

Introduction

I begin today with two statistics. First, according to *Psychology Today* magazine, five million unmarried couples in America live together. Second, 66% of 18 year-old females and 68% of 18 year-old males have had intercourse. I share those statistics because of the simple point they make. Americans are sinning sexually as they've never done before.

Which is why we read Proverbs 5:1-14. It teaches us something that all of us desperately need to know. That something is the "afterwards" of sexual sin and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

Sexual Sin Has an "Afterwards"

After declaring the significance of what he's going to write about, in verses 1-2, the wise man identifies what that is in verse 3, the "**seductress.**" He discusses her here and in chapter 7 for a reason. It's because the temptation to sin sexually is so pervasive and deep.

But we must resist it, he contends, and the opening words of verse 4, "**But in the end,**" explain why. It's because there is always an "**afterwards**" to sexual sin. When I say "**sexual sin,**" I mean by it what the wise man does in chapter 5. It's a single person having illicit sex with someone or a married person having sex with anyone not his or her spouse. That's the "**sexual sin**" I'm talking about today and verses 3-5 teach us that there is always an "**afterwards**" to it.

Verse 3 describes how sexual sin begins. It's like eating honey, which is delicious and being covered with oil, which is soothing.

But verses 4-5 describe how it ends. It's like wormwood, which is bitter, a two-edged sword, which is cutting, and Sheol, which is death.

Those verses together teach us that the beginning and the end of sexual sin are stark contrasts. In the beginning, it's appealing, exciting, and fulfilling. But in the end, it's appalling, deadening, and emptying.

An adulterous and subsequently divorced husband once commented to me, "**How could something that seemed so good end up being so**

bad.” Answer: Sexual sin always has an **“afterwards.”**

Now, the wise man defines what that **“afterwards”** is in verses 7-14. He does so by revealing four consequences that follow from it.

Disease

The first consequence is found in verse 11, **“your flesh and your body are consumed.”** That statement includes the idea of disease. Archaeology reveals that venereal diseases were rampant among the Canaanite nations of the wise man’s day. Sexual sin invited disease 3000 years ago - and still does today. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 19 million Americans are infected with STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) every year. 65 million Americans, as a result, have STDs and more than half will have one at some point in life.

I’ve recounted those statistics because of how unrealistic people are about this consequence of sexual sin. Suppose a person is about to have so-called casual sex with someone. If that person knew he would get an STD from it, would he have it? The answer is an emphatic, **“No!”** So the fact that he goes ahead and has sex means he’s confident he won’t get one. The commonality of so-called casual sex shows what most people think, **“It’s not going to happen to me.”** They’re special, they think, and somehow, what happens to others won’t happen to them.

But they’re wrong. I ministered to a sexually active young man who contracted and eventually died of Aids. And he confessed one day, **“I never thought this would happen to me.”** Most of the 65 million Americans with STDs thought the same thing. But they now know better. It can happen to anyone – including us. Sexual sin invites disease.

Exploitation

There’s a second consequence that follows from sexual sin – exploitation. We see that in verses 9 and 10. These two verses refer to the chosen circle of sexual sinners, the ones to whom their sexual

activity links them. Notice what those in that circle do. They take what belongs to the sexual sinners – their **“vigor,” “years,” “strength,”** and **“hard-earned goods”** – and use it as their own.

That reflects that there are no real ties between sexual sinners and those in their chosen circle. There are no loyalty and love. Someone usually gets exploited as a result. He or she gets used for the ends of others and is then cast away when those ends are achieved. So, a young man has a sexual affair with a young woman until he tires of her and moves on to someone else. The sexual component of the relationship doesn't cause the exploitation but certainly invites and enhances it.

This second consequence explains the dynamics of living together out of wedlock. Nancy Wartik wrote an article for *Psychology Today* magazine titled “The Cohabitation Trap: When ‘Just Living Together’ Sabotages Love.” Listen to an excerpt: **“Co-habiting relationships, by their nature, appear to be less fulfilling than marital relationships. People who co-habit say they are less satisfied and more likely to feel depressed. Long-term cohabitation is rare: most couples either break up or marry within five years.”** She goes on to point out that married couples who had lived together are two times more likely to divorce than married couples who hadn't. She also points out that they report less satisfaction in their marriages, more arguing, diminished communication, and lower levels of commitment.

Wartik's conclusions are consistent with verses 9-10. Sexual sin invites and enhances exploitation.

Disintegration of Personality

A third consequence of sexual sin is found in verses 12 and 13. These verses quote a person who sins sexually. The gist of what he's saying is, **“How did I ever come to this?”** He's bemoaning, regretting, the person that he's become. These verses reveal that sexual sin invites the disintegration of personality. It diminishes people psychologically.

