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Walking on
Hot Coals

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Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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Try to define what life is all about and one of the best definitions you can come up with is that life is a series of tough choices. The world will argue with you on that. They will explain away many of life's catastrophes as circumstantial and thus out of our control. Some experiences are circumstantial, beloved, but our responses to those experiences are still based on one thing: choice. And the tougher the circumstances, the tougher the choice.

No, we can't control who our parents were and we can't control what happened to that child or that mate that so wrecked our lives and changed our course. But we can control the choices we make once it happens. Will we choose to take God's perspective, seek His mind, and let Him bring beauty out of ashes? Or will we choose to allow the burden of it to cloud our vision of God's sovereignty, God's love and God's grace?

And those besetting sins that seem to so control our thoughts, and eventually our behavior, are they not uncontrollable? We've tried, we say, and still they dominate our thoughts. We may not have the power to overcome them apart from God, but,

there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to man, but God is faithful. He will not allow us to be tested above that we are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

(I Corinthians 10:13)

So there is a way out. It's called "You choose; God does." They are tough choices, but choices nonetheless. In this study, we will look at one of the most crucial choices a man or woman ever makes: the choice to be holy.

In our last study, we looked at the holiness of God and at the portrait of God's plan that is destroyed every time a believer violates the concepts of God's holiness. Now we take it into the realm of reality and look at what happens when a man or woman commits adultery. It is not a pleasant subject, but it is vital, for

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no one sin so decimates the body of Christ and so destroys the testimony of Christ as this one.

Part I of our lesson is entitled, “The Three Pillars of This Study.” And it is only a reminder of the premises upon which last week’s lesson was built.

Premise 1- We are to be holy because He is holy: It is simply a reminder that even in the honest pursuit of obedience, where morality is concerned, we as Bible-believing Christians can win the battle and lose the war if we forget why it is our lives are to become increasingly pure. We are to be holy because He is holy. God is the source of all holiness. You cannot live a holy life unless the Holy Spirit lives in you. But once He comes to live in you, the Holy Spirit wants your life to increasingly demonstrate the holiness of God. It is the expression of God’s beauty, the essential of God’s character, and the essence of God’s attitude. We belong to a holy God, and as He who has called us is holy, so He commands us to be holy in the way we behave.

Premise 2 is built on Premise 1 which said, because God is holy, we can be holy.

Premise 2 says, because the very image of God is at stake, we must be holy. We looked in detail in the last lesson at how the portrait God has etched into the fabric of marriage literally demonstrates His message of salvation to a lost and confused world. We learned that:

Fornication says to the world conversion is not essential.

Adultery says to the world man can find spiritual fulfillment outside of Christ.

Divorce says to the world man’s salvation is not secure.

Homosexuality says to the world man can find spiritual fulfillment without God at all.

These are blasphemy, but subtly they are, once again, easing their way into both the conscious and subconscious bloodstream of modern man’s philosophy, thus unconsciously determining modern man’s theology. It’s not just what adultery does that’s horrendous; it’s what adultery says about God that’s even more devastating.

Premise 3, builds on the first two is this: adultery, which breaks the heart of a holy God and mars the image of a faithful

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God, is basically a spiritual problem. We're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. The battle is between Satan and God. The battlefield is the heart of the Christian. The weapon Satan is using (the fiery dart with which He is seeking to devour the believer) is the lure of moral impurity. His objective is to discredit a holy God by slashing at the canvas of His portrait of holiness and destroying lives in the process.

So it is possible that one of the reasons this problem continues to claw at the spiritual balance of so many lives is that we simply do not realize who the real participants are. Satan is battling with God over the central issue of the heart. Nor do we really realize what is at stake; the image of God's mercy and faithfulness is at stake. And lastly, we do not seem to realize with a holy awe just what a holy God we serve.

Those then are the three pillars of this study:

- 1-The holiness of God is the basis of our holiness
- 2-The image of God is at stake in our behavior.
- 3-The enemy of God is on the offensive to do whatever it takes to mar that image.

With those three pillars holding up the foundation, let's proceed then to look at the principles Proverbs surfaces on the subject of adultery.

Now this lesson will be somewhat different than most. I want you to see a panoramic picture (a God's-eye view) of adultery by listening to everything Proverbs says about the subject at one sitting. There are one hundred verses in Proverbs that deal directly with adultery.

