

“He dies for lack of discipline.”

We were warned earlier in 3:11, “do not despise the LORD’s discipline.”

Discipline is important!

Indeed, back in chapter 1, verse 2, we were told that the proverbs themselves are to help us “know wisdom and discipline” (or instruction).

Discipline can either be verbal or physical.

Indeed, even in English, the word discipline is closely related to the word disciple. It comes into English from the Latin “disciplina” which means “instruction or knowledge.”

And that fits very well with the range of meaning of the Hebrew term *musar* – which gets translated “instruction” or “discipline” in its 30 uses in Proverbs.

It appeared four times in chapter 1 – including verse 7 –

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (or wisdom and *discipline*).

So hear the *instruction* – the *discipline* – of the Father as he disciplines his son in the way of wisdom!

This catechesis – this training – is not just verbal.

It starts with words – and is shaped by words – but it includes all of life.

He dies for lack of instruction – for lack of discipline – for lack of discipleship...

With our children the goal of discipline is that they might learn the right way – that they might heed our instruction and turn away from folly.

And that is our heavenly Father’s goal of discipline with us.

He has made his son perfect through suffering – he has brought Jesus to maturity through training him.

Now he is working that work in you!

Church discipline operates in the same way.

There are two basic forms of church discipline: administrative – and judicial.

When we think of church discipline, we usually think of “judicial discipline” – when the elders pass judgment on a particular case.

But there is a way in which every sermon – every bible study –  
every time the Word of God goes forth –  
that is an act of “church discipline.”  
When we hear God say “believe this!” “Do this!” “Don’t go there!”  
That is an exercise of discipline – of discipleship.

After all, “make disciples of all nations” *means* discipline them in the way of Jesus Christ

Proverbs 5-7 is the second main section of Proverbs 1-9.

The first section – chapters 1-4 – taught the disciple to love wisdom – pursue wisdom –  
*get wisdom!*

Now the second section particularly focuses on the warning against Folly.

There are four speeches from the father to his son.  
We look tonight at the first.

### **1. Decide Now: Because if You Wait, Folly Will Ensnare You (5:1-6)**

*My son, be attentive to my wisdom;  
incline your ear to my understanding,  
<sup>2</sup> that you may keep discretion,  
and your lips may guard knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> For the lips of a forbidden<sup>[a]</sup> woman drip honey,  
and her speech<sup>[b]</sup> is smoother than oil,  
<sup>4</sup> but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,  
sharp as a two-edged sword.  
<sup>5</sup> Her feet go down to death;  
her steps follow the path to<sup>[c]</sup> Sheol;  
<sup>6</sup> she does not ponder the path of life;  
her ways wander, and she does not know it.*

Be attentive – pay attention to my words – to my wisdom –  
so that your lips may guard knowledge:  
not that you may keep it to yourself,  
but that you may be a wise guardian of knowledge–  
who knows when to speak and when to be silent.

Why is it so important that you listen?  
What are you guarding knowledge for?

The day will come when you will need it.  
The day will come when “the forbidden woman” (or “unchaste wife”)  
will seek to entice you.

Remember Joseph?

Potiphar's wife sought to entice him (Genesis 39:8-9).

How did he respond?

His lips guarded knowledge, and he spoke truly to her:

“My master...has put everything that he has in my charge.

He is not greater in this house than I am,

nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself  
because you are his wife.

How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

The father now introduces his son to Folly.

He explains to his son, someday you will meet Potiphar's wife.

Folly is here portrayed as a woman offering easy sex.

Her seductive speech is smooth and sweet,

but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,

sharp as a two-edged sword.

(More literally, “a sword of mouths”--

in other words, the mouth that drips honey will prove a deathtrap)

In the end, there is nothing smooth or sweet about her.

[and if you are seeing double meanings in the text, yes, they are there in Hebrew as well!]

Her steps follow the path to Sheol.

Her steps lay hold of the grave.

All who go with her will end up with her!

And the reason for her deathly march

is that she does not watch the path of life,

her ways wander and she does not know it.

She does not know the path of life, nor does she even realize that she is on the path of death.

She wanders aimlessly in moral darkness, simply looking for “a good time”

looking for “fulfillment,” looking for something to fill her.

She has no home, no future and lacks any moral compass.

