

The Harvester



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To Serve The Lord



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A Wise Father's Warnings (Part 2)

By Brian R. Kenyon

If a person were to read the Book of Proverbs in one sitting and highlight all the contexts that begin with, “My son...” (Pr. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1) or “Hear, my children...” (Pr. 4:1; 5:7; 7:24, NKJ), he or she would have an extraordinary body of instruction that would be ideal for parents today to teach their children. Much of that content would be in the form of a warning. As we shall see, the pitfalls about which the wise father in Proverbs warns his son are the same pitfalls about which children (and adults) today need to be warned, for many have fallen into these same snares. In Part 1 of this study (in the November 2012 issue of the *Harvester*), we considered Solomon’s warning against joining the ranks of habitual sinners, comparable to today’s gangs (Pr. 1:10-19). Now, let us consider three more of these warnings.

Foolish Financial Ties

Many of our children and grandchildren fall victim to making foolish financial alliances. Solomon warns against making relationships based on financial obligations.

My son, if you become surety for your friend, If you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, ²You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth. ³So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; For you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; Plead with your friend. ⁴Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids. ⁵Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, And like a bird from the hand of the fowler. (Pr. 6:1-5)

There are some key terms in the text that must be understood. First, the term “surety” refers to security that is put up for another (cf. Pr. 11:15). It means to “underwrite another’s debts,” comparable today to such things as cosigning a loan (Ross 931). Second, “shaken [striking, KJV] hands” is the guarantee of surety, much like shaking hands or signing a contract in American culture (cf. Pr. 17:18; 22:26). Third, notice that in verse 1, “friend” is paralleled with “stranger.” This suggests that the one whose debt is being guaranteed by the other is no more than a foreigner or casual acquaintance at best.

This agreement is a snare for the one who is guaranteeing the other’s debt. One’s good sense is questionable when he or she assumes financial risk for another person. The wise man said, “A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, And becomes surety for his friend” (Pr. 17:18). One should not assume this responsibility unless he or she is able to pay the amount in full. Again, the wise man writes,

Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, One of those who is surety for debts; ²⁷If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you? (Pr. 22:26-27)

The one who assumes financial responsibility for another will most likely suffer financial hardship for it. Elsewhere, the wise man said, “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, But one who hates being surety is secure” (Pr. 11:15 cf. Pr. 27:13).

Rather than remaining with such an obligation, Solomon said to “do this” (Pr. 6:3). The KJV reads, “Do

this now, which indicates the rapidity with which one is to rescue himself or herself from this financial burden.

Release from this debt will require humility, “Go and humble yourself” (Pr. 6:3). This shows that pride—a desire to be thought well of no matter what the cost—may be the general “incentive to suretyship” (Ironside 62). This also shows that one may have to allow oneself to “be trampled on,” the literal meaning of the word “humble” (Ross 932), in order to be freed from such a foolish obligation. Temporary embarrassment, misunderstanding, or even ill-will is far better than a lifetime of misery brought upon oneself by making a relationship based upon a foolish financial obligation. The two illustrations of a gazelle and a bird in Proverbs 6:5 emphasize the entrapment of the financial obligation and the beauty of being freed from that obligation. Getting out from under this situation in the Law of Moses context may have involved fulfilling the requirements of release from a “rash vow” (Lev. 5:4-10, ASV).

Parents and grandparents must teach their children and grandchildren to beware of making relationships based on financial obligations. Trying to be “Mr. Nice Guy,” especially when it comes to taking up the financial obligations of another, will usually end in disaster—it is hard enough to keep up with one’s own financial responsibilities! Parents and grandparents, therefore, must teach and exemplify sound stewardship over money so that their children

and grandchildren will learn how to use money, rather than being the victims of money enslaving them!

Sexual Relationships

Many of our children and grandchildren fall victim to illicit sexual relationships. One might be surprised to find that Proverbs (as well as the rest of the Bible) has much to say about sexual relationships, concerning both the good and the bad ones. Proverbs 5:1-21 is one such source of teaching. Solomon first depicts a father’s warning to his son about the deadly seduction of an “immoral [strange, KJV] woman.” This warning begins with an exhortation to be discrete,

My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding, That you may preserve discretion, And your lips may keep knowledge. (Pr. 5:1-2)

Only wisdom can keep one on guard against the seductive skill of an “immoral woman.”