I have taken the liberty to paraphrase them, since there isn't time to address the meaning of each verse individually. I'm going to read all one hundred verses paraphrased without stopping or commenting. I started to arrange them topically, but chose instead just to read them in the order they are found in Scripture so you can see that the thread of God's judgment on impurity runs from Chapter 2, verse 1 all the way to chapter 31:3.

Son, listen to the Word of God. Hide it in your heart, bury it in your life, until it becomes pure gold to you, until it becomes like precious hidden treasure.

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The result will be wisdom, the mind of Christ controlling you. (Proverbs 2:2,6)

You will become a man of discernment and this discernment will guard your life.

God's mind in you will deliver you from the clutches of wrong friendships of evil companions. (Proverbs 2:10-12)

And it will steer you away from the temptation to yield to lust and immorality.

From being led astray by the flattery of an ungodly woman who, having forsaken what she knows is right, has turned her back on the Word of God.

Involvement with her is like entering a road with clear road signs that say, "Adultery: THE WAY TO DEATH"

No one that takes that road will ever be the same again for they have knowingly turned their backs on God's clear Word and God's clear warning.

Son, pay attention to this warning. Place the Word of God in front of your eyes. Engrave it on your heart. It's a matter of life and death.

And whatsoever you do, guard your affections. Place a key on the door of your heart. What goes in and out of your heart will ultimately determine what kind of person you will become.

Stay away from women who would lead you astray. When temptation walks by look straight ahead. Don't even turn your head to look. Don't so much as give her a glance.

Pay attention to where you're going and to what you're looking at.

Don't be sidetracked so much as an inch. Stay far from whatever tempts you. (Proverbs 2:16-27)

I know what I'm talking about so pay attention!

Be discreet and cautious.

A strange woman, a woman who does not belong to you, may be able to ply you with words; but though the words are smooth and enticing, the end result is a bitter conscience and a life of guilt.

She will lead you down the road to death and hell.

She will blind your eyes to TRUTH, until you can no longer even recognize it.

So pay careful attention, children, to what I'm saying.

Run as fast as you can when you see her coming. Don't

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even so much as go near her house (the one who so tempts you). Go around the block if you need to, but avoid her at any cost.

For you just might give in. You'll be dishonored if you do, and you'll become a slave for the rest of your life. Others will take honors God intended for you.

Others will gain the wealth that was meant for you and you'll become their servants.

You'll awaken one day to find your body consumed by disease and further embarrassment will be your lot.

Then, when it is too late, you'll wake up and cry, "Why didn't I listen? Why did I disregard counsel?"

Now I am disgraced before all of my colleagues; now I stand condemned before the whole congregation.

The truth is God intends us to drink from our own well. He intends us to receive love only from one HE has given us.

He never intended us to share our love outside our home or bear children outside our home.

Your manhood was meant to be a blessing. It was designed only to be shared with the wife God gave you.

She alone is to satisfy your every need, and you alone are to satisfy her.

Why in the world would you seek pleasure from another? (That's not acceptable to God.)

And God's not asleep. He watches every move you make and carefully weighs everything you do.

If you persist, He will let you get caught in your own trap and you will end up ensnared in immorality, with no hope of repentance. (Proverbs 5:1-23)

Young man, pay attention to God's Word handed down to you by your parents.

Keep pouring God's Word into your heart until it engulfs you.

Then wherever you go, the Word will lead you; from the moment you awaken in the morning it will be like a beacon lighting every new day.

For that's what God's Word is, a spotlight! And it will flood your soul (if you'll let it) and brighten those hidden recesses, warning you where you might stumble. (Proverbs 6:20-23)

Here's the key:

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Don't let your mind run wild with your imagination.

Before it's over, you'll sell your soul. Can you commit the act without being burned? Can you walk on hot coals and not burn Your feet? Of course not. (Proverbs 6:20-26)

And you can't commit adultery and not be burned either. You so much as lay a hand on another woman, and God holds you guilty.

It's wrong to steal even if it is because you're starving. But men will grant you mercy if you're caught.

You'll have to pay for what you've done, maybe even sell all you own to pay it back.