The forbidden woman – the “strange woman” – on the internet, on television,

and quite possibly in your neighborhood,

or in your workplace.

But her way is the way of death

Verses 7-14 explain the folly of adultery, both economic and social,

Verses 15-20 then set forth the positive direction,

and verses 21-23 explain the eternal consequences of adultery.

## 2. The Importance of Discipline in Preventing the Folly of Adultery (5:7-14)

- <sup>7</sup> *And now, O sons, listen to me,  
and do not depart from the words of my mouth.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Keep your way far from her,  
and do not go near the door of her house,*
- <sup>9</sup> *lest you give your honor to others  
and your years to the merciless,*
- <sup>10</sup> *lest strangers take their fill of your strength,  
and your labors go to the house of a foreigner,*
- <sup>11</sup> *and at the end of your life you groan,  
when your flesh and body are consumed,*
- <sup>12</sup> *and you say, "How I hated discipline,  
and my heart despised reproof!*
- <sup>13</sup> *I did not listen to the voice of my teachers  
or incline my ear to my instructors.*
- <sup>14</sup> *I am at the brink of utter ruin  
in the assembled congregation."*

While the father addresses his "sons" in verse 7, the verbs remain singular, leading Bruce Waltke to suggest that "sons" is not referring to a group of sons, but to a succession of sons—from father to son to grandson....to the reader, who is being included in this spiritual succession. Whereas the words of the forbidden woman's mouth are the way of death, the "words of my mouth" are the way to life.

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

This is good advice.

Whenever folly is calling to you,  
stay away from her door.

One of my seminary professors told the story of a man addicted to pornography—  
who kept going back to the same store.

One of the first things his counselor told him to do was to avoid that street,  
even if it meant going miles out of his way.

In the same way, if you struggle with a particular temptation —  
then you know where that temptation is most likely to strike!

Stay away from that door!

If you have patterns of thought that are unhealthy and sinful —  
then train yourself — discipline yourself — to change them.

And if it's not working — ask for help!

Sometimes you may even find medication helpful in changing patterns!

It's not *just* a matter of changing your *thinking* —

we are, after all, *body and soul* – and our bodies and our souls interact!  
If your body is out of whack – your soul will be affected.  
If your soul is out of whack – your body will be affected.  
But – and please pay attention to this!! –  
that *doesn't mean* that if you fix your “spiritual condition”  
then your body will automatically be “fixed.”

We may need bodily help – physical help – in order to deal with depression,  
anxiety, and similar afflictions.

Of course, since we are *both* body and soul,  
it will not be enough to *just* take a pill.  
*Words* shape us – the instruction, the discipline – the discipleship of the Father  
is at the heart of teaching us to stay away from Folly!

Notice in verses 9-10 *why* the Father says to stay away from her:

*Lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, (9)*  
*lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner (10)*

The idea is that when others find out (because others *will* find out!)  
then the adulteress's family could enslave you (some sort of extortion may be in view).

Some have wondered at this.

After all, the Law of Moses prescribed *death* as the penalty for adultery.

But there are two caveats to that:

- 1) We *know* that Israel did not do well at obeying the law!
- 2) It is not at all clear that Moses required *death* every time.

Death would be the maximum penalty –  
but many passages seem to suggest that the death penalty  
could be commuted through payment.

Certainly the *practice* of Israel headed in that direction.  
“if you want to live – pay the family X”

While the social situation may have changed, the statement is still true:  
alimony, child support, broken homes, hurt, jealousy, venereal disease–  
these are still the economic and social results of adultery.

Our society says “hey, they are consenting adults – who cares?!”  
And yet... there is no way to escape the *cost* – both economic and social –  
We live in God's world – no matter how much we try to deny it! –  
the price of adultery will be paid!  
The question is *who will pay it*.

And so, the father says to his son,  
if you choose this path, then you will say at the end of your life,  
*when your flesh and body are consumed,*  
*“How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!*  
*I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors.*  
*I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.”*

Having expended your strength for that which was not yours,  
you will finally learn the lesson you could have learned easily had you listened!  
And that lesson will be learned publicly.  
Adultery brings shame and disgrace before the assembled congregation.

The LORD disciplines those he loves.  
Do you love his discipline?  
Then listen to his instruction!

