

Proverbs 7 - Avoid Promiscuous Women, part 2

I. Chapter Overview

- A. This chapter is the most vivid development of the "strange woman"
 - 1. She has been introduced and mentioned several times
 - a. 2:16-19 - Her paths lead to death
 - b. 5:3-14, 20 - She will cause you to lose your vitality
 - c. 6:24-35 - Her jealous husband will pursue you
 - 2. Some of the previous descriptions of her attraction
 - a. 2:16 - Flatters with her words
 - b. 5:3 - Her mouth and lips are smooth and drip with honey
 - c. 6:25 - She looks good
 - 3. The teacher now goes into detail of how she typically lures her victims
- B. 3 Major sections
 - 1. v.1-5 - Introductory exhortations to listen and heed
 - 2. v.6-23 - A real time depiction of the luring of an unsuspecting victim
 - 3. v.24-27 - Concluding exhortations to listen and heed
- C. Development in a "mirror-like fashion" ¹
 - A 7:1-5 Call to attention - protected from the woman
 - B 7:6-9 A simple young man wanders
 - C 7:10-20 The woman described and quoted
 - B' 7:21-23 A simple young man is slain
 - A' 7:24-27 Second call to attention - an image of the woman's slain victims

II. v.1-5 - Introductory exhortations to listen and heed

- A. Translation
 - 1. My son, guard² my words
and my commandments treasure up³ with you
 - 2. Guard my commandments and live
and my instruction like the pupil⁴ of your eyes
 - 3. Bind them upon your fingers
Inscribe⁵ them upon the tablet⁶ of your heart
 - 4. Say to wisdom, "My sister are you"

¹ Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 206.

² שָׁמַר *šamar* - to keep, guard, watch, preserve

³ צָפַן *šāpan* - to hide, treasure up

⁴ Allan M. Harman, "אִישׁוֹן" in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:391, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997). Literally, *ʾišôn* is "little man" but it also used figuratively for "pupil of the eye."

⁵ כָּתַב *kātab* - To write, inscribe, record

⁶ לִיחַ *lūah* - Tablet (usually stone), board, plank, plate

and, call understanding "kinsman"

5. To guard you from the strange⁷ woman
from the alien woman who makes smooth her words

B. Several imperatives or commands

1. Guard

- a. This could also be translated to "keep" or "preserve"
- b. The idea is to not let them go

2. Treasure up

- a. This could also be translated to "hide," which has the idea of putting away something precious to keep from losing it
- b. Treasure up like the pupil of your eyes
 - 1) A possible meaning is "illumination" or "guidance"⁸
 - a) The phrase is literally: "The little man of the eye"
 - b) Figurative of the pupil, the receptacle of light
 - c) So the pupil is speaking of receiving illumination
 - 2) I do not think this is the case due to how "Pupil of the eye" is used elsewhere:
 - a) Dt 32:10 - Descriptive of God's care for Israel
 - b) Psa 17:8 - Prayer to stay in God's care
 - c) Here it has the idea of something precious, at the center of your attention that is to be guarded
 - 3) "Pupil" is also used in other phrases to mean, "middle"
 - a) Prov 7:9 - lit: "In the pupil/middle of the night"
 - b) Prov 20:20 - lit: "In the pupil/middle of darkness"
 - c) In these verses it apparently means, "middle" or "midst" as the pupil is in the middle of the eye
 - d) Perhaps the instruction
 - e) "Pupil of your eyes" probably is something at the center of your attention
 - 4) Most English translations interpret this with, "apple of your eye," which I believe carries the meaning well.
- c. Call wisdom a "sister"
 - 1) This could merely be a reference to blood relationship
 - 2) In the Ancient Near East, "sister" is sometimes a term of endearment between lovers.⁹ Old Testament examples:
 - a) Songs 4:9-10, 12; 5:1 - "my sister" is parallel to "my bride"

⁷ זָרָה *zārāh* - Strange, different, foreign, prohibited, woman

⁸ William McKane, "Avoid the Immoral Woman: Proverbs 7," In *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 221.

⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, "אָחִי" in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:351-354, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997).

- b) Songs 5:2 - "my sister" is parallel to "my darling"
- c) Also in Old Testament Apocryphal literature:
Tobit 5:20; 7:16 - Tobit & Raguel call their wives
"sister"

3. Bind them, inscribe them

- a. Bind them on your fingers - A constant visual reminder
- b. Inscribe them on the tablet your heart
 - 1) "Heart" in Hebrew thought is the seat of the mind, thinking, will, and intellect
 - 2) Tablet here is usually a stone tablet
 - 3) The idea is to keep these in mind permanently

C. Benefit - Guards you from the strange woman

- 1. Idea is the wisdom is a constant accountability partner
- 2. Wisdom will keep you away from the page of the strange woman
 - a. Her words will be stronger than the words of the strange woman
 - b. She will woo and draw you away from the immoral woman

D. Similar instructions

- 1. Matt 13:44-46 - Treasure of the "rule"¹⁰ of God in your life
- 2. 2 Cor 10:3-5 - Take every thought captive to Christ
- 3. Rom 2:28-29 - Circumcision of the heart v.s. of the flesh
- 4. 1 Tim 6:20 - Guard against false knowledge
- 5. 2 Tim 1:13-14 - Guard through the Holy Spirit

II. v.6-23 - A real time depiction of the luring of an unsuspecting victim

A. Translation:

- 6. For at the window of my house
from my lattice I looked down
- 7. And I saw among the simple¹¹ ones
and I discerned among the sons
a lad lacking of heart¹²
- 8. Passing over in the street near her corner
and the way to her house he steps

¹⁰ The phrase, βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ *basileia tou theou*, can either mean, "kingdom of God" or "reign of God, but is usually, βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν *basileia tōn ouranōn*, kingdom/reign of Heaven in Matthew due to Jewish sensibilities. "Kingdom" and "reign/rule" are the same Greek word, βασιλεία *basileia*, and context determines which it is. On the other hand, Hebrew had two separate words to denote "kingdom" and "reign/rule." The original Hebrew phrase was, מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם *malkût šāmayim*, reign/rule of Heaven, not מְמַלְכָּה שָׁמַיִם *mamlākāt šāmayim*, "Kingdom of Heaven." Therefore, the idea behind the coming of the kingdom in New Testament teaching is not "kingdom" in the sense of territory, but "reign" or "rule" of God.

¹¹ פְּתִי *peṭî* - Simple, open-minded, gullible

¹² Lacking in sense

9. In the twilight, in the evening of day,
in the middle¹³ of the night and the darkness
10. And lo!¹⁴ A woman to encounter¹⁵ him,
a garment of a harlot, and a heart being guarded¹⁶
11. A growler¹⁷ is she, and one who rebels¹⁸ in her house
Her feet do not settle down¹⁹
12. Footstep²⁰ in the streets, footstep in the plaza²¹
And near every corner she lies in wait²²
13. She prevails²³ on him and she kisses him
she shows boldness in her face and she says to him,
14. " Sacrifices of peace are upon/with me today
I have completed my vows
15. Therefore I have come out to encounter you
to eagerly seek your face²⁴, and I found you
16. I have prepared my couch with coverings,
colored materials of Egypt
17. I have sprinkled my bed
with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon
18. Come! Be intoxicated²⁵ of loves²⁶ until the morning
Let us delight ourselves in loves²⁷
19. For the man is not in his house
He went on a journey²⁸ far away
20. A pouch of silver he took in his hand
In the day of the full moon he will come (to) his house. "
21. She turns him aside in the abundance²⁹ of her teaching³⁰
In the seductiveness³¹ of her lips she thrusts him

