Sermon Series: Words of Wisdom in a Whacked-Out World
Sermon Title: Pure and Holy

Introduction: We're continuing in our series, "**Words of Wisdom for a Whacked-Out, Crazy World**", and this morning I want to deliver a message that only forty years ago would have been primarily addressed to the men in our church. But, of course, things have changed here in our country. So, even though the text I'm about to read is addressed to a young man, I want our women to think hard and fast about what God is saying as well. Let me read it to you.

Text: **Proverbs 5:1-23 -- My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, 2 that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. 3 For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, 4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; 6 she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. 7 And now, O sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. 8 Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, 9 lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, 10 lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, 11 and at the end of your life you groan when your flesh and body are consumed, 12 and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! 13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. 14 I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation." 15 Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. 16 Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, 19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. 20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? 21 For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. 22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. 23 He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.**

This passage, along with **Proverbs chapter seven**, provides the most extensive teaching on sexual morality found anywhere in the Bible. Here, Solomon issues a stern warning to his son to avoid what he calls "**the forbidden**

woman." He's referring to a woman who is attempting to seduce his progeny to commit adultery with her. The reason she is "**forbidden**" is because he has already taken a wife and God expects him to be faithful to her. God's law commands us, after all, to be pure when it comes to our sexuality. "**You shall not commit adultery**" – **Exodus 20:14**. Here God is saying that the only place for sexual expression between a husband and wife is in the context of their marriage and between the two of them. Any expression outside of it results in marital unfaithfulness. Lest if anyone think that physical intimacy outside of marriage is okay, **you need to know that there is another word in the Old Testament that is translated as fornication**. It forbids any kind of sexual activity between two people who are unmarried. **Taken together, it's clear that God expects us to control ourselves and be pure and holy when it comes to our sexuality**. Let's break this passage down into four points that I think will help drive home the meaning to each of us. I invite you to join me as we start where Solomon does – with a word about temptation.

A WORD ABOUT TEMPTATION – **Most of us recognize that the American culture is obsessed with human sexuality**. All you have to do is turn on the TV, listen to certain kinds of music, **watch an R or occasional PG-13 rated** movie, or go to a place you shouldn't on your computer or phone, and there it is staring you in the face. This makes it more difficult than ever for Christians to be pure in their thoughts and actions, especially when it comes to adolescents. **In fact, several studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the more sexual content a young person is exposed to, the more sexual activity he or she will be involved in down the road** (Brown et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2004; Hennessey, Bleakley, Fishbein and Jordan, 2009; Pardun, L'Engle and Brown, 2005). **You say, not my kids. I hope and pray you're right, but other studies demonstrate that a large percentage of America's children are being exposed to sexually explicit material as early as eight years old**. And for most, it's not with their parent's blessing.

By the way, this is not merely a 20th and 21st-century problem. If you don't believe me, consider again the words that Solomon wrote to his son roughly three thousand years ago. "**My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion – What is this? It's the quality of being discreet, prudent, or having good judgment -- and your lips may guard knowledge (which Proverbs 1:7 says begins with the fear of the Lord). 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. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow**

the path to Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life. Her ways wander and she does not know it". Note the phrases used to describe **the female temptress** – her lips drip honey (**they are sweet to the taste though never as sweet as God's Word – the judgments of the Lord are sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb -- Psalm 19:10**), her speech is smoother than oil (**it means friendly, gentle and persuasive**). **This is how she masks the grave consequences of giving into her**. Solomon likens it to taking a drink of poison (**i.e. wormwood**) or grabbing hold of a sharp two-edged sword that will cause great injury. AS FOR THE ENTICING WOMAN, her steps lead her to Sheol and divine judgment. Doesn't sound very promising, does it? In fact, it forces us to ask the question, "**If this is what the Bible warns will be the consequence to those who walk the path of adultery, then why do so many people choose it for themselves**?" **Because they aren't thinking about any consequences when this kind of temptation comes along**. THEY JUST WANT WHAT THEY WANT WHEN THEY WANT IT. Listen, the right time to decide to flee sexual temptation is not when it's knocking at your door, but well before that. **In the Lord's prayer, we're told to pray that we will not be led into temptation. That seems to be the best way to handle it**. Ask God to protect you by steering you away from any kind of sexual sin.