But there's no such mercy for the adulterer. He is a stupid fool bent on self-destruction.

Dishonor and grief will be his unending lot in life.

And he'll have to face the jealous rage of other men.

And no bribe in the world can buy them off in their fury. (Proverbs 6:29-35)

My son, keep putting God's Word into your heart until it controls your life. It ought to become your most priceless possession.

Keep the Word in front of you. Make it always available by storing it in your heart.

Make the mind of Christ like your dearest relative—literally a part of your life.

God's Word will keep you from the clutches of immorality, from falling prey to the suggestive flattery of those who would lead you astray.

I'll give you an example of how easy it is to fall. One day, I was looking out the window at the young people passing by and noticed in particular one young man who was particularly void of understanding. (He had not applied God's Word to his life.)

He was walking down the street, somewhat innocently, but he knowingly went past the house of an immoral woman. (He had been there before, and he knew better.)

It was early in the evening, about dusk,

And there she came to greet him. She was dressed in the gaudy attire of a prostitute. Her spirit was far from quiet; her attitude was rebellious; and she was always running about instead of tending to her own household.

Instead, she would wander the streets, looking for likely

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male companionship.

On this particular evening, she found our simple-minded lad and turned on all her charm; with a seductive glance, she grabbed him and kissed him and said,

“Forgive and forget is my motto.”

I’ve been looking for you, and here you are.

My bed is prepared with fresh new linens perfumed with the smell of spices.

Come, let us share our love ‘til morning,

My husband has gone on a business trip and will not return for days.

Eventually he yielded to her seductive coaxing and followed her home. He was like an ox on his way to the slaughterhouse, or like a deer which has been wounded and is only waiting to die,

Or like a bird that’s headed for a trap that will ultimately end in his death, yet still he flies headlong into its clutches.

Oh, listen to me, son, listen and pay attention.

Don’t be let astray by the pull of immorality.

The road of life is strewn with its victims; the strongest of men have fallen prey to its subtle deadliness.

The end result is spiritual death. And the road to hell is paved with its victims. (Proverbs 7:1-27)

An immoral woman is a disgrace; her ways are crude and insensitive. She has no discernment and no spiritual knowledge.

She places herself where she’ll be seen, where she can appear attractive to men who pass by.

She whispers promises of pleasure to the simple-minded.

“Stolen waters are sweet,” she implies. “The best treats are those you’re not supposed to have,” she whispers.

But what her unsuspecting prospects do not know is that her bedroom is a cemetery and those who once were her guests are residents now of hell instead. (Proverbs 9:13-18)

A man can always justify his own behavior but God is not fooled; He judges based on what goes on in the heart.

(Proverbs 21:2)

And a woman without morals is a dangerous trap; those who fall into that trap are cursed by their very choice.

(Proverbs 22:14)

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So, my child, let God rule your every thought, and pay attention to how you use your eyes. For an immoral woman is a satanic trap just waiting to destroy those who venture its way. (Proverbs 23:26)

A man who strays from home is like a bird that wanders from its nest. (Proverbs 27:8)

Remember, a wise son brings joy to his father's heart, but the youth who companies with harlots and immoral friends will bring his family disgrace and waste his father's money. (Proverbs 29:3)

Oh, the gall of one in the clutches of immorality! She can sin, look the other way, and say, "I've done nothing wrong." (Proverbs 30:20)

Wrong relationships will destroy God's man. An ungodly woman can ruin even a man who was destined for greatness. (Proverbs 31:3)

Now, I don't know about you, but I personally was affected greatly by seeing all of God's words of wisdom and warning on this one issue back to back. It clarified some things for me, and I pray that it might crystallize these same truths for you. So we will simply try, in the remainder of this lesson, to see the patterns to form a basis for our convictions. We will look first at the results of adultery and then at the causes and the corresponding cures.

But first, using these passages as our backdrop, let's carefully define what we mean when we say "adultery." "Adultery" used in the general sense includes all forms of moral infidelity that violate God's holiness and thus mar God's portrait of salvation. I believe Proverbs, as well as the key New Testament passages we've looked at before, confirm that there are five expressions of adulterous or morally impure behavior.