¹³ אֵשׁוֹן *ʾišôn* - Pupil of the eye, middle,

¹⁴ הִנֵּה *hinnēh* - No exact English equivalent. Particle of immediacy

¹⁵ קָרָא *qārā* - To encounter, befall, meet unexpectedly

¹⁶ Meaning of the phrase, וְנִצָּרָה לֵב is uncertain. The phrase, "and a heart being guarded/watched," makes little sense. Emending the Masoretic pointing of נִצָּר would offer something like, "and keeping a secret of the heart," or "and a keeper of a secret of the heart"

¹⁷ הָמָה *hāmāh* - To growl (like an animal), murmur, roar, be tumultuous, be boisterous

¹⁸ סָרָר *sārar* - To be rebellious, stubborn

¹⁹ שָׁכַן *šākan* - To remain, dwell, abide, settle down

²⁰ פֶּעַם *pa'am* - Beat, hoof beat, footfall, footstep

²¹ רָחֹב *rahob* - broad, open place, plaza - broad open public place in city usually near the gate

²² אָרַב *ʾarab* - To lie in wait, usually for an ambush

²³ חָזַק *hāzaq* - (hiphil) - To make strong, to prevail, to seize or capture

²⁴ פָּנִים *pānīm* - Face, figurative for "presence"

²⁵ רָוַח *rāvāh* - To be saturated, drink ones fill, be intoxicated, be drunk. Same word in Prov 5:19. This verb is plural here, indicating that the strange woman is addressing a crowd of boys rather than an individual

²⁶ דּוֹד *dōd* - beloved, love. Plural in form, could also be translated, "O beloved ones," but this doesn't seem to fit the context (the parallel phrase) as well.

²⁷ אֹהֶב *ʾohab* - love, in plural form often has a carnal sense to it

²⁸ דֶּרֶךְ *derek* - way, road, distance, journey, manner

²⁹ רֹב *rōb* - multitude, abundance, greatness

³⁰ לִקְחָהּ *leqah* - learning, teaching

22. Walking behind her suddenly
like cattle to the slaughter he goes
and like a bound stag³²
23. Until an arrow cleaves open his liver
Like a rushing bird to the trap
And it/he does not know that it costs his soul.³³

B. Words from mother?

1. Many believe this particular speech may be an address from the mother rather than the father
 - a. The woman at the window is a common sight and also a common Ancient Near Eastern Literary motif³⁴
 - b. Biblical Examples:
 - 1) Jud 5:28 - Sisera's mother (in poetic context)
 - 2) 2 Sam 6:16; 1 Chr 15:29 - Michal, David's wife
 - 3) 2 Kings 9:30-33 - Jezebel
2. Prov 31:1-3; 10-13 Lemuel's mother also warns against giving strength to women and praises the excellent woman.
3. If this is the mother, it highlights the importance of teaching from both parents
4. We cannot be sure whether this is the mother or not strictly due to someone looking out a window. Gen 26:8 - Abimelech also looks out a window

C. v.6-9 - Description of the Youth

1. The scene
They appear to be loitering, or "hanging out"
2. Simple ones
 - a. Simple means - Open minded, naïve, or gullible
 - b. A more clear picture of the simple:
 - 1) Prov 14:15 - The simple are gullible
 - 2) Prov 27:12 - The simple do not recognize danger ahead
 - 3) Prov 21:11 - The simple can become wise through

³¹ חֵלֶק *hēleq* - smoothness, seductiveness

³² Meaning of the Hebrew, וְכַעֲסֵם אֶל-מוֹסֵר אֹיִל "and like a fetter to discipline (of) a foolish one," is uncertain here. Emending the Masoretic pointing of מוֹסֵר "discipline" to מוֹסֵר "fetter, bond" offers, "and like a fetter to fetter" for the first three words. This would make the whole phrase something like, "and like a fetter to fetter fool," or "and like a bound fool." Apparently, the RSV, NRSV, and NIV have also emended the last word to אֵיל "buck, stag." This would offer the translation, "and like a bond to bond stag," or, "and like a bound stag." The Septuagint has: καὶ ὥσπερ κύων ἐπὶ δεσμοῦς "and like a dog upon chains." Dog in Hebrew is כֶּלֶב *keleḇ*, so I am not sure where κύων "dog" came from.

