



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Seven Deadly Sins

Part 8: Lust: The Real Giant Killer

Tim Badal | September 25, 2016 | Proverbs 5-7



Today we'll be bouncing between chapters five, six and seven of Proverbs, as we finish our series on the "Seven Deadly Sins." Over the past two months we've focused on seven particular sins, not because they're any worse than other sins, but they're ones the early church used to help believers identify their areas of weakness, because there were so few copies of the Scriptures available in their day. These seven sins were believed to be the sources of all other sins and the leaders wanted people to be aware of the heartache that would be the result of engaging in these sins.

I've heard from a lot of you about how convicting this series is, which I hope is true, but I also want to remind you—and we'll do some closing thoughts today—that all of us are sinners in need of a Savior. As you've seen areas of weakness and struggle in your particular lives and as you've found victory over them, I trust that you will remember over and over again that you have a Savior Who went to the cross and died for those sins. Because our sins were nailed to the cross, we are able to live in victory and blessing in this life.

Next week we'll start a series on the life and times of Joseph from the book of Genesis, and I'm looking forward to what God will teach us through that. But today as we finish this series, we'll be dealing with a sensitive subject, one that I understand is an issue that impacts both men and women today—the issue of lust.

David was the great giant slayer, wasn't he? He fought nine-foot-tall Goliath when nobody else would fight him. The young David stood toe-to-toe with the giant and gained victory over him, receiving great accolades from the people. Years later, however, he came toe-to-toe with another giant. But this time, instead of finding victory, the great giant slayer was defeated. Scripture tells us that one evening David was walking on the palace roof, looking at the grand city which he led and helped build. But as he looked out over Jerusalem, he saw a woman named Bathsheba bathing. And unlike his fight with Goliath, this time David was unprepared for this challenge. Instead of having the weapons of war he had when he faced Goliath, he was unequipped to battle against the giant called lust. How many other giant slayers have we seen who have fought great battles in other arenas but who have fallen prey to this giant of lust?

Today I want to speak to this giant that is alive and well in the lives of so many of us. It was also alive when the book of Proverbs was written about 3,000 years ago. Even though there was no technology in those days—no cable television, no internet—people still needed help dealing with sexual immorality. In fact, one-eighth of the book of Proverbs is dedicated to the subject of purity and sexual morality. These are principles we need to hear today.

In the three chapters we'll look at today, we'll find very open, honest and candid—perhaps almost risqué—words from Solomon, the wisest of all men who in some ways, like his father David, struggled to deal with the issue of lust in his life. In fact, he had 300 wives and 700 concubines. And now, at the end of his life, knowing that all he had pursued when he was young was actually meaningless, he writes wise words to his sons which can be a foundation for all of us. Through his words, we who are Christians can find great wisdom on how to find God's blessing in this most difficult of battles.

Simply put, sociologists would call lust the "sexual buzz" within us. But to define it in more biblical rather than humanistic terminology, we will define lust as a willfully-allowed, pleasurable gratification of wrongfully directed sexual desire that takes place deep within us. It's important that we break this down so we can understand what the Word of God has to say about it.

First, lust is willfully allowed. That means lust is something you and I choose. It's not something we can put on someone else's doorstep. If we struggle with lust—whether it's fantasy or physical lust or whatever its manifestation in our lives—we cannot blame others for our choices. You can't blame the devil. You cannot say, "The devil made me do it—that's why I'm lusting." No. The Bible makes it clear that if we resist the devil, he must flee from us (James 4:7). While he may tempt us or put entrapments around us, we can flee those and resist him, and he has to run from us.

We can't blame the nice-looking people around us. We can't blame the pretty girl in our class or the nice-looking guy in the office. We can't blame our lust on how they dress or the type of signals they give off. The Bible makes it clear that sin comes as a result of our being dragged away by our own desires. It's not someone else's fault, so you can't blame your lust on them.

Another way to play the blame game is to blame God. We begin to say, "God, You made me this way. You created me." How often in our society now do we hear people say, "The reason I'm this way is because God designed me this way"? The Bible makes it clear that God made us male and female, and He intends us to live out sexuality in conformity to His plans. Yes, He gives us sexual feelings and the capacity to behave sexually, but as with all of our emotions, these emotions are to be under our control.