Expression 1 is adultery of the eyes. It is moral impurity governing where we look, what we look at and how long the look remains. "The eye is the lamp of the body," we read in Matthew 6:22, "and if the eye be clouded with impurity," verse 23 goes on, "darkness will invade the whole soul." So Jesus in Matthew 5:28 adds,

I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already.

Adultery of the eye is adultery to God.

Expression 2 is adultery of the mind of the imagination or the

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heart. It's reflected in the second half of Matthew 5:28 when you look for the purpose of lusting. Lusting is the dramatization in the mind of activities or attitudes you would like to experience in reality. It is using your imagination to arouse sensual desires. We can usually justify our thought life because "we'd never really do that." But of course, that's not true because "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7) Matthew 15:18 and 19 paraphrased say, "it is what comes out of the heart that defiles a man—evil thoughts, adultery, fornication, to name a few."

Matthew 12:35 says. "A good man out of the treasure of the heart brings forth good things. An evil man out of an evil treasure issues forth an evil life." So we are what we think when we think no one knows. And the Technicolor "A-rated" reruns that play in the theater of our minds when the lights are out are clearly viewed on the screen of the heart by a holy God. And rather than coin a new more easily justifiable title for our secret cinema, God calls it "adultery"—adultery of the mind.

Expression 3 of adultery is adultery of the will. Very simply put, it is choosing to go or to be at places or with people that we know will provoke impurity of heart or life. When we walk into that movie knowing what we will see and how what we see will affect us, we are committing adultery of the will by buying the ticket or turning the channel or picking up the magazine. The passages we just read in Proverbs confirm that principle over and over.

Expression 4, of adultery is physical adultery: any form of physical activity that generates or maintains impurity of the heart, whether or not it actually constitutes a completed sexual act. Heavy petting, fornication, marital infidelity, homosexuality, even those acts of flirtatious touching of another that could arouse impure thoughts or desires are adulterous activities. They may or may not culminate in adultery, but either way their intent is to defy the very nature of a holy God.

Expression 5 is spiritual adultery. Spiritual adultery is any act or attitude that flirts with or engages in spiritual activity with any spirit other than the Holy Spirit. Ours is a jealous God, so all forms of idolatry are, in essence, spiritual adultery. The more obvious, of course, are witchcraft, Satan-worship, astrology, and all forms of overt occult activities. The less obvious (but just as fatal) are involvements with religious cults which deny

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the cross in the name of Christianity, such as Mormonism. The least obvious (but deadly as well) are involvements with satanic agents such as drugs and alcohol, opening the spirit to demonic activities which counterfeit the activities of the Spirit.

James even carries it one step further. He says, “Don’t you know friendship with the world is enmity with God? Ye are adulterers and adulteresses, spiritually,” he adds, “when you try to serve two masters.”

So that’s what adultery is. It can be adultery of the eyes, of the mind, of the will, of the body, or of the spirit. Though the obvious penalties vary, the basic results are still the same.

Well, what are the results?

Moral impurity of various kinds, Proverbs says, produces at least eleven satanic symptoms in the Christian’s life. Let’s look at them quickly. We’ll group them together for the sake of time.

The first three form a trinity of fear. Proverbs 5:4 and 5:12 say impurity produces (1) a bitter conscience, (2) guilt and (3) regrets. Like cancer of the soul, impurity sears the conscience and lets it become less sensitive to sin and more cynical of heightened spirituality. But even as the conscience appears to be deadened, below the surface real guilt tries to awaken the spirit. Then the false guilt tries to magnify the hopelessness of it all. A bitter conscience, guilt, and regrets follow all forms of adultery.

The fourth thing impurity produces is spiritual death—the gradual dying of spiritual hunger. Proverbs 5:6 says impurity will blind your eyes until you can no longer recognize the truth. Proverbs 7:27 says the end result of adultery is spiritual death. You’re not lost to God’s salvation, but you’re deaf to God’s understanding. (You might as well be dead.)

The fifth result is bondage. All forms of moral impurity generate self-induced slavery. The more you see, the more you want to see. The more you imagine, the more evil your imaginations become. Chapter 5:9 says you may well become a slave to your desire for the rest of your life.

The next three results are the natural result of the eventual overt forms of impurity that follow the seasons of lust that go in the mind. They are:

The sixth result is dishonor among the saints. Proverbs 5, verse 4 paraphrased says,

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Now I am disgraced before all of my colleagues. I stand condemned before the whole congregation.

