



## SEVEN • Lust

### What Do I Need to Know?

One of the most powerful passages in the Bible dealing with lust and adultery is Proverbs 5:6-23. The poetic genre adds particular potency, as lust is personified as a seductress: making her lies, foolishness, and deceptive tactics more clearly exposed. The study breaks the Proverbial story into three sections.

#### Proverbs 5:1-6

The phrase, her lips “drip honey and her speech is smoother than oil” points to how subtle, and seducing the temptation to sexual sin. These words also point to the promise of sweetness and satisfaction. The teacher reminds the student that these words are a lie, and while lust and illicit sex seem sweet at the time, afterward they are bitter as gall. The teachers words underscore that there is always an afterward, and a price to be paid for illicit sex. It is a “double-edged sword.” The smooth talk and promise of life and fulfillment, conceal the deadly backside of the sword. The Proverb says the woman’s path “leads to the grave,” most likely meaning spiritual death, and a shattered life, but often there are physical consequences to lust and adultery as well.

#### Proverbs 5:6-14

In this section lies a critical warning; the teacher tells his student to “turn aside,” or as the apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 6:18, “Flee from sexual immorality.” The best path to avoiding sexual sin, is to do everything within one’s power to steer clear of temptation, and compromising situations.

This section mentions three consequences to lust that we are to keep in mind, lest the words of the seductress lead us astray. “Giving your strength to another and your years to one who is cruel,” paints the picture of enslavement. Sexual relationships, as well as sexual and pornographic involvement, often lead to enslavement. In exercising sexual freedom, freedom is forfeited. The second result is regret. “You will groan at the end of your life,” says the Proverb. The full consequences of lust and sexual sin continue to unfold over the length of our lives, leaving even the most foolish – at the end of their life – with terrible regrets and remorse. Last, is the consequence of public shame. The Proverb says, “I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.” Sexual sins are often the most private, and carry with them the most shame. The teacher reminds his student that sexual sin, sooner or later, is publicly exposed, leading to unbearable shame.

### What’s the Big Idea?

This discussion will explore the sin of lust. The study traces some of the consequences of lust and adultery, and then looks at the corresponding virtue to lust, self-control.



### Proverbs 5:14-23

In this last section, there are several solutions in view. First, the teacher advises to “find delight” and satisfaction in one’s own wife. This is more than a simple choice, but a lifestyle that continuously cultivates and inclines the heart toward one’s own husband or wife (much like keeping our zeal always serving the Lord) and does not allow the passions to diminish or divert. This principle can certainly be expanded to those who are single: cultivating one’s heart toward the Lord, or toward the future promise of a wife or husband. The principle is choosing to direct and cultivate one’s passions in the right direction.

Another solution, stated in the negative, is found in the last verse, “he will die (the adulterer) for lack of discipline.” The corresponding virtue to lust is self-control. All efforts to cultivate growth in self-control can bear fruit in fighting lust. Self-control, is the ability to say “no” to our passions, and their desires to be satisfied. Spiritual disciplines, such as the fasting of food or times of silence, can be a helpful exercise in growing one’s ability to control fleshly urges.

A last corrective mentioned in the verse, is the acknowledgement of the Lord. “For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and He examines all his paths.” The rationalization of lust can be: No one will ever know. But the teacher reminds us that all we do is always in full view of the Lord, and nothing can be kept hidden from Him.

### What if There’s a Problem?

The question about whether pornography is a form of adultery could present some debate. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” This makes it pretty clear that adultery and sexual immorality can occur even within the mind.

Additionally, the question over whether premarital sex could be classified as adultery is tricky. The Bible clearly affirms premarital sex as immoral, but is it adultery? A case could be made either for, or against, so allow for differing perspectives. In 1 Thessalonians 4:6, the apostle Paul seems to be referring to premarital sex as “defrauding a brother” (the person to whom they will eventually be married). From this line of sight it does seem that premarital sex could be seen as a form of adultery.

## What Are the Answers?

1. Perhaps alludes to flattery, or smooth and seductive words. (Make sure you have the group read through all of the Web quotes and Bible passages that are on the study. Their content is essential to the flow of the study.)
2. Allow the group to share.
3. See “What If There Is A Problem?”
4. Most likely the idea of spiritual death or a ruined life.
5. Have the group share.
6. Allow the group to share. This is a sensitive issue, so you might share first to help people be vulnerable.
7. Open discussion. Again, a very sensitive topic, you might need to break the ice.
8. There is the idea of choosing to find your fulfillment in your spouse. Choosing to keep the relationship fresh. Remembering that all things are done in full-view of the Lord. The last verse also mentions the idea of self-control.
9. Discuss. It’s important to bring out that God’s design for marriage and sex was meant to be beautiful.
10. Allow for open discussion. See “What If There Is A Problem?”
11. Share. You might try to think of a few recent examples before the study.
12. Discuss. Keeping some type of open communication or accountability with another Christian is very wise. Share from your own experience.
13. The power of sexual sin is that it is often done in secret. Keeping in mind that all things are in full-view before the Lord can be powerful. There really is no such thing as sneaking around.
14. Have group share how they would rate themselves.
15. Exercising self control in other areas can backwash into the sexual area. Also, spiritual disciplines like fasting, or a day of solitude, can develop one’s self control. Ask God to put things in your life that will grow you in this area. Rely moment-by-moment on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

## What’s Our Response?

The final section has a couple of application points. One is to think through some ways to develop in self control. The second, is for the group members to think through on their own, one application point they can make to their life regarding lust. You might share with the group one thing you have been encouraged to do.