For example, God gives us the ability to be angry, but we have seen fits of anger do all kinds of wrong things. Because God gave us the capacity to do something, does that mean we're supposed to do it? No. God has also given us guidelines. We can't blame God for giving us certain feelings and desires as an excuse for doing what He tells us we should not do. No, the Bible tells us the heart is deceitfully sick and who can understand it (Jeremiah 17:9)? We are defiled by what is in us, not by what is on the outside. We can't blame anyone else but ourselves. Our sin is willfully allowed.

Number two, it's pleasurable. Whether you want to admit it or not, sexual lust can be pleasurable. It was given by God to be enjoyed, a gift He designed to set the marriage relationship apart from all other relationships we have. I have a lot of great friendships with other guys and ladies, but the thing that separates those relationships from my relationship with my wife Amanda is that marriage allows nakedness without shame. God tells us this is what is going to cement marriage into a relationship like no other relationship in any other context. That's why sexual relationships outside marriage are so disastrous. They cement something that was never supposed to be put together. When you cement things that aren't supposed to be put together, you inevitably break them apart—but I will tell you, it's hard to break apart something that has been cemented. It's going to require a lot of hammering and will result in a lot of broken pieces.

Now, I tend to play this game—and you may too—that if I was God, I would have done things differently. This issue of lust would have been an easy thing to deal with. If I was God I would not have given sexual capacity until the man and woman are pronounced husband and wife.

Not too long ago I was on this stage performing the marriage of a young man and young woman, and I wish somewhere in the marriage ceremony I would have been able to say, "And now I pronounce you husband and wife. Now turn around." And on their backs, somewhere between their shoulder blades, I would have been able to flip a switch, causing the groom to look at the bride and say, "Heyyyy. You come here often? I didn't recognize you. Heyyy."

No. Somewhere around 11, 12, 13 years of age, God allows that switch to be turned on by Him for every individual. Here's the problem, though. We don't hear about a lot of 11, 12 or 13-year-olds getting married. God gives us the capacity and then He tells us, "You'll be able to find victory even if there's not an outlet right now for all these hormones and desires that are foaming up inside you. You're going to have to wait until marriage." I'm not sure exactly why God did things that way. He's got a reason and His ways are higher than my ways. But it doesn't mean that because we have the desires, that we have to act on them.

Whether it's perverse or pure, sexual gratification is pleasurable. There's no way around that. In fact, that's one of our problems. The devil advertises that sex is pleasurable—whether we do it God's way or another way.

Notice that lust is "wrongfully-directed sexual desire." In the proper confines of a marriage relationship, lust cannot be found. A husband can't lust after his wife, and a wife can't lust after her husband—because that arena is where sexual desire is without sin. Hebrews 13:4 says the marriage bed cannot be defiled. So within the confines of a monogamous marriage relationship lust cannot be found. A husband loves his wife, even in the sexual realm. A wife loves her husband in the sexual realm without sin.

Lust is wrongfully-directed sexual desire, taking what should be found only in the marriage relationship and should be devoted to that relationship, but then moving it to another relationship. "This is what I'm going to have with my boyfriend or girlfriend or fiancé." Even though it still may be pleasurable, it's out of place.

British theologian C.S. Lewis put it this way: "Lust is a lot like what you would see in a fireplace." Marriage is the proper place for a fire. When you have a fire in the fireplace in your living room, everything is wonderful. You enjoy the heat, the crackling flames, the ambiance that comes from fire in its proper place. But Lewis says that lust takes that which is properly and safely in the fireplace, where it can be enjoyed, and putting it in the middle of the family room. That same fire, those same embers that were used for enjoyment in the fireplace, is now in a place where only destruction and disaster are incurred. It's the same fire, but with a different result. Lust, then, is taking that which God has given for a proper place and time and using it instead for our selfish reasons. It takes the fire out of the fireplace and on to the floor, where disaster and destruction await.