Chapter 6:33 talks of dishonor as your lot in life.

The seventh result is public disgrace. Even your unbelieving friends who scorned your supposed righteousness will now mock your hypocrisy when your impurity is found out. For they never considered it acceptable for you, and the result is a destroyed testimony. II Samuel 12:14 says it all:

By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

The eighth result is the loss of success. Even his worldly objectives often escape the Christian who is in the grips of immorality. Proverbs 5:5 and 10 describe what happens. Job, however, said it best:

If mine heart hath been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door:

Then let my wife grind unto another (serve another), and let others bow down upon her.

For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an sin iniquity to be punished by the judges. (Job 31:9-11)

It is a sin that consumes everything in life and would ultimately destroy all hopes of my success.

The next two results are natural forms of reaping what you've sown. The ninth result is disease. All throughout history, God has allowed certain diseases transmitted through physical relationships to haunt and deter those who would thrive on promiscuity. Today we have some brand new strains with brand new names, but the problem is the same old problem: the wages of sin, reaping a harvest of discomfort and disgrace.

The tenth result is found in chapter 6, verses 34 and 35. It is the natural rage of a jealous lover whose wife has been unfaithful. Verse 35 says no bribe on earth is large enough to cool his jealous anger.

The eleventh and final result of impurity is the wrath of God, the divine discipline that ultimately comes into the life as a result of either inwardly or outwardly blaspheming the holiness of God through moral compromise. Chapters 5:21-23 and 6:9 talk about God's eventual discipline on those who violate His laws of purity. Genesis 20:3, Jude 7, Hebrews 13:4 and Revelation 2:20-22 all

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echo the same refrain. God is so patient, but even His patience has limits. And the wrath of God, when it falls, falls heavily on those who live the lie of adultery.

So that's what immorality produces. It produces a bitter conscience, guilt, regrets, spiritual death, self-induced slavery, dishonor among the saints, public disgrace, loss of success, disease, jealous rage, and God's divine discipline. Hardly seems like anything could be worth that price, does it? But you see, we get deceived by the great deceiver. We get sold the lie that it's worth enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season even if the long-range prognosis guarantees spiritual disaster. Truly, the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; who can know it?

That's what immorality produces. Now lastly, let me share from Proverbs the causes and the cures. We've seen the results, now we must ask ourselves why do we do it and how do we conquer it? Using the passages we've read, let's boil it down to these five causes and cures.

CAUSE	REFERENCE	CURE
Spiritual weakness	Proverbs 2:1-11; 4:20-24; 6:20-24, 7:1-5;	Saturation with the Word of God
Discontentment with relationships or married status	Proverbs 5:15-20; 27:8; I Thessalonians 4:3;	Contentment and trust
Uncontrolled eyes	Proverbs 4:25-27; 5:8; 23:26; Job 31:1;	Guarding the eyes
Imaginations	Proverbs 4:24; 5:21; 6:25; 21:2; Matthew 5:28; 15-19;	Controlling the thoughts
Tempting God	Proverbs 4:27; 6:27,28; 7:8	Fleeing immorality

The first and primary cause for yielding to adultery of the eyes or the mind or the will or the body or the spirit is "spiritual weakness." When the armor's not in place, you have no defense against Satan's onslaughts of impurity, be they subtle or obvious. You get out of the Word, and you get out from under the protection of the sword of the Spirit. So it's no coincidence that every single passage of consequences in Proverbs dealing with impurity begins with the same warning.

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Son, listen to the Word. Hide it in your heart. Bury it in your life. (Proverbs 2:1)

So, place the Word in front of your eyes. Engrave it on your heart. It's a matter of life and death. (Proverbs 4:20)

Young man, pay attention to God's Word. Keep pouring it into your heart. It's a spotlight. It will keep you from stumbling into immorality. (Proverbs 6:20)

Son, keep putting God's Word in your heart. It will keep you from the clutches of immorality. (Proverbs 7:1)

Now if that isn't conclusive, nothing is.

The words of the Lord are pure words. (Psalm 12:6)

How can a young man keep his heart pure?

By paying attention to the Word of God.

