

## **Like An Ox To The Slaughter**

Proverbs 7:1-17, Exodus 26:31, Exodus 30:23-25, Exodus 30:31-33, 1 Kings 11:4-6, 1 Kings 11:11-13

### **Slide 1**

Last week we looked at Proverbs 9 in which Solomon contrasted Wisdom with Folly.

In that Proverb, he attempted to make the choice between Wisdom and Folly as obvious as possible in the hopes of helping us to make the right choice.

Even Paul had this problem as he pointed out in Romans 7:17, *“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.”*

In other words, Paul knew the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do but he still struggled with making the right decision.

Here in Proverbs 7, Solomon warns us that we can be totally hijacked and taken unawares by sin.

### **Slide 2**

Proverbs 7:6-7, *“At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense.”*

Many of the commentaries and articles that I read suggested that this young man wandered off from the group in hopes of running into this mysterious and exotic woman.

I'm not sure that's correct as in the original Hebrew it suggests that he just wandered off from the group and was just 'strolling' down the street, totally unaware of where he's going.

In verse 8, Solomon said that *“He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house.”*

One could argue if he knew where he was going, or if he just happened to wander blindly onto that specific street.

The fact that he’s just mindlessly wandering away from the group suggests to me that he just happened to make a wrong turn without realizing it, which is often how we accidentally wander into sin.

Think about the times when you were just strolling through life and then, blindly or accidentally, you found yourself in a situation you neither expected nor for which you were prepared.

Have you watched any nature shows of lions hunting. They lie in hiding, waiting for their unsuspecting prey to get close enough for them to strike.

I love how Solomon sets up the scene. The narrator’s looking out the window of his house.

The window’s covered with lattice, allowing the narrator to observe what was about to take place without the principal players in this drama being able to see him.

The young man didn’t know who lived on this street or the danger it held, but the person looking out the window did and he knew what was about to happen.

*“I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense.”* In other words, someone without a clue as to the danger he was in. *“He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house.”*

I imagine that the person looking out the window had seen this woman on the corner many times before and watched her lure simple, innocent young men into her trap.

Remember how Solomon described Folly in Proverbs 9:13-16a, *“Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way, “Let all who are simple come to my house!”*

### **Slide 3**

Right on cue, like a trap-door spider, the woman sprang out of her house *“dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent”* and began her “sales pitch.”

Like Folly in Proverbs 9, *“She is unruly and defiant, her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.”* (Proverbs 7:11-12).

It’s funny but many commentaries and articles point out that she used words to entice the simple young man but she did more than just use words, she used her body.

She dressed suggestively, she seized him, kissed him, and then invited him into her bedroom to make love.

Sin begins with words, with thoughts, with an invitation but almost always ends in us taking some kind of physical action. The thought of stealing a candy bar leads to the act of stealing the candy bar.

In Matthew 5, Jesus pointed out that thoughts of lust lead to actual acts of adultery.

Proverbs 7:21-22a, *“With persuasive words she led him astray,”* says Solomon, *“she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her.”*

Right away, without a moment of doubt or hesitation, without a trace or hint of suspicion, he followed her, Clueless to the danger that awaited him.

I mentioned watching lions hunting on nature shows a moment ago. So long as the gazelle stays within the herd, it's relatively safe.

The herd knows there's lions and hyenas hiding somewhere in the bushes, so they stay close to one another.

But there's always that one gazelle that sees a delicious clump of grass just a few feet away from the herd and the temptation is too great. It leaves the herd and starts nibbling on the grass.

His friends call to him, warning of the danger that lurks in the bushes but he's fast. He's sure that he can get back to the herd before the lion can get to him and he was right, “See, fellas, no problem.”

The next day he leaves the herd to nibble some more, and the next, and each day he gets a little further from the herd.

The lions patiently crouch in the brush and wait until the day that the gazelle is too far from herd, then they pounce. Just as this lady pounced on this simple young man who strayed away from the group.

She does nothing but tell lies. She tells him that she had been waiting for him, that she had prepared everything just for him.