Finally, lust happens deep within us. A sexual revolution took place in the 1960s, but there's a new sexual revolution taking place today. This time it centers on the issue of our sexual identity. We hear people asking, "What is your sexuality?" I want you to know that the Bible makes it clear that our sexuality runs deep. It's not just physical. Our sexuality is not based on a bunch of nerve endings on different parts of your body. That's not our sexuality. It runs deeper than that. It goes to the very core of who we are. That's why our sexuality is an incredibly personal issue.

We have individuals now who are struggling with their sexuality, saying, "But it's who I am. It's how I identify myself." That's why these struggles with sexuality are so difficult to deal with. For some people it's wrong thoughts; for others it's pornography; for others it's sensual entertainment or literature. For some the issue of lust is a heterosexual one; for others, it's homosexual lust. For single and young people, it's fornication, which is sexual sin in those who are not married. For those who are married, our lust can lead us into the realm of adultery. These temptations affect each of us.

You see, the issue of lust isn't just a guy issue. It affects males and females alike. It's not a young person issue, for it impacts old and young alike. Some will say, "Come on, Tim. This is church; we don't need to be speaking about such things here." Let me remind you that the Bible doesn't skirt around this issue. In fact, the Bible says over and over again that this is a problem—and it was as much a problem 3,000 years ago as it is today.

Now, maybe because technology has become more common it's easier to sin in these ways because through the internet and television, the devil bombards us with images and scenarios like never before. Have you noticed how frequently sex and lust are used to sell things? It sells cars, cheeseburgers, clothing, potato chips, deodorant, web-hosting companies. They try to get us to believe that if we consume these products, we'll be sexier individuals. Because we're sexual creatures, we long for this attention. We want this, and advertisers know that if they can get people thinking about sex they will consume their products because they think something better will come as a result of that.

Now, back in my parents' day, it was easier to keep their young boys pure. The only thing my mom really had to worry about was billboards on the side of the interstate on long car rides. She would always, with great flair, tell us to look the other way, because there was a deer running over there and she wanted us to see it. "Look out that window! Look at the deer!" She was able to keep us safe for a while, until I got smart enough to figure out what she was doing. My brother is still looking for the deer.

That was the enemy in my day. If you wanted to find pornography that would feed your lust, it was hard to do. A lot of us didn't have the access of television—and quite frankly, even when we did, television was tame in many ways. But things have gotten a whole lot worse—this time because of another interstate highway called the internet. It's created one of the greatest enemies there is when it comes to our battle against lust.

I have no doubt that God put the idea of creating the internet into the hearts of men. I believe that with all my heart. There's not a technological advance in human history that God did not author in the minds and hearts of people. And God is using the internet to advance His Kingdom like never before. But just like with every great invention and creation of God, the devil uses it to thwart the will and plan of God. God has created the internet for our good and for the help of mankind, but the devil has used it to destroy—and boy, he's doing a good job, isn't he?

On the internet, pornography is now a \$97 billion business globally, of which \$13 billion comes from the United States alone. Twelve percent of all internet sites—more than 27 million—are dedicated to pornography. Two and a half billion emails each day are pornographic in nature. Two and a half billion emails every day. Twenty-five percent of all search engine requests each day—whether Bing, AOL, Google, or Yahoo—are pornographic in nature.

To put that in perspective, that means Grandma is looking on the internet to find that German potato salad recipe, Grandpa is looking to find a way to fix the tractor, Mom wants to find out how to fix the shades in the family room—and everybody else is looking at pornography. This is crazy. Seventy percent of all 18- to 24-year-old men visit pornographic sites in a typical month. Sixty-six percent of men in their 20s and 30s also report being regular users of pornography.

Now you say, “Wait a minute, Tim. Those are lousy statistics.” Well, sure they are. What about the church? A couple years ago Josh McDowell conducted the largest set of surveys on the issue of lust and pornography, specifically in evangelical churches. He shared his findings in what many called a “drop the microphone” presentation at last year’s Founders Week. They said you could hear a pin drop at Moody Church.