Wisdom warns against the attractiveness of her words,

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; ⁴But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. ⁶Lest you ponder her path of life—Her ways are unstable; You do not know them. (Pr. 5:3-6)

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Although her flattering words are sweet and smooth, her end is bitter, tumultuous, and destructive. This “immoral woman” stands on shaky ground, so shaky that she herself does not even know the instability of her own life.

Solomon next depicts a father’s instruction about the ruin and regret that inevitably follow a relationship with an “immoral woman.” He says to stay as far away from her as possible!

Therefore hear me now, my children, And do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸Remove your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house. (Pr. 5:7-8)

While some like to get as close to sin as possible, wisdom says to stay as far away as possible from it!

The tragedy of a young man getting too close to the “immoral woman’s” house is graphically portrayed in Proverbs 7:6-27, especially verses 21-23, which reads,

With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. ²²Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, ²³Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life.

Wisdom’s house and the “strange woman’s” house are contrasted in Proverbs 9:1-18.

Solomon shows how ruin and regret will come as the result of sexual relations with the “immoral woman.”

Lest you give your honor to others, And your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors go to the house of a foreigner; ¹¹And you mourn at last, When your flesh and your body are consumed, ¹²And say: “How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! ¹³I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! ¹⁴I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation.” (Pr. 5:9-14)

Note three areas of suffering when one yields to the temptations of an “immoral woman.” First, there will be physical suffering because “your honor” and “your years” are given over to others and “your flesh and your body [i.e., the entire being] are consumed.” Not only can this physical suffering involve sexually transmitted diseases, which often accompany sexual promiscuity, but the very guilt of such a relationship can affect one’s physical health (cf. Ps. 32:3-4). Second, there will be material suffering because “your wealth” and the fruits of “your labors” end up “in the

house of a foreigner [stranger, NKJ].” The imagery here is reminiscent of the curse promised to Israel if she did not obey “the voice of the LORD” nor “observe carefully all His commandments” (Deut. 28:15). God, through Moses, told His people,

[Y]ou shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes... A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. (Deut. 28:30-33 cf. Zeph. 1:13)

As it relates more precisely to illicit sexual relationships, one’s wealth is often given to another as “hush money” and/or financial support for children resulting from such relationships.

Third, there will be psychological suffering because when the ruin is realized, one will remember the instruction one received and how that instruction was rejected. Much like the rich man’s suffering was made more miserable when he was told to “remember” his former life (Lk. 16:25), the one whose ruin comes from a sinful sexual relationship will remember the warnings he rejected!

Rather than being ruined by an “immoral woman,” Solomon depicts a father’s advice for his son to find sexual satisfaction at home,

Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. ¹⁹As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. ²⁰For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? ²¹For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths. (Pr. 5:15-21)

The images of a cistern, well, and fountain can refer to a wife because she, like water, satisfies a basic desire (cf. Song 4:15). Young men and women will find the greatest happiness only in the spouse of their youth. The “fountain” being “blessed” indicates that “sexual delight is God-given” (cf. Gen. 2:18-25) (Ross 930). Since God has provided for sexual satisfaction in the Scriptural marriage relationship, why would anyone want to pursue the deceptively destructive delights of an “immoral woman”?

Children and grandchildren need to be taught about the proper relationship with the opposite sex. Parents and grandparents must verbally instruct their children and grandchildren about the right and

wrong kind of sexual relationships. Parents and grandparents must also exemplify a Scripturally sound relationship with their spouses, if they still have one. Obviously, certain aspects of a marital relationship are private and should be kept “behind closed doors.” However, children and grandchildren must know that mom and dad, grandmother and grandfather, truly and Scripturally love one another

(cf. Eph. 5:22-29) and that they are “enraptured [ravished, KJV] with [one another’s] love”!

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