So I am hiding the Word in my heart to keep me from sinning. (Psalm 119:9,11)

The key is read, study, memorize, and meditate... particularly the last two. Every passage in Proverbs on lust says the cure is hiding the Word, engraving the Word, memorizing the Word. It's almost impossible to daydream impure thoughts while you're meditating on Scripture. Try reviewing verses you've memorized every time you're tempted to look the wrong way. It may keep you in the Word all day, but it will keep your heart all day. If Satan knows that every time you're tempted, he is just driving you to the Word, it sort of kills his incentive. So Proverbial Principle #1 is God's Word is God's antidote for impurity. Stay in the Word and stay out of trouble. Jesus said,

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. (John 15:3)

The second cause of impurity that surfaces in Proverbs is a discontented spirit; either not being satisfied with being single or not being satisfied with the wife or husband God gave you (that you yourself selected.) Chapter 5 makes it clear:

Drink from your own well, my son. The one God gave you is to meet your needs. That makes your manhood a blessing. Why would a man seek pleasure from another?

(Proverbs 5:15)

A man who strays from home is as helpless as a bird who wanders from its nest to destruction. (Proverbs 27:8)

This is a difficult subject, and time does not permit us to

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deal with the many aspects of temptation that evolve from failing to be continually praising God for your lot in life (whatever it is.) Those who are single or separated or have strained physical relationships in their marriage are not to be chided for their frustrations where physical fulfillment is concerned. It's a serious matter. But our only purpose here is to acknowledge that the attitude with which you face your particular lot in life will determine the degree to which you open yourself up to attack in the area of moral impurity. The key is contentment and praise.

The third proverbial problem area is uncontrolled eyes.

Don't even turn your head to look. Don't so much as give her a glance. Pay attention at what you are looking.

(Proverbs 4:25 paraphrase)

Chapter 9:1-15 says that Satan will place those with whom he wants to tempt you just where you'll see them, and he uses his kind of beauty to make them attractive to your lower nature. Chapter 23:26 says to pay attention to how you use your eyes. The cure is found in Job 31:1:

I made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I think upon a maid?

God says control what you look at, and you shut the door that feeds the garbage disposal of the soul.

The fourth problem area is the area of imaginations: controlling the thoughts. Proverbs 6:25 is the key thought:

Don't let your mind run wild with imagination.

Chapter 23 adds,

Let God rule your every thought.

The cure is not to listen to the voice of the stranger. Had Eve done that we'd all still be in paradise. You don't talk to yourself. Either God or Satan has control of the projector that flashes images on the screen of your mind. You must constantly choose who's producing the film that's showing. If there's even a taste or a tinge of impurity, **THEY DO NOT COME FROM GOD**, and if they do not come from God, **THEY ARE THE VOICE AND IMAGES OF THE STRANGER**. Resist him, rebuke him immediately and continually. Don't enjoy the program and then turn off the projector. Unplug the projector at the first sign of lust or impurity. Control your thoughts; they control your heart and out of that heart, remember, come the issues of life.

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And the last proverbial problem, the last major cause of impurity found in these passages comes from tempting God. By tempting God, I mean allowing yourself to be put in a compromising position, then crying presumptuously to God for help. Oh, teenagers and older singles, don't date anyone who might cause you to compromise. Don't let yourself get caught with too much time and too few restraints, and then cry out to God for help. Married folks, don't become intimate friends with someone else's mate, or even with those single folks you work with. So often it begins in a guise of spirituality. You're going to help that sweet young thing through her divorce, and it almost leads to one of your own. Get her in touch with a woman who can help her, but don't tempt God by getting in too deep and then calling for help.

Don't be sidetracked an inch. Stay far away from whatever or whoever tempts you. (Proverbs 4:27)

Run as fast as you can when you see her coming. Go around the block to avoid her. (Proverbs 5:8)

Ask yourself,

Can a man walk into a fire and his clothes not be burned?
Can you walk on hot coals and not burn your feet?
(Proverbs 6:27)

He knowingly went past her house. He'd been there before and he knew better. (Proverbs 7:8)

Don't tempt God. If some one or some place or some thing always arouses lust in your heart, avoid that person, avoid that place, avoid that thing. Scripture says if you don't, you're a fool. You're like an ox being led to the butcher, a wounded deer waiting to die, or a bird flying knowingly into a net.

