

## Right Women and Wrong Women/Men

### I. Proverbs that deal with right and wrong women

#### A. From Proverbs 1-9

1. 2:16-19 - The strange woman<sup>25</sup> who flatters with her lips
2. 5:1-23 - Avoid the strange woman, love your wife
3. 6:20-35 - The dangers of adultery with another man's wife
4. 7:1-27 - An example of a deadly seduction
5. 9:1-18 - A choice, Woman Wisdom, or the Woman of Folly?

#### B. Prov 10:1ff

- 11:16 A gracious<sup>26</sup> woman attains honor  
And ruthless men attain riches
- 11:22 As a ring of gold in a swine's snout  
So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion<sup>27</sup>
- 12:4 An excellent wife<sup>28</sup> is the crown of her husband  
But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones
- 14:1 The wise woman<sup>29</sup> builds her house  
But the foolish<sup>30</sup> tears it down with her own hands
- 15:17 Better is a dish of vegetables where love is  
Than a fattened ox served with hatred
- 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing  
And obtains favor from the LORD
- 19:13 A foolish son is destruction to his father  
And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping<sup>31</sup>
- 19:14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers  
But a prudent wife is from the LORD
- 21:9 It is better to live in the corner of a roof  
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman
- 21:19 It is better to live in a desert land  
Than with a contentious and vexing<sup>32</sup> woman

<sup>25</sup> Most translations correctly interpret this as something like, "loose woman" or "adulteress."

<sup>26</sup> "Grace" is from חן which means, "favor, grace, acceptance, or even elegance."

<sup>27</sup> טַעַם - Taste, judgment, discretion. This is not the normal word for discretion, מְנוּחָה, which carries the idea of a plan or device.

<sup>28</sup> אִשְׁת־חַיִל - A woman/wife of valor. חַיִל usually means valor, strength, wealth, army, ability. It carries the idea of honor and strength, and is often used of military heroes.

<sup>29</sup> In Hebrew it is plural, "Wise women..." The RSV renders this "Wisdom" rather than "Wise women." Not sure why, since both the Septuagint γυναικες and the Hebrew נְשִׁים have the word "women."

<sup>30</sup> אֹנֶלֶת This is a noun that means, "folly," not an adjective meaning "foolish one." So a literal reading of the second line would be, "But folly, with her hands, tears them down."

<sup>31</sup> דֹּלֶף Dropping/dripping, usually of rain.

<sup>32</sup> כָּעַס Vexation, anger

22:14 The mouth of an adulteress<sup>33</sup> is a deep pit  
 He who is cursed<sup>34</sup> of the LORD will fall into it

23:26-28  
 Give me your heart, my son  
 And let your eyes delight in my ways  
 For a harlot is a deep pit  
 And an adulterous<sup>35</sup> woman is a narrow well  
 Surely she lurks as a robber  
 And increases the faithless<sup>36</sup> among men

25:24 It is better to live in a corner of the roof  
 Than in a house shared with a contentious woman

27:8 Like a bird that wanders from her nest,  
 So is a man who wanders from his home<sup>37</sup>

27:12 A prudent man sees evil and hides himself  
 The naïve proceed and pay the penalty

27:15-16  
 A constant dripping on a day of steady rain  
 And a contentious woman woman are alike  
 He who would restrain<sup>38</sup> her restrains the wind  
 And grasps<sup>39</sup> oil with his right hand

28:26 He who trusts his own heart is a fool  
 But he who walks wisely will be delivered

29:3 A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad  
 But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth

30:18-20  
 There are three things which are too wonderful<sup>40</sup> for me  
 Four which I do not understand:  
 The way of an eagle in the sky  
 The way of a serpent on a rock  
 The way of a ship in the middle of the sea  
 And the way of a man<sup>41</sup> with a maid<sup>42</sup>  
 This is the way of an adulterous<sup>43</sup> woman:  
 She eats and wipes her mouth

<sup>33</sup> Lit: "Strange woman"

<sup>34</sup> זָעַם - To be indignant. The form used here is a passive participle, which makes it difficult to translate. A literal translation of the second line is "He who is indignant of Yahweh will fall there."

<sup>35</sup> Lit: "Strange woman"

<sup>36</sup> בָּגֵד This word is a participle that can mean, "one who are faithless" or "ones who are treacherous"

<sup>37</sup> מְקוֹם - place

<sup>38</sup> צָפַן - To hide, or treasure up

<sup>39</sup> קָרָא - To encounter, befall. The second line is "An fat/oil his right hand he/it will encounter."

Meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

<sup>40</sup> פֶּלֶא - To be surpassing, extraordinary, difficult, wonderful, amazing

<sup>41</sup> גִּבּוֹר - Man, as in strong man, not merely "male" or "human."

<sup>42</sup> עַלְמָה *almāh* - Young woman

<sup>43</sup> נָאֵפָה *na'ap* - To commit adultery. Not "strange woman," but, "she who commits adultery."