Her bed was ready for a night of passion. She had covered it with expensive sheets, a luxurious bedspread, and had sprayed it with expensive perfume.

But the truth is, this young man meant no more to her than all the other men, including her husband, that she's lured off the streets and into her bedroom.

Think about it. She came right out and admitted that she was cheating on her husband.

He's away on business so that he can provide her with the house, the bed, the sheets, and the perfume that she's using to lure this poor sap into her trap.

This young man was so blinded by her and by her invitation to experience a night of delight that he doesn't put two-and-two together.

Why would she be loyal to him when she wasn't even loyal to her own husband? She used the fact that her husband was going to be gone for a month to lure this simple young victim into thinking he was safe.

They won't get caught, just like that gazelle who wandered further and further away from the herd thinking he was safe when the truth was that lions are very, very patient.

Here's the thing, sin or Satan is a liar. She said that she had been waiting for "him," but the truth is, she had been waiting for anyone to wander into her clutches and fall for her trap.

She said that her husband was away on business and wouldn't be back for a month, but how do we know that's true?

He could just be at the office, or at the market, or working in the fields. He could show up at any time.

How do we even know that she's married, for that matter? Maybe her so-called husband was a ploy.

Any self-respecting man who heard that she was married would've run away from there as fast as possible.

The fact of the matter is that this simple young man had no clue if what's she was saying was true or not, nor did he care. He was so blinded by his lust that he heard only what he wanted to hear.

Did he really believe that she had been eagerly seeking him? He must, regardless that she openly admitted that she was married and was willing to cheat on her husband with him.

Sin says, *"I care for you. I love you. I want you,"* when, in reality, sin only cares for herself. She will use whatever or whomever, to satisfy her lust for control or destruction.

Though Solomon didn't say, the suggestion to me is that she'll toss him aside when she's done with him and take to her corner to lure in yet another victim, and another, and another.

#### **Slide 4**

In verse 9, Solomon said all of this took place *"at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in."*

Twilight's the time when lions usually come out to hunt. It's too hot to chase after gazelle or game in the heat of the day.

When it's dusk and the sunlight's fading, it's easier to hide and blend in with the landscape. There's still enough light for the lion to see his prey.

*"Come,"* she says to her victim, *"let's drink deeply of love till morning,"* meaning that she would have her fill and cast out what was left of him in the morning.

Twilight's the time between day and night. For the writers of the Bible, day and light represented 'wisdom,' and darkness represented 'ignorance.'

Twilight, the time between daytime and nighttime, the time between total light and total darkness, the time between wisdom and ignorance.

This was the perfect time to trap someone and mislead them into taking the road to ruin and destruction.

At twilight, children are old enough to begin challenging and questioning the teachings of their childhood but haven't experienced enough of the world to get to know and respect its many hidden dangers.

Yet, you don't have to be a young person to fall into this trap. You can be in your 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and still find yourself in the vulnerable position of "twilight."

Caught between daylight and darkness, of knowing and not knowing, of knowing a little but not knowing enough to keep you from making a bad decision like this poor sap.

In verse 14, the woman told the simple young man that she had "*fulfilled my vows*" and made her "*fellowship offering*."

Two kinds of offerings were made at the Temple, guilt offerings and thanks offerings.

She made it sound as though she offered the LORD a thanks offering at the Temple in anticipation of God sending this simple fool to her in answer to her prayers.

But maybe she had to go to the Temple to make a guilt offering for a sin she had recently committed or the sin that she was about to commit, or both.

Verse 14 suggests something more sinister and sinful to me. During a “peace” or “thank offering,” the sacrifice was divided between God, the priests, and the person who brought the offering.

Part of the sacrifice was burned on the altar, another part of the sacrifice was given to the priest, and the rest of the sacrifice was given to the person who made the offering where they took it home and held a solemn ceremonial feast, eating it with their family.

This woman was taking the offering that she made at the Temple, be it a sin or thanksgiving offering, and invited a stranger to share it with her instead of her husband.