Josh was a grandfather talking about the great struggle going on in churches. Here is what he found: 70% of Christian men and 47% of Christian women admit to struggling with pornography on a daily basis. Again you might say, “Tim, that’s a lousy sample.” So let’s reduce it. Let’s cut it in half. That means 35% of men and 23% of women who call themselves Christian struggle with this. Forty-eight percent of Christian men and 20% of Christian women in the study admitted to having an addiction to pornography.

You might say, “Now, Tim, I don’t know what churches those people are part of, but not Village Bible Church. We’re a great church. We’re a church with holy people.” Well, let me tell you something. We are an average evangelical church. Here’s how I know. Our measurables tell us we’re average. Our giving per capita is average. Our church attendance—meaning how many times an individual in our church attends on a monthly basis—is average. Our service involvement is average. I love Village Bible Church, but we’re an average evangelical church. We are filled with average evangelicals and that tells us these statistics should scare the living daylights out of us. This means there’s an epidemic—not only in the evangelical church, but here at Village Bible Church. We have a problem for which we need a solution.

In this lust-dominated world, it seems that we’re losing the battle. We need help. And God in His great love has provided a place where our sexuality can be lived out under the lordship of Jesus Christ, where we can find fulfillment in Him, not in our sexual desires. But in order to do that, we need God to speak to us. And aren’t you glad that He dedicated three chapters in a book on wisdom that speaks to these problems?

Let’s look at our text. Now that we know the problem, let’s hear God’s solution. Proverbs, which was written by Solomon through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, articulates the following in chapter five, starting in verse one: *“My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.”* Let’s stop there. What are we to do? We are to throw ourselves into being attentive to wisdom.

God, by His grace, has given us His Word and He says, “Listen. I have the answer, but you’ve got to listen. You’ve got to get the wax out of your ears. You’ve got to be attentive—inclining yourself, stretching yourself—so you are close to wisdom every step of the way.” God is saying, “If you will just listen to what I have to say, all will go well with you.” So we need to listen. There are three things I want to draw out from what the Bible says.

1. We must recognize that immorality advertises to deceive us.

First, the Bible makes it clear that immorality promises things that will deceive us. Solomon says, “Be careful of the promises that immorality advertises. It’s all just smoke and mirrors.” In Proverbs, immorality is spoken of in a feminine way, as we see in verses three and four: *“For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.”*

In the Bible, especially in Proverbs, immorality is pictured as a beautiful prostitute, one who is seemingly available to take care of every one of your desires—but at a cost. The Bible clearly says that prostitutes are known for being willing to do whatever you want when you’re with them—but it will always cost you. So it is with lust. You can do whatever your heart desires. You can go anywhere you want—even without technology—but it will cost you.

Proverbs reminds us that immorality starts out sweet and smooth

Verse three: *“For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil.”* You couldn’t get sweeter than honey or smoother than oil in Old Testament times. By the way, both of those are spoken of and used for good purposes in the Old Testament. Honey was a delicacy. Oil was used to anoint and set apart kings, plus it was used for healing.

So this advertisement used substances that were sweet and good, delicacies, substances that heal. But wise old Solomon says, “Be careful.” Turn to Proverbs 7, starting in verse ten. Here we find more advertisements.

¹⁰ And behold, the woman meets him,
dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.

¹¹ She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;

¹² now in the street, now in the market,
and at every corner she lies in wait.
¹³ She seizes him and kisses him,
and with bold face she says to him,
¹⁴ "I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
¹⁵ so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.
¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings,
colored linens from Egyptian linen;
¹⁷ I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.
¹⁸ Come, let us take our fill of love till morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.
¹⁹ For my husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey;
²⁰ he took a bag of money with him;
at full moon [next month] he will come home."

Here's what the woman advertises. She says, "I've got everything ready. The candles are lit, the music is playing, the bed's made. I'm wearing all the right stuff." What the prostitute is doing is what the Bible says the devil does so well: masquerading as an angel of light. He paints a picture that says everything is perfect. But all the while there are problems. Notice, she's acting very religious. "I've offered my sacrifices. I've paid my vows. I've got everything ready for you. So all I have to focus in on is you." Lust advertises that it's all about you—your needs, your desires, your wants.