³³ וְלֹא-יָדַע כִּי-בִנְפֹשׁ הוּא Lit: "And he does not know that for his soul is it."

³⁴ O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, trans. T. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 210.; Koptak, 207

punishment and instruction

- 4) Psa 19:8 - The simple can become wise through Torah
- 5) Prov 19:25 - Corporal punishment can make the simple shrewd
- 6) Prov 1:22; 8:4; 9:4 - Woman Wisdom calls out to the simple
- 7) Prov 9:16 - The foolish woman also calls out to the simple
- c. A simple one is not hopelessly simple
 - 1) Through instruction and discipline he can become wise
 - 2) Discipline, instruction, correction, etc. are the means

2. Sons

- a. She could have said, "boys" but said "sons"
- b. Both the "son" and the "simple" in Proverbs is who is receiving the training
- c. This implies that these boys are in training, they have parents to instruct and discipline them

3. One was "lacking in heart"

- a. Remembering that "heart" is a reference to the seat of thinking and will, this is one who is just not very smart. Other passages where those "lacking in heart" appear:
 - 1) Prov 6:32 - One who commits adultery with another man's wife
 - 2) Prov 9:4 - Woman wisdom calls to those lacking in heart
 - 3) Prov 10:13 - Doesn't control his mouth
 - 4) Prov 11:12 - Despises his neighbor/friend
 - 5) Prov 12:11 - Involved in worthless pursuits
 - 6) Prov 17:18 - Becomes collateral
 - 7) Prov 24:30 - Neglects what needs to be done, lazy
 - 8) Prov 28:16 - Can be a leader who oppresses
- b. He is out after dark.
 - 1) The first phrase says it was evening
 - 2) Then it says it was in the middle of the night
 - 3) He apparently is just hanging out
 - 4) The implication is that he should be home
- c. He crosses over near the strange woman's door on her side of the street
 - 1) He "steps" or walks around on her side of the street
 - 2) Now that it is dark, why does he do this? Curiosity?
 - 3) He obviously is not thinking straight or doesn't care
 - 4) This "simple" youth is not aware of the danger that lurks

4. Some further exhortations

- a. 1 Thess 5:5-8 - Be of the "day," alert and awake

- b. 1 Thess 5:21-22 - Examine everything
- c. 1 Tim 6:9-11 - Stay focused on your pursuit of godliness
- d. Matt 6:22-23 - Be aware, wise and stay out of trouble
- e. There is no reason to be out after dark, stay home
- f. It would be good to reflect on places to keep your distance from
 - 1) On the surface it may seem harmless
 - 2) But danger lurks in many places

D. v.10-21 - The anatomy of a seduction

1. Description of the strange woman v.10-12

- a. She unexpectedly "encounters" the young man
 - 1) It appears to be a chance encounter
 - 2) She has been stalking and prowling
 - a) She is a growler - Highlight her predatory nature
 - b) Her feet do not stay in her house
They step and walk all over the public areas
 - c) She "lies in wait" near every corner
To "lie in wait" is usually a reference to someone waiting for a surprise attack
- b. Description of her appearance
 - 1) Wearing the garment of a harlot - provocative
 - 2) Her heart is not straight
 - a) Translations offered by various translations
 - A subtle heart - KJV
 - Crafty heart - NKJV
 - Cunning of heart - ASV, NASB
 - Wily heart - RSV, NRSV
 - With crafty intent - NIV
 - And was making plans - GNB
 - b) Meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain, it apparently says something like she has a secret or guarded heart. She is not honest and has plans
 - c) The "God's word" translation perhaps captures the sense of verse 10: "A woman with an ulterior motive meets him. She is dressed as a prostitute."

