

Connection to Proverbs 5:3-11,15-18

In Proverbs, Solomon called for sexual purity. Solomon shows us that sex is to be enjoyed within the context of marriage. He also pointed out the drastic results of impurity when embraced. Joseph's actions when tempted by Potiphar's wife give us practical steps in how to pursue purity and not sin against God.

Introduction/Opening

Many of us have been asked, "How far is too far?" in regard to sin. Teenagers might want to know this in the context of the opposite sex. Adults can ask this same question in regard to taxes or personal use of company time and resources.

The question should not be about taking ourselves as close to the edge as possible without going over, but rather we should concern ourselves with determining the right thing to do in the first place. Solomon had a great deal to say about sexual purity. We see the same principles carried out in the life of Joseph. Joseph knew that having any kind of relationship with the boss's wife was too far. So, he ran as fast as he could and as far as he could. Let's learn from his example today.

Outline

1. The Temptation to Sin is Present.
 - a) The temptation for sin, sexual or otherwise, is always going to be present. This is simply a part of our fallen world. At times the temptation can be extremely direct. Potiphar's wife came right to Joseph and said, "Sleep with me" (v. 7). When a direct temptation presents itself, a direct answer is needed. Joseph "refused" (v. 8). It would be wise for us to do the same thing.
 - b) Someone might approach us in the same manner, and temptation can present itself in a variety of ways. The temptation need not always be sexual. The temptation might not even come through someone else, being indirect in nature. We are tempted to look at something online, cheat a little on our taxes, or borrow a few things from the company. No matter what the temptation might be, Joseph's reply needs to be our reply as well.

2. Refuse to Submit to Temptation.
 - a) The refusal of the temptation needs to be immediate. From the request in verse 7 to his answer in verse 8, we see no delay. Left to ourselves, we might seek to justify sinful behavior. If we start down the path of what seems to be insignificant sinful behavior, we could end up in a compromising situation. Therefore, it is vital that we immediately refuse the temptation, no matter where it comes from.

- b) We must refuse the temptation consistently in the long term. Verse 10 shows that Potiphar’s wife spoke to him day after day. She would not relent. Yet, “he refused to go to bed with her” (v. 10). We need not think that the pursuit of purity is a one-time event. It can be a daily and moment-by-moment battle. Therefore, consistently spending time with God is crucial so that we are equipped to refuse the temptation in the immediate as well as the long term.
3. Pursue Purity No Matter What.
- a) The world and our sinful flesh seek to justify sinful behavior. We do so by thinking that no one will find out. Joseph, however, knew that this would not be the case. He told Potiphar’s wife that if they were to engage in sex, it would be a “sin against God” (v. 9). When we see sin as rightly being against God, we are more apt to take drastic steps to avoid it at all costs.
 - b) One drastic step that Joseph took was to immediately leave the room when Potiphar’s wife grabbed a hold of his clothes. His action was so swift that he left his clothes behind (v. 12). He had to know that leaving with such a rush and in said fashion would attract attention. It seems, however, that he would have rather found himself in an embarrassing moment than in a sinful moment.

Conclusion

God’s outline for purity, sexual or otherwise, is clearly articulated in His Word. Joseph provides an example of one who lived out God’s commands and affirms Solomon’s wisdom found in Proverbs 5. He recognized the temptation, refused to submit to it, and pursued purity no matter what. The question now becomes, will we follow God’s model?

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