Yet there are warning signs that lust gives. She says, "*Come, let us take our fill of love till morning*" (verse 18). "*Let us delight ourselves with love.*" And, "By the way, my husband is not home...hint, hint." He'll be back soon. I'm sure he'll be real happy to find out what his wife's been doing, right? Solomon warns, stay away from there, boy! But he doesn't.

Proverbs reminds us that immorality usually ends up being sour and sharp.

Every time lust is involved, it starts out smooth and sweet, but it will end sour and sharp. Going back to chapter five, verse three says "*...her speech is smoother than oil...*" Then verse four tells us, "*In the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.*"

Let's look at those two words. "Wormwood" is used only eight times in all the Scriptures. It was an herb used for medicinal purposes in small amounts. It was bitter to the taste and if you got too much of it, you would die. This guy is about to consume way too much wormwood and it will end his life. He's going to be dead. So it is with immorality. Just a little doesn't seem wrong—a little exhilaration of doing something forbidden. That bitterness starts out kind of sweet. Then you get beyond the bitter taste, and little do you know that as you keep tasting it it's getting more and more poisonous. The phrase "two-edged sword" is only used twice. The New Testament talks about the Bible being a double-edged sword, which means it cuts physically and it cuts to the very soul (Hebrews 4:12). While the Word of God cuts in a good way—like a surgeon—immorality cuts like a machete. It cuts physically and it cuts down to the very soul. Some here today have experienced the great pain of the sword of lust and immorality in their lives that has cut deep and left scars.

The text goes on: "*Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol...*" (that is, the grave). "*She does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.*" That means she's going nowhere good. She wants to destroy. Go to chapter seven, verses 21–23: "*With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.*" Man, he's ready to go. He's all excited. He's going to get what he's been looking for. Then all at once, "*He follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life*" (7:22).

I want you to realize that when you play with the lusts of your heart and the lusts of the flesh, it will start out smooth and it will end very badly. Because the devil, like a lion prowling around looking for those whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8), is a sniper in the tall weeds of lust. He's waiting to take you out. He's waiting to destroy you. But you're so focused on your desires—your own wants and pleasures—that you don't even see it coming. And before you or I know it, the sharp pain of that arrow is piercing our bodies

and taking our lives. Never forget: immorality starts out sweet, but before we know it, immorality will come in for the kill. And it ends sour.

2. The path of immorality leads to disaster.

Notice the destination of this immorality path. Solomon helps us out with this, saying that these choices lead to disaster. He understood that a couple verses on this subject weren't good enough. That would be like taking a water pistol to hell. It wouldn't work. So he has more to say. With candid and descriptive words he articulates the danger of indulging in sexual immorality. Turn to Proverbs six. Solomon will ask a couple questions that you can help me answer.

Let's read in chapter six, starting in verse 27. Solomon asks this: *"Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?"* No, he can't. *"Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?"* No. *"So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished."*

The idea here is that you can't hold fire close to you and not get burned. If you think you can play around with immorality and have nothing happen, you're wrong. There are going to be consequences. You are going to get burned. You can't play with this stuff. We need to consider some of the consequences.

The path of immorality can lead to disgrace.

Go back to chapter five, starting in verse seven:

*And now, O sons, listen to me,
and do not depart from the words of my mouth.
Keep your way far from her,
and do not go near the door of her house,
lest you give your honor to others
and your years to the merciless,
lest strangers take their fill of your strength,
and your labors go to the house of a foreigner.*

What's the first thing that will happen? The first thing the path of disaster leads to is disgrace. Verse nine: *"Lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless."* How many times have we seen verse nine played out because people can't get a handle on their lusts? How many of us have seen, over and over again, men and women in high positions of authority—whether politicians or pastors—who have lost everything because of their lusts?

Right now we're watching a former congressman from New York, Anthony Weiner, who was well liked and thought highly of in his community. He was married to a wonderful and very attractive wife. A New York magazine called them "one of the most prestigious couples." But now numerous times his immorality has gotten him into trouble. He's had to hold two press conferences to talk about his lusts and is now facing jail time because his lusts led him to interact with underage girls.