1 Corinthians 6:15-18 explains why it does. Intercourse always

makes people **“one flesh.”** We don’t have a body. We are a body. We don’t have a spirit. We are a spirit. Consequently, whatever touches the body also touches the spirit. Since intercourse touches the body profoundly, it touches does the spirit as well. Derrick Bailey explains it well in his book *The Mystery of Love and Marriage*: **“Sexual intercourse is an act of the whole self which affects the whole self; it is a personal encounter between man and woman in which each does something to the other, for good or ill, which can never be obliterated. This remains true even when they are ignorant of the radical character of their act.”** He isn’t exaggerating. What is done to the whole self can never be obliterated. It stays with people for life.

That helps us understand what happens when a man and woman who aren’t married have intercourse. A deep bond is created between them that is broken when they go their separate ways. What they experience when they do, therefore, is a **“little divorce.”** It’s a psychological impact similar in nature if not degree to a divorce.

I read about a 78 year-old missionary whose was a wreck. She was depressed and afraid and a deep sadness hung over her entire life. She was so sad in fact that she was preparing to have shock treatments. Her counselor, hoping to avoid that, asked her if she had been happy as a child. After she answered that she had, he inquired when her sadness began. **“When I was sixteen,”** she said. Which led him to ask, **“What happened when you were sixteen?”** **“I had a sexual affair with a young man,”** she replied, **“That ended as suddenly as it began.”** It was the first time she ever confessed it and she realized as she did just how deeply it had wounded her. It was a breakthrough and the first step in what would be a complete recovery from the sadness she felt.

That illustrates the third consequence of sexual sin. It disintegrates personality. It diminishes what people are psychologically.

Public Ruin

Sexual sin has a fourth consequence that’s found in verse 14.

Notice the word **"ruin"** and its reference point, **"in the midst of the assembly and congregation."** Sexual sin invites public ruin.

Our own culture's normalization of sexual sin has lessened the severity of this consequence but it's there nonetheless. There is a certain humiliation and shame that being "found out" sexually brings, both to the sinners themselves, unless they're reprobate, and the ones closest to them.

All of us could name a host of public figures who illustrate what I mean. Unfortunately though, it isn't just public figures. It's the rest of us as well. A father from my home church in Van Wert conveyed to a friend of his how humiliated he was. His unmarried adult daughter took a vacation with her boyfriend. She then posted pictures of it on Face Book, including suggestive ones of he and she together on their motel room bed. Sexual sin invites public ruin. It sabotages the reputations of both the sexual sinners and the ones closest to them.

That then is part of the **"afterwards"** of sexual sin. It invites disease, exploitation, disintegration of personality and public ruin.

Weigh a Course of Action

So, don't sin sexually with others. That's the wise man's call, and he discloses one of the things we must do to answer it in verse 6.

There is an interpretive issue in this verse. The Hebrew tense of the first word allows it to be translated either **"You"** or **"She."** In my view, the better translation is **"He,"** referring to the wise man's pupil. That helps us understand the verse. In the second line, the wise man notes that the seductress's ways are **"shifty"** and **"slippery,"** to quote the Moffatt translation. He then warns his pupil in the first line not to let those ways keep him from **"pondering"** the path of life.

That teaches us something we absolutely must do. We must **"ponder the path of life."** The Hebrew word translated **"ponder"** there means to **"examine," "search out,"** or **"weigh."** We must weigh our course of action in other words. In a sex saturated culture like ours, we

can't just wing it or shoot from the hip when it comes to sex. We'll flounder if we do. We must weigh our course of action instead. That means, as a practical matter, that we thoughtfully develop a specific policy with regard to sex.

Verses 15-20, which portray the sexual delights of a faithful marriage, imply what that policy should be. The degree of physical intimacy must match the degree of relational commitment – with the ultimate physical intimacy, intercourse, reserved for the ultimate relational commitment, marriage. According to this policy, we should move toward physical intimacy at the same rate we move toward relational commitment. When we move further toward the first than we do toward the second, sex becomes illicit. It becomes illicit and, to one degree or another, the **“afterwards”** of these verses kick in.

Anyway, we make that our policy and then carry it out. We live according to it. We go on a first date, for instance, and since there's no commitment, there's no intimacy, not even holding hands. We go on a second or third date and since some commitment develops, so does some intimacy. We begin to hold hands. We then start going out exclusively and since more commitment develops, so does more intimacy. We begin to kiss. And on it goes. We've developed our policy and now, asking the Holy Spirit for the wisdom and power to do it, we devote ourselves to carrying it out. That, in the context of our discipleship to Jesus, is one of the things we must do to be right sexually before God.

Conclusion

I close this morning with the words of the great G.K. Chesterton: **“The moment sex ceases to be a servant it becomes a tyrant. There is something dangerous and disproportionate in its place in human nature; and it does really need a special purification and dedication.”** He's absolutely right about that. Followers of Jesus need to purify and dedicate their sex lives to God. There won't be any **“afterwards”** if they do.