Pastor John Ortberg wrote in "**The Me I Want to Be**" the following in 2010: "Recently my wife and I went fly-fishing for the first time. Our guides told us that "**to catch a fish you have to think like a fish**." They said that to a fish, life is about the maximum gratification of appetite at the minimum expenditure of energy. Again, to a fish, life is "**see a fly, want a fly, eat a fly**." A rainbow trout never really reflects on where his life is headed. A girl carp rarely says to a boy carp, "**I don't feel you're as committed to our relationship as I am. I wonder, do you love me for me or just for my body**?" Fish are just a collection of appetites. A fish has a stomach, a mouth, and a pair of eyes. While we were on the water, I was struck by how dumb the fish are. **Hey, swallow this. It's not the real thing; it's just a lure. You'll think it will feed you, but it won't. It'll trap you. If you were to look closely, fish, you would see the hook. You'd know once you were hooked that it's just a matter of time before the enemy reels you in**. **Ortberg continues**, "**You'd think fish would wise up and notice the hook or see the line. You'd think fish would look around at all their fish friends who go for a lure and fly off into space and never return. But they don't. It is ironic. We say fish swim together in a school, but they never learn. Aren't you glad we're smarter**?" Or maybe we're not, at least when it comes to saying no to sexual temptation. We see the temptress, want the temptress, and, all too often, give in to the temptress. And before we know it, we're hooked.

A WORD OF FOREWARNING – Solomon then says this in **Proverbs 5:7-8 -- 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**. **A forewarning is an advanced warning that something bad could happen and we should be ready for it**. When I was a kid, my mom used to say to me whenever I was getting ready to go out, "**Make sure you're wearing clean underwear. You never know when you're going to be in an accident**." I'm not sure why that would matter if I had to go to the hospital for treatment, but I'm sure she had something in mind. **Here Solomon warns that those who give in to sexual temptation stand to lose these four things**:

- **Your honor** – **Proverbs 5:9 -- lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless. The word means "an imposing form and appearance".** He's talking about the young person in the prime of life before he reaches middle age and things start to deteriorate. If you're already past this point, you've probably caught yourself reminiscing every once in a while and thinking about what it would be like to be young once more. I know I have. I would love to throw a baseball as hard as I can like I did when I was in my twenties. I was in great shape and ran six miles every other day. I didn't feel like I had any limits when it came to my body. But now that I'll be turning sixty-six in another month, I know I'll never feel that way again. **Solomon warns that those who give in to the adulteress will quickly find that their strength is dissipating**. They'll end up weak and older than their years. Sin can do that to a person. It can cause you to prematurely age. It can zap the life right out of you.
- **Your wealth – Proverbs 5:10 says, "lest strangers take their fill of your strength (meaning your wealth), and your labors go to the house of a foreigner. Listen, anyone who decides that he or she has a better plan for their sexuality than God does is in for a rude awakening.** When a man (or woman) commits adultery, someone is going to get rich, but it's not going to be either party in the marriage. It will be the lawyers who walk away in the end with a larger bank account. According to one website, the average cost of a divorce is **$11,300** (www.fool.com). When a person decides to break God's law, they can be sorry in a thousand ways, but one of them will most certainly be that they'll have less money to live on.
- **Your mental and physical health** -- **Proverbs 5:11-12 -- and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof**! This is a picture of the adulterer facing up to his foolishness and the regret that he has to live with for the rest of his life. He thinks to himself, "**Why didn't I obey God? Why didn't I listen to my parents**? There's also the possibility that

Solomon has in mind sexually transmitted diseases that take a tremendous toll on the human body. Today, these might include Hepatitis B, Herpes, HIV, and HPV all of which have no cure. But even in ancient times, there was the mention of something that could fit the description of an STD recorded on a **Sumerian Clay Tablet** dated 2,000 B.C. ... it seems that even back then, people couldn't get away from the fruit of their sinful choices!