I've been saying that Proverbs 1-9 is all about how to learn wisdom  
so that you can walk before God  
on the way of life,  
so what should we learn from Proverbs 5?

Proverbs 5 offers us a very practical glimpse at the 2 ways.  
When you fall into sin, you acknowledge that the problem is yourself.  
(Note that the profligate does not blame the forbidden woman –  
he doesn't say “it's her fault!”)  
He says: “How I hated discipline.”  
Don't go trying to blame other people or your situation.  
There is always a way out—if you are willing to take it!  
But as you repent, there are two steps:  
1) turning away from sin (do not go near the door of her house)  
2) turning to righteousness

### **3. The Importance of Being “Led Astray” in the Right Direction (5:15-20)**

This second part is found in verses 15-20

*(Read)*

<sup>15</sup> *Drink water from your own cistern,  
flowing water from your own well.*

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

<sup>17</sup> *Let them be for yourself alone,  
and not for strangers with you.*

<sup>18</sup> *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<sup>[d]</sup> always in her love.  
20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman  
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?<sup>[e]</sup>*

Once again, the euphemisms and double meanings are quite intentional!  
God designed the sexual relationship to bring joy and delight in one another.  
And, the father insists, this joy and delight only comes to its full expression in marriage.

The proper refreshment for the heat of passion is the cool water of your own cistern.  
Verse 19 says that her breasts are to (literally) fill you at all times with delight  
(or “drench” you!).  
At all times and in all ways you are to be intoxicated with her love (her caresses).

This word “intoxicated” is used three times in the last five verses.  
It means to go astray unconsciously– the word is usually used to speak of drunkenness –  
but it can also be used of straying sheep meandering off.  
It is not an inherently negative term.

But you are to be intoxicated always in her love.  
Immediately after saying this in verse 19,  
the father asks, “why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman?”  
Why should you stray after another woman,  
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

In light of the conjugal bliss with your blessed wife,  
why on earth would you want to seek involvement with an adulteress?

It is the height–or shouldn’t we rather say depth–of folly  
to pursue adulterous rather than married love.

“Sure, Pastor – that’s easy for you to say – you’re married!  
What about me?!  
I want to get married but I can’t find a spouse?  
What about me?!”

The Father says to his son – “Son, with that attitude, you’ll never find a wife!”  
Get wisdom!  
Pursue wisdom – and you will likely find a wife.  
Pursue a wife – who knows what you will find!

So far the focus has been on the economic, social, and personal dangers of adultery.

We have been told about the great delight and benefit of married love.

But the father will not leave us there.

#### **4. The Fatal Conclusion for the One Who Does Not Listen (5:21-23)**

<sup>21</sup> *For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD,  
and he ponders<sup>[1]</sup> all his paths.*

<sup>22</sup> *The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him,  
and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.*

<sup>23</sup> *He dies for lack of discipline,  
and because of his great folly he is led astray.*

Now we see that same word, “intoxicated” or “led astray”  
but this time used to refer to the fool who dies for lack of discipline.

All your ways are before the eyes of the LORD.  
You cannot hide from him.

But also noticed how God’s judgment works.

God does not come after you with a thunderbolt.

He allows you to design your own trap.

You cannot blame God for bringing unfair judgment against you;  
you will find that you yourself forged your own bonds.

“He is held fast in the cords of his sin”

Thus, he dies for lack of discipline.

I have stayed focused on adultery because that is the theme of Proverbs 5.

But if you are sitting there saying, “well that’s not a problem for me!!”

Then I have a few words for you as well!

Folly wears many guises,

and there are many ways to go astray at her beckoning!

There is a sense in which every chapter in Proverbs has the same conclusion:

God the Father is seeking to train his son to be wise and faithful.

Jesus is that Son.

He is the wise son who never turned aside to folly’s charms.

All the smooth talking in the world could not deter him from his bride.

And we are that bride.

We are that blessed wife in whom Jesus is delighted.

But we are the bride of Christ.

Not individually, but corporately.

But everything that is expressed in married lovemaking

is properly seen in Jesus's relationship with us.  
He finds you entirely satisfying,  
and has no desire for strange women.

Therefore, as one who is in Christ,  
you may rest satisfied and content in him.