And I Corinthians 7 says you don't tempt God or your mate by denying your mate the privilege of the physical relationship that marriage alone allows. Verse 4 says the wife's body belongs to the husband, the husband's belongs to the wife, and except for agreed times of fasting and prayer, you do not deny your partner the right that is his or hers by Scriptural decree. If you do, Paul says, Satan will bring temptation into your lives and both of you will be ripe to yield to immorality, and you will share in the guilt. Don't tempt God. Flee immorality. Run as fast as you can away from what tempts you. Do nothing knowingly that will make you or your mate a sitting duck for Satan's target practice. He knows where to aim his arrows of immorality.

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So the Book of Proverbs has much to say about adultery. I don't like to teach it, and you don't like to hear it. But if God hadn't intended us to face it head on, I doubt that He'd have given one hundred verses on it in Proverbs.

I want to close with two or three quick thoughts from an incident in the life of Christ to help us keep this lesson in perspective. In John 8, Jesus had gone early in the morning, as was often His custom, to the mount of Olives. And upon His return, He came to the Temple and began to teach. There the scribes and the Pharisees brought to the Master a woman who had been taken in adultery. There was no doubt about her guilt. She had been caught in the very act, verse 4 says. And they tempted Jesus, saying, "Moses would have us stone her. What would You have us do?" Jesus, as you remember, stooped down and wrote in the dust. We don't know for sure what He wrote, but one by one each of His accusers slipped away in obvious conviction. Three statements from Jesus Himself in the next few verses form the backdrop for the atmosphere with which I would like to leave this subject.

In verse 7 He said, "He that is without sin let him cast the first stone." In other words, the goal of God was conviction, not condemnation. Galatians 6:1 says that if you see a brother overtaken in sin, go to him, try to restore him, but oh, do it in meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. This message is not to equip you to judge your mate or the person sitting next to you. You judge not, that ye be not judged. If you want a life to examine, examine your own.

The second statement came when in verse 10 Jesus asked "Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." Jesus answered, "Neither do I condemn thee." And some of you may have mistaken conviction for condemnation yourself. Maybe your past has been less than pure.

Maybe this study has resurrected false guilt of sins long since forgiven. Maybe Satan has whispered, "God can't use you." My friend, forgiven sinners are who God uses. Leave the past behind you, forget those things which were behind. Some scars may remain, some reaping may go on, but you are forgiven, and much forgiven and much loved. God wants to use you and use even the scars to remind you that He is a God of grace. Memorize that line, "Neither do I condemn thee."

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And the final word from Jesus follows that phrase. He added,

Now go, and sin no more.

(John 8:11b)

The miracle of beginning again. The past was gone, she was forgiven. But was she to continue in sin that grace might abound? God forbid. She had been made whole that she might become holy, and so were you, and so was I. God does not intend us to trample His grace underfoot.

The purpose of this lesson was for us to see adultery from God's perspective—adultery of the eye, mind, will, body, spirit; and having seen it from God's perspective, never again to toy with immorality. Can we walk through fire and not be burned? Can we walk on coals and not be burned? Can we toy with immorality and not be burned? And not lose the spiritual destiny a holy God has charted for our lives? We cannot. So God has erected signposts on His Word that clearly warn us—Danger: Hot Coals. Stay Away.

I believe that what God is saying to us is, "Drive a stake in the ground today." If your feet are feeling the heat of those coals, get back in the Word and get the Word into you. Become content with your marital status and with your mate. Put a guard on your eyes (watch what you watch). Place a lock and key on your heart and your secret thoughts, and don't open it to the voice of a stranger. Flee immorality. Run from whatever or whoever lures you into that dangerous trap of lust.

I believe we're to drive a new stake in the ground and say to God, "I can't walk through fire and not be burned. I can't walk on hot coals and not be scorched. So, Lord, let's put out the fire, and walk instead in the beauty of your holiness with a pure heart." That's what God wants from you. That's what God wants from me. Dare we offer Him anything less?

For...

God is still seeking holy lives.
He is seeking the purest of men
To form an army of godly power
Not ravished by lust and sin.

So, flee immorality, Christian;
Rather in holiness tread
That others may see through your holy life
The life of a holy God.

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