- **Your reputation** – This probably is the first loss that comes to your mind when a person commits adultery. People who stray from their marriage vows seem to always think they can hide it from everyone. **But sooner or later, word gets out**. That's what the next two verses tell us, "**Proverbs 5:13-14 -- 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**." This is a picture of the sinner who realizes just how much he has lost, all for the sake of a short season of sinful pleasure. I like what one pastor says about this. **He cautions people about saying that we have broken one of the 10 commandments**. Nobody has ever broken the 10 commandments. Rather we are broken by them. He compares them to a huge boulder at the base of a cliff. **When someone decides to jump off a cliff, he hits the boulder, but it doesn't break. The person does**. Our lives are shattered by our disobedience and everyone sees it. Any respect we worked so hard to acquire is lost in an instant. (**Review: A word about temptation; A word of forewarning – You'll lose your honor, wealth, mental and physical health, reputation**)

A WORD ABOUT THE FLIPSIDE—**This is what God wants for us. Proverbs 5:15-20 -- Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. 16 Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you.18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, 19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. 20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress**? Our Lord has provided a holy way for us to satisfy the sexual urges that He gives to us. IT'S TO BE PRACTICED IN THE CONTEXT OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN. That's what Scripture means when it says, "**It's better to marry than to burn with passion**" – **1 Corinthians 7:9**. Men, we are called to love our wives with all our being -- including intellectually, spiritually, socially, and PHYSICALLY. **This last one may be what sets the marriage apart from all other human relationships**. Think about it. You can be united to someone other than your mate intellectually. You can be thoroughly blessed by the sharing of ideas with that person. You can be one with someone other than your mate spiritually. The Bible says that we're to strive to be

one in spirit (**Philippians 2:2**). And you can be one with someone other than your mate socially. We all have friends that we're very close to (**Jonathon and David**). But the only way you cannot be one with anyone else but your spouse is physically. There is something about a husband and wife sharing together their bodies in sexual intimacy that glues them together so that they become one (**Genesis 2:24**). This expression of love in marriage is so important that the Apostle Paul warns that husbands and wives should not stop being intimate with each other unless it's for a special purpose. Listen to his words in **1 Corinthians 7:3-5 -- The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control**. Sometimes a married couple may choose to fast from sexual intimacy in order to pray about something important. But the warning is clear: Once the fast is over, come back together again so that Satan may not tempt you. So many unbelievers think God is against sexual expression. But that is far from the truth. HE JUST WANTS US TO PRACTICE IT IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN FOR LIFE – WHAT WE CALL MARRIAGE. (**Review: A word about temptation; a word of forewarning – You'll lose your honor, wealth, mental and physical health, reputation; a word about the flipside and …**)

A WORD ABOUT GOD -- **Proverbs 5:21-23 -- For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. 22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. 23 He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.** He sees everything! He sees what you do, where you go, and who you're with. He also knows everything including your deepest and most impure thoughts that you share with no one else. This ought to stop and make every one of us think! Oh, and by the way, Solomon concludes by informing us that sexual sin is always self-defeating. Once it gets its grip on us, we're looking at a very troublesome and difficult journey until we repent.

Here are a few thoughts about how to protect ourselves from adultery:

- Only watch TV with someone else and use your computer with the door open and at a time when anyone can see what you're looking at. This is often the place where seeds of unfaithfulness get planted in our minds. Get accountability for the use of all your electronics.
- Don't fight this battle alone. Confide in someone you can trust and ask for his or her help.
- Pray that you will not be led into temptation and never be alone with anyone for whom you might be thinking impure thoughts.

Conclusion: We're now almost a month into the fall season and you know what that means. If you drive a vehicle, you have to be on the lookout for deer on the roads. The **Illinois Department of Resources** reports that more than 17,000 deer die each year after being struck by motorists on state highways. I'm sure that a number of us have helped some of these beautiful animals commit suicide in the last few years. (**Tell my story**.) According to **Paul Shelton,** the **State Wildlife Director,** the peak season for road kills is in **early November.** Why? Because that's typically the beginning of the rut season and the bucks become a little crazy. **"They're concentrating almost exclusively on reproductive activities,"** he said**, "and are a lot less wary than they normally would be." What's true of deer in the fall seems to be true of human beings all year long. That's why we need to heed these words from Solomon. So much is hinging on us making the right choices.**