And says, "I have done nothing wrong."

30:21-23

Under three things the earth quakes,  
And under four in cannot bear up  
Under a slave when he becomes king,  
And a fool when he is satisfied with food  
Under an unloved<sup>44</sup> woman when she gets a husband  
And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress

31:2-3 What<sup>45</sup>, O my son?

And what, O son of my womb?  
And what, O son of my vows?

Do not give your strength to women  
Or your ways to that which destroys kings

31:10-31<sup>46</sup>

10 An excellent wife, who can find?  
For her worth is far above jewels.  
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,  
And he will have no lack of gain.  
12 She does him good and not evil  
All the days of her life.  
13 She looks for wool and flax  
And works with her hands in delight.  
14 She is like merchant ships;  
She brings her food from afar.  
15 She rises also while it is still night  
And gives food to her household  
And portions to her maidens.  
16 She considers a field and buys it;  
From her earnings she plants a vineyard.  
17 She girds herself with strength  
And makes her arms strong.  
18 She senses that her gain is good;  
Her lamp does not go out at night.  
19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,  
And her hands grasp the spindle.  
20 She extends her hand to the poor,  
And she stretches out her hands to the needy.  
21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household,  
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.  
22 She makes coverings for herself;

<sup>44</sup> שֹׂנְאָה - To hate. This line should read, "under a hated woman when she is married."

<sup>45</sup> Some translations drop the Hebrew interrogative, מַה "what?". The Tanakh and the NRSV interpret מַה as a negative, "no," which doesn't appear to have any textual basis.

<sup>46</sup> This section curiously uses a couple of military terms, such as אִשְׁת־חַיִל "A woman/wife of valor" in 31:10, and "he will have no lack of שָׁלַל "plunder, spoil" in 31:11. The excellent wife is almost cast with military imagery in the first couple of verses in this section.

Her clothing is fine linen and purple.  
 23 Her husband is known in the gates,  
 When he sits among the elders of the land.  
 24 She makes linen garments and sells them,  
 And supplies belts to the tradesmen.  
 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
 And she smiles<sup>47</sup> at the future.  
 26 She opens her mouth in wisdom,  
 And the teaching of kindness<sup>48</sup> is on her tongue.  
 27 She looks well to the ways of her household,  
 And does not eat the bread of idleness.  
 28 Her children rise up and bless her;  
 Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:  
 29 "Many daughters have done nobly,  
 But you excel them all."  
 30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,  
 But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.  
 31 Give her the product of her hands,  
 And let her works praise her in the gates.

## II. Principles on finding and loving the right spouse

Note: Although these proverbs are directed at young men, the principles also will apply to young women as well

### A. Avoid immoral women/men

1. 5:1-14; 23:27; 27:8; 27:12; 28:26
2. There are basically two types of immoral women in Proverbs
  - a. The Harlot 6:26; 23:27
    - 1) With her, there is the outward danger of poverty 23:27; 29:3
    - 2) Even though the outward danger is not as great as the married "strange woman," this is not to be understood as being okay.
  - b. The "strange woman"
    - 1) She is strange because she belongs to another
    - 2) There is the outward danger of poverty and despair 5:1-14
    - 3) There is also the outward danger of death at the hands of an enraged husband 2:18; 6:20ff; 7:22-23; 22:14

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<sup>47</sup> שָׂחָק *sāḥaq* - To laugh, make sport, play, make merry, jest. This a strong image. It often is accompanied with music and dancing in the Old Testament.

<sup>48</sup> חֶסֶד *hesed* - Lovingkindness, love, mercy, loyalty, loyalty

### 3. The nature of the temptation

- a. What the text most often notes is not her beauty, or seductive appearance, but her words. Words are her greatest means of seduction
  - 1) 2:16 - "who flatters with her words"
  - 2) 5:3 - lips drip honey, speech is smoother than oil
  - 3) 6:24 - smooth tongue
  - 4) 7:5 - flatters with her words
  - 5) 9:15 - calls to those who pass by
  - 6) 22:14 - mouth of the adulterous is a deep pit
- b. Attractiveness
  - 1) 6:25 - Do not desire her beauty "in your heart." Heart is the seat of the intellect. Don't keep thinking about her
  - 2) 7:10 - Dressed as a harlot
- c. See all her tools and methods in action 7:1-23
  - 1) 7:13 - Brazen and bold
  - 2) 7:15 - Flattery
  - 3) 7:16 - Use of the senses
  - 4) 7:18 - Promise of fulfillment
  - 5) 7:19 - Anonymity, no strings attached
  - 6) 9:17 - Intrigue, pleasure of taking what it not yours

### 4. Other passages

- a. 2 Tim 2:22 - Flee from youthful lusts
  - b. 1 Cor 6:18 - Flee immorality
  - c. Matt 5:27-30 - Do not lust after someone in your heart
  - d. 2 Cor 6:14 - 7:1 - On unhealthy relationships
  - e. Gen 39:7-12 - Joseph
  - f. 2 Sam 11-12 - David
5. Conclusion - Flee, run, don't even talk to an immoral woman/man who is trying to seduce you
6. "You may not be able to keep a bird from landing on your head  
But you sure can keep it from building a nest there."