We've seen it over and over again. How many high-profile pastors from high-profile churches have had to give up all they've worked for, all that God's people have helped them build, because of lust? What a disgrace! How many of us have lost the ability to minister because we have fallen morally? The opportunity is lost due to our sin.

The disgrace isn't only for the perpetrators, by the way. It affects those closest to them as well. Think long and hard about the impact your sin can have in the lives of those around you. While it's not a 100% deterrent in my own life, when sin and temptation come, I find thoughts like this going around in my head: "What will Amanda say?" "What will this do to my three boys?" "How would I feel if I had to share this with the church?" "What am I going to think when I have to tell my mom and dad what's happened? Or my brother, my in-laws, my friends?"

You see, had David gone through the ramifications of his sin, he never would have slept with Bathsheba. He'd have said, "It's not worth this, because of the disgrace that will come on my life. I don't want any of that. I don't care how beautiful she is. I don't care how hot and bothered I am. I'm not going there, because it's not worth it." How many of us have fallen and lived with the disgrace of past failures, because our lusts got out of control? It causes disgrace.

The path of immorality can lead to disease.

The Bible also says sexual immorality can bring forth disease. Verse 11: *“And at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed.”* Scholars believe that what Solomon is talking about is the reality of sexually transmitted diseases and venereal diseases that come as a result of sexual immorality. Yes, they were around 3,000 years ago.

What he’s saying is, “Be careful! Be careful, my sons, because if you play around with this stuff, it’s just like holding fire next to your chest. You’re going to get burned, and you’re going to carry the scars of this immorality for the rest of your lives.” Today we are seeing this in epic proportions. The Center for Disease Control says that 50% of 18- to 25-year-old kids are carrying around a sexually transmitted disease. That’s not a church group. That’s the Center for Disease Control. Look it up. They’re calling it a pandemic.

Many of these kids don’t know they’re carriers of these STDs until it’s too late. As a result of these diseases, their chances of getting certain cancers are skyrocketing. Also, their immune systems are damaged, making them susceptible to all kinds of illnesses. While the Bible makes it clear that sexual sin is no greater in the eyes of God than any other sin, Paul says that sexual sins are greater because we sin against our own bodies. We literally become the enemy of our own vessels, our own bodies. And he’s right. But before you think you’re safe, because your lust stays up in your head or just in your heart, you should recognize that even though your lust is not expressed physically, lust doesn’t just corrupt your body. It also corrupts your mind.

Two weeks ago...I couldn’t have planned this any better. Two weeks ago Pamela Anderson—vixen, bombshell, Bay Watch lifeguard, on the cover of *Playboy* magazine numerous times—comes out and says, “Pornography is destroying the human soul.” Now, a lot of people might argue, with good reason, that she’s probably the wrong person to be talking about this. But she is seeing the great epidemic.

David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, called the issue of pornography “the greatest cancer facing our children today,” because it corrupts the mind. This past year, a medical report came out regarding an issue facing young men in Japan. They found that the greatest users of ED medication are Japanese men 18–25. They made the correlation because of the high use of pornography, now the attraction to a real life woman is not enough.

We’ve got a problem—and the problem is that we have fallen prey to the idea that our lusts and our desires are okay. Even the secular world is taking notice. Yet what we hear from a 3,000-year-old book—the book of Proverbs—is that they knew this was a problem long before we ever figured it out.

The path of immorality can lead to disappointment.

In verses 12–14, we see that disappointment also comes from lust: *“And you say, ‘How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.’”* Here is the lament of a man who is saying, “I wish I would have listened.”

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had people come into my office and tell me how their lives have been dramatically impacted by their sin. They’ve said, “Tim, I wish I would have listened. I wish I would have seen the warning signs.” Some of us are screaming on the inside because of disappointments we have due to the decisions we’ve made. We wish we could go back to that moment, to that place and time, and instead of saying yes to our bodies, to our pleasures, we would have said no. That young person who allowed things to go too far with their boyfriend or girlfriend, now has to explain to a future spouse what has been done. The sorrow of a person having to explain to their spouse why they’re caught in porn. The devastation of an affair and the damage it brings to a marriage and family. These are moments you wish you could have back.