- c. She is rebellious/ stubborn
 - 1) A rebellious young man or woman can be alluring and exciting
 - 2) This passage is a warning against them

2. Her Method

- a. To "prevail" on the young man
 - 1) The Hebrew root, *hāzaq*, has the idea of strength, to be strong, to exercise strength.
 - 2) This is a violent word that is often used of defeating and capturing or "seizing" an enemy or his loot
 - 3) Mixed imagery of violence and seduction
 - a. Her weapon is a kiss.
 - b. She overpowers him with a kiss
 - 4) v.21 - She "turns" him with her "teaching"
 - a. Interesting choice of words
 - b. The parents have also been "teaching"
 - c. Places her in competition with other "teachers"
 - d. Immoral people "teach" lessons too, but bad ones
 - 5) v.21 - She "thrusts" him
 - a. She forces him with seductive lips
 - b. She overpowers him effortlessly
 - c. There is little indication the man resists
 - b. Mixture of the image of violence and seduction
- b. She flatters, makes the young feel special v.15
 - 1) I have come out looking for "you"
 - 2) I have found you, you are who I was looking for
- c. She promises forbidden pleasure at no cost
 - 1) Good Food
 - a) She completed her sacrifice that day
 - b) Normally, the worshipper would eat part of the sacrifice
 - c) This means she has a sumptuous dinner prepared, since the sacrifice was that day, it was fresh
 - d) She went out looking for "company" to eat it with her, and found him
 - 2) She describes her luxurious couch and bed
 - a) Covered with exotic materials
 - b) Scented with exotic perfumes
 - 3) She invites him to drink his fill of loves (plural) all night
 - 4) Promises no worry about being caught
 - a) "The man" is out of town and won't be back for a month
 - b) She doesn't say, "my man" or "my husband"

E. v.22-23 - The result of a seduction

- 1. He follows her, captured, yet not aware he is captured and about to die
 - a. Like cattle to the slaughter, not aware of what is coming
 - b. Like a bound stag, not aware of what is coming

2. The image of the strange woman shifts from predator to hunter
 - a. An arrow will cut him open
 - b. He will be a bird that has fallen into the trap
 - c. This plays on the image from Prov 1:17
 - 1) A stupid bird doesn't see the trap and is caught
 - 2) The wise bird doesn't take the bait

III. v.24-27 - Concluding exhortations to listen and heed

A. Translation

24. And now O sons, listen to me,
and incline³⁵ to the sayings of my mouth
25. Do not turn aside to her way
Your heart let it not wander about³⁶ on her pathways
26. For many³⁷ are the slain she has caused to fall
And much³⁸ are all her slain ones
27. The ways of Sheol is her house
(They are) descending to the chambers of death

B. Stay focused

1. Don't "wander about" on her pathways

C. Consider her victims

1. This is not a one-time, hypothetical danger
2. She has had many victims

D. Consider the end result

1. It is not pleasure with no consequence
2. The consequence is death
 - a. Like the evil friends of chapter one, she makes empty promises
 - b. Unlike the men of chapter one who are caught in their own trap, the victim is not her, but him

³⁵ קָשַׁב *qāṣab* - To incline, attend to

³⁶ תָּהַוָּה *tā'āh* - To wander about, usually due to intoxication

³⁷ רַב *rab* - Much, many, great (as in strong or large)

³⁸ עֲצוּם *āsûm* - mighty, numerous

Discussion Questions for Proverbs 7

1. Consider would the instructions of the first five verses help you to guard against the strange woman/man? How would you go about calling wisdom, "my sister?" What does that mean?
2. How does this passage describe young people? What is your reaction to this description? What should be your attitude toward this description?
3. How does this passage describe the methods of the "strange woman?" In what forms can the "strange person" come in our lives?
4. What kind of character and personality does the strange woman have? What warning signals does this send out for you in your friendships and relationships?
5. What are some lies and deceptions concerning love, friendship, and belong that circulate in today's time? How should this temper your "fantasies?"
6. What warnings does this lesson give you about where you should be, what you should do, and who you should be with?