### B. Build a good relationship with your spouse and stay faithful

- 1. 5:15-20; 18:22; 19:14; 30:23
- 2. A good spouse is a gift from God
  - a. 18:22; 19:14 - Gift from God
  - b. Gen 2:23-25 - God makes them one flesh
  - c. Principle of stewardship applied to the gift of a good spouse
- 3. Being hateful to your spouse causes trouble
  - 30:23 - An hated married woman is an earthquake
- 4. Wandering from your wife is foolish and deadly
  - a. 27:8 - A wandering man is like a wandering baby bird
  - b. 27:12 - A wise man hides from potential trouble
- 5. Other passages

- a. 1 Cor 7:3-4 - The spouses belong to each other
- b. Songs 4:12 - A locked garden. Only for one person
- c. Eph 5:21 - Love and honor in a marriage

C. A good, wise spouse brings joy

- 1. 5:15-20; 12:4; 14:1; 15:17; 18:22
- 2. A good spouse is a delight and a joy
  - a. 5:15-20 - Be delighted in the wife of your youth
  - b. 15:17 - Love in a home is better than riches
  - c. 31:28 - A husband praises the good wife
- 3. A good spouse contributes to a good home
  - a. 14:1 - She builds here house
  - b. 31:11ff - She works to make sure all is safe, healthy, and secure in the home
  - c. 31:27 - She does not "eat the bread of idleness" - She doesn't sit on the couch eating bonbons all day
- 4. A good spouse brings a good name
  - a. 11:16 - A woman of grace attains honor
  - b. 12:4 - She is the crown of her husband
  - c. 14:1 - She builds her house
  - d. 31:23 - Her husband is known in the gates
- 5. A good spouse is faithful - 31:10ff

D. An unwise, bad spouse will bring despair

- 1. 11:22; 12:4; 14:1; 19:13; 21:9; 21:19; 25:24; 27:15-16
- 2. True attractiveness goes beyond the physical
  - a. 11:22 - The gold ring in a pigs snout
  - b. All you see is the ring. It may be ornate, attractive
  - c. Take away the ring, and all you have is a pig
  - d. Need to look beyond physical attractiveness
- 3. A bad spouse is like gangrene 12:4,
  - a. Eats away at your life and vitality
  - b. Get weaker and weaker
- 4. A bad spouse is destructive 14:1
  - a. The rebel may seem attractive at first
  - b. Loud and boisterous, free spirit may seem attractive at first
  - c. In the end, it will destroy
- 5. A contentious spouse is like a rainy day that never ends
  - a. 19:13 - The rainy day wife is parallel with the foolish son
  - b. 21:9, 19; 25:24 - Solitude is preferable to contentious woman
- 6. You cannot change a contentious spouse 27:16
  - Warning to those who think they can "change" someone after marriage
- 7. Other passages
  - a. Jud 14:1-7; 16:1; 16:4ff - The example of Samson
  - b. Eccl 7:26 - A woman/man can be more bitter than death

#### E. The ideal spouse

1. In context, Prov 31:10ff appears to be the instruction of Lemuel's mother that begins in verse one
2. Lemuel's mother begins with, "A woman of valor, who can find?"
3. The description that follows encourages her son to set his standards high and give plenty of consideration to what makes for a good wife
4. For our own children, we need to do the same.

### III. On Fidelity: Something to Consider:

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INCOMPLETE LIST of what you have in store after your immorality is found out.<sup>49</sup>

- ❑ Your mate will experience the anguish of betrayal, shame, rejection, heartache and loneliness. No amount of repentance will soften those blows
- ❑ Your mate can never again say that you are a model of fidelity. Suspicion will rob her or him of trust.
- ❑ Your escapade(s) will introduce your life and your mate's life the very real probability of a sexually transmitted disease
- ❑ The total devastation your sinful actions will bring to your children is immeasurable. Their growth, innocence, trust, and healthy outlook on life will be severely and permanently damaged
- ❑ The heartache you will cause your parents, your family, and your peers is indescribable
- ❑ The embarrassment of facing other Christians, who once appreciated you, respected you, and trusted you, will be overwhelming
- ❑ If you are engaged in the Lord's work, you will suffer immediate loss of your job and the support of those with whom you worked. The dark shadow will accompany you everywhere . . . and forever. Forgiveness won't erase it.
- ❑ Your fall will give others license to do the same
- ❑ The inner peace you enjoyed will be gone
- ❑ You will never be able to erase the fall from your (or others') mind. This will remain indelibly etched on your life's record, regardless of your later return to your senses.
- ❑ The name of Jesus Christ, whom you once honored, will be tarnished, giving the enemies of the faith further reason to sneer and jeer.

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998): 19-20.