The Proverbs writer says, “Why didn’t I listen? Why didn’t I incline my ear to the truth of Scripture?” But sadly, it’s too late. Verse nine says that when those moments come, you will give your years to the merciless. The devil doesn’t care. He’s giddy over your destruction.

3. The protection against immorality involves certain disciplines.

So how do we protect ourselves? This protection involves certain disciplines. In verse 12 he says, *“How I hated discipline.”* Godly discipline is the answer. At this point in the sermon you should feel pretty lousy. Here’s this passion deep inside each of us, and when we pursue it, it consumes us. “Thanks for the great, uplifting message, Pastor Tim.”

But let me remind you, that's not all Solomon says. He leaves us with truth that transforms our lives and our society—if we will only listen. And it's as simple as ABC.

A – Avoid immorality at all costs

Proverbs 5:8 tells us, *“Keep your way far from her.”* The New Testament tells us when sexual immorality comes, we should flee. It's the only sin we're told, in essence, to run away from. We aren't to try to stand against it, but run. Literally the Greek word for “flee” is *pheugo*, which I like because it reminds me of Hugo. So when immorality comes your way, when lust starts knocking at your door, don't just stand there. Don't look through the peephole. Don't ask, “Who is it?” Run! Literally, it means vanish. Get lost. Seek safety by flight. You don't stand around. You don't try to resist it. You don't dip your toe in the waters. You get out of there.

We're going to see this in a couple weeks when Joseph was pursued by Potiphar's wife. He ran. It's better to lose some conveniences or some technology or some entertainment—or even a relationship—than to lose your soul. Avoid it at all costs.

B – Build a good marriage

God wants you to have the privilege of fulfilling the sexual desire within you, but He says the place for that is in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage relationship. In Proverbs 5:15–18 he tells us that a good marriage is an exclusive one. It involves two people: *“Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone....Let your fountain be blessed.”*

What in the world is he talking about—fountains and waters and springs? He tells us in verses 18–23:

*Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love.
Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?
For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord,
and he ponders all his paths.
The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him,
and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.
He dies for lack of discipline,
and because of his great folly he is led astray.*

The sexual marriage relationship that God has enabled to take place is an exclusive one: husband and wife for a lifetime. But the Bible makes it clear that this relationship is also to be exhilarating. Exclusive and exhilarating. Every married couple should ask that question today: “Is my marriage exclusive?” Praise God if it is. And if it's not, you'd better get there really quick. “Is it exhilarating?” Some of you right now are living lifeless, cold marriages, yet you think you're honoring God. You're not.

Whether you're in the honeymoon stage of your life or in the twilight of your marriage, God wants it to be an exhilarating marriage. Listen to how Solomon declares it. He says you will delight in it. You'll be “intoxicated with her love.” That you'll rejoice in the wife of your youth. That her body and his body will fill you at all times with delight. The Song of Solomon is a whole book dedicated to the sexual intimacy between a husband and wife that brings great joy to them both. Not just when you're young, but when you are old as well.

Christian marriage should be the trophy of what redemptive sexuality should look like. But sadly, for many of us it's not. Our young people, our sons and daughters, should look at the relationships we have with our spouses and say, “That's worth waiting for.” By the grace of God I pray that we will be committed to our marriages here at Village Bible Church. We want to teach, help and empower you so we can delight in these things, so we can find an avenue in which to live out our sexuality, and so we will not commit sexual immorality—as the book of 1 Corinthians says.

But maybe you're not married yet. Maybe God hasn't brought that certain someone—or maybe He's given you the gift of singleness. What are you to do?

C – Commit to obedient living

Verses 21–23: *“For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.”* God wants you to place yourself and your sexual passions under His Lordship, to serve Him with your passions and desires, to allow God the privilege of telling you when, where and how you will live out those desires.

For some, it will mean chastity and celibacy for a season. For others it may mean those things for life. For some it will mean getting married instead of burning with passion. God is examining our ways, and my prayer is that He will see me and you, my friends, living lives that commit each and every day to Him and not to our passions.

When we fall—and we will fall—I pray that He will find us contrite and humble, eager to seek His restoration and forgiveness, remembering that Jesus is the only One Who can cast any stones at you or me, because He is the only One Who was tempted and didn’t sin. But instead of condemning us, Jesus forgives us and cleanses us, nailing our sexual sins to the cross, and He says no more will they be held against us. No more will they keep us in bondage. Instead, He lifts us up from the dust, saying, “Go and sin no more.” Thanks be to God in His Word!

Closing Thoughts

As we close our series, let me remind you of a few truths. We have spent seven weeks talking about sin—seven weeks of hammering the reality that we are indeed sinners.

We are all sinners who need a Savior.

Because we are all sinners, we need a Savior. Why spend seven weeks talking about sin? Because seven weeks reminds us that while we are terrible, broken-down, dysfunctional people because of our sin, we have a great Savior. He’s the glorious One. He’s the wonderful One. He’s the perfect One. He came to die on the cross, and He became sin on our behalf. He became your pride. He became your anger. He became your gluttony. He became your envy. He became your lust, so He might nail that sin—whatever sin you and I are dealing with—to the cross, so you and I can be forgiven. That’s why we worship and adore Him.

Jesus was tempted but didn’t succumb to any temptation.

Jesus Christ proved His Saviorship, if you will, because He was tempted but did not succumb to any of these. Jesus is the saving One, because for 33 years He lived on this earth with a body just like ours, and He wasn’t given to any of these sins—though He was tempted. So we can find victory just as He did. He did not use any of His super-powers to find victory, but proved to us that we can live without sin if we follow in His steps.

The Word shows us how to fight sin.

The Word of God is the only way we’re going to be able to fight sin. Psalm 119:9, *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”* Your sin problem inevitably starts with a Word problem. If you’re struggling with sin, it’s not that the sin is too great; it’s that your appetite for the Scriptures is too anemic. I know I’m not in the Word enough when my thought life is saturated with all kinds of wrong things. When my perspective gets too big about myself, I haven’t spent enough time reading the Scriptures that remind me God is the only One Who is great.

So when we wonder, “Why do I fall into sin?” my question would be, “Why aren’t you in the Word?” And the more you struggle with sin, the more you should be going to the Word of God, to “incline your ears to wisdom.”

We must seek help in the fight.

Finally, when we deal with sin, we must always ask the question, “Who’s fighting with me? Who is my trusted friend who can speak honestly into my life? Who’s the trusted friend with whom I can be confidential?”

I was at a catering job this week at a church, and the pastor there knew I was a pastor here. I said, “Hey, brother, how are things going?” He and I were standing next to the grill, where the pork chops and chicken were cooking. I said, “How’s life?” And he says, “Good.” He kept nodding, “It’s good.” Then he said, “No, it’s not. It’s terrible.” He said, “Can I just be real with you, brother? I’m dying. Sin’s all over the place. I’ve lost so many battles this week...would you just pray for me?”

Right there I put my arm around the guy—although I kept one eye open and on the grill, as I didn’t want things to burn—but I stood there and prayed with my brother. He in turn prayed for me. That’s what we need to be doing for one another. The Bible

says, “Confess your sins one to another” (James 5:16). Why? First, it reminds us we’re all in the fight, and second we need others to help us, because we have blind spots all around us. We need brothers and sisters around us.

So when we talk about sin, it’s a cooperative event. But the devil tells us, “The only one dealing with this sin is you.” Let me tell you something: I struggle with all seven of the deadly sins, so if you struggle, it’s good to have you on board with me, because we’re fighting this battle together. Only the proud—which is a deadly sin in itself—would say, “I don’t deal with sin.” Well, let him deal with the first one, which is the mother of all of them.

So welcome to the group. We all deal with sin, and we all need God’s help. God has called us into community to help one another to that end. We do not celebrate sin here at Village Bible Church. We stand opposed to it, knowing that we have a Savior Who has conquered these sins once and for all. We worship Him as the King of Kings and as the Lord of Lords. He is the only One Who can address these sins and Who will enable us, by the forgiveness of His blood, to be welcomed into eternity. How great a God we serve!

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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