### **Slide 5**

In verse 17, she told the simple young man that she had perfumed her bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Clearly the mention of the expensive bedsheets and the perfume were meant to purvey a feeling of sensual delight, but I think it meant something greater, God’s house.

The Temple was lavish. It was built with expensive stone and wood and covered in gold.

The entrance to the inner-sanctum, the Holy of Holies, was covered by a thick, gorgeous curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework of cherubim.

The idea of burning the sacrifice was two-fold. Once the offering was consumed, either by fire or by the priests or by the person offering the sacrifice, it was gone. It could not be taken back.



An offering couldn't be physically eaten with God, so God commanded that it be burnt so that the smoke would rise to Heaven where He could smell it and know that we were thinking of Him and making a sacrifice to Him.

But there was another fragrance that was pleasing to the LORD, a special perfume.

*Exodus 30:23-25, "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil. Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil."*

*Exodus 30:31-33, "Say to the Israelites, 'This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. Do not pour it on anyone else's body and do not make any other oil using the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. Whoever makes perfume like it and puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from their people.'"*

The adulteress in Proverbs 7 used these fragrances to lure this young victim into her house, away from the house of the LORD, under the guise that everything was safe and sacred.

She had made her sacrifices. She had paid her vows. She had decked her bedchamber with expensive sheets, scented her bed with sacred spices and perfume, and her husband would never know.

Sadly, Solomon, who's watching this from behind a lattice-covered window, knew that any young man or woman who succumbed to the wiles and allure of Folly would also succumb to idolatry.

Unfortunately, Solomon didn't listen to God's advice, nor did he listen to his own God-granted wisdom. He failed to heed his own advice.

*1 Kings 11:4-6a, "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD."*

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

At the beginning of Proverbs 7, Solomon tells us to *"keep my words and store up my commands within you."*

We're to get to know God's wisdom intimately, like a sister or an intimate friend, so that we can avoid the loose or evil woman and not be fooled or beguiled by her smooth words.

Proverbs 7:22-23, *"Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say,"* he commands us at the end of this proverb. Don't be *"like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose,"* or *"like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him [you] his life."*

Proverbs 7:25-27, *"Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death."*

Folly's house is *"a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death."* The adulteress' path is strewn with the bodies of her victims.

We must stay in the middle of the herd. Don't be one who thinks that they can wander from the herd and make it back alive.

Keep the Lord's commandments and the Lord's teachings, as Solomon wrote in verse 2, in the "*apple of your eye.*"

The "*apple of your eye*" is a beautiful way of commanding us to keep God and His Word in the center of our lives.

The "*apple*" of our eye is the pupil which is what admits light into our eyes. It makes it possible for us to see.

If we keep our eye on God's commandments, if we keep our eyes focused on God's teaching, if we bind them on our fingers and write them on the table of our hearts then we'll live.

We won't be simple. We won't just wander aimlessly down strange streets and paths. We'll know about the lions and fear them and stay close to God and the herd.

When the adulteress tells me that she's been waiting for me, that she loves me and cares for me and wants to be with me, I'll know that she's lying.

I'll know that she cares nothing for me, that I'm not special, that I'm just another victim for her to use and throw out with tomorrows trash.

Solomon told us that we should treat 'wisdom' like a sister and call 'insight' our intimate friend. We should see God's laws, God's commandments, God Word as though they were our best friends.

We should hold them closer than a blood relative. We should love them as much and maybe even more than we love our own family.

We should be hanging out with God's Word, with God's Law, with God's instruction as much as we hang out with our family and friends on a daily basis.

The Hebrew in verse 2 that mentions keeping Solomon's teaching as the "*apple*" our eyes is also a beautiful and informative play on words.

The Hebrew word "*ishon*" means "pupil" or the center of the eye. It also means "*little man*."

When someone looks you in the eye or you look someone in the eye, you not only see the pupil, but you also see a "little man" in their pupil. You see a reflection of whatever or at whomever their eye is looking.

Who is the "*ishon*," who is the "*little person*" being reflected in "*the apple of your eye*?" Is it the adulteress, or is it Jesus Christ?