

Rivers of Pleasure, or Paths of Death?
Proverbs Chapter Five
Berean Baptist Church
Pastor