously somebody who is planning and thinking about how they can break the law and hurt others; "*feet that make haste to run to evil*," that's people who seem to just have a gravitational pull toward doing wrong, "*a false witness that breathes out lies*," that's somebody who's willing to lie in any situation, even in a court of law in order to wrongly accuse another; "*and one who sows discord among (friends or) brothers*" is that person who sows the seeds of suspicion between people so that they end up hating each other.

And then we move on to another warning in verse 20 and following against the painful consequences of sexual immorality. You're kind of wondering why is that repeated so often here? Remember, Solomon's writing this to his sons. It's a big deal particularly with boys, particularly with boys. Sexual immorality and boys just seem to kind of go together, to be honest with you.

I mean, the Bible even says, "how can a young man keep his ways pure?" (Psalm 119:9) It doesn't say, "how can a young woman... Not that women struggle less with sin. But in the area of particularly sexual immorality and impurity, boys just have a natural gravitational pull toward those areas and so it's given repetitiously in the Proverbs.

"20 My son, (and he starts off) keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.

21 Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck.

22 When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.

23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

24 to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.

25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, ...do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; (correction- and do not let her)

26 for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.

27 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?

28 Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

29 So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.

30 People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry,

31 but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house.

32 (But) He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.

33 He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.

35 He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts."

So, he's talking there about the jilted husband, if you will. Who comes back with an attitude of jealousy and revenge against the individual who has walked so foolishly as to take his neighbor's wife.

And I particularly like verses 27 and 28. Because the rhetorical questions that are asked there are so important for us to just remember. "Can you carry fire next to your body? Can you grab some logs out of the fire pit and hold them close to you without burning yourself?" Well, obviously no one would think to do it. We'd say well, that would be dumb.

But that's what Solomon is saying. It's no less dumb to take another man's wife. Or to have that kind of a relationship with another man's wife. It is literally burning yourself. That's why he says at the end of this chapter, "he ends up just hurting himself."

He says "can you walk on hot coals in your feet not get scorched? Yeah, I don't think so. I don't care how much you meditate. It's... There's physics going on here. And then there's going to be burns. It's the same thing with sin. When we give ourselves into sin, there's going to be a result. There's going to be a result.

You know what I'm thankful for? I'm thankful for the grace and mercy of God, aren't you? Cause you know what, there's not one person in this room who hasn't sinned. There's not one person in this room who hasn't been a fool, myself included. I've been the chief of fools. And I am so thankful that when we come to God and we confess our sin, He is faithful, and just, to forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now, what I've just shared in no way gives us a license to go out and sin. Because believe me there are still burns. The consequences don't necessarily go away. There can still be forgiveness. There can even be restoration. But listen, you wrestle with God, you'll limp the rest of your life. Just ask Jacob. You thumb your nose at God's Word and some aspect of your life will be hindered.

The wages of sin is death. Something is going to die. May not be you. You come to the Lord, you confess your sin, yes, there's life in Jesus Christ. But that doesn't mean that something doesn't die. I've seen relationships die. I've seen families fly apart at the seams. I've seen careers come to a screeching halt and an end because of sin. Something always dies.

The wages of sin is always death even for a believer. It won't kill you eternally. Jesus already suffered eternal death for you and I on the cross. He experienced,

He tasted that separation from the Father for you and I. And thankfully you and I never will. Praise the Lord! Right?

But that doesn't mean that sin has lost its consequence, or its power to hurt, or to maim, or to cripple. Even in the life of a born-again Christian, it continues to, to kill, and to maim, and to cripple.

I am so thankful for our God who is, who loves us despite our weaknesses, despite our foolish decisions, our ridiculously dopey plans and who embraces us with a love that only a father could give. And sees us in Christ as complete and whole even though we know we are so far off the mark. But He embraces us nonetheless, just as He would see His son. And what a, what a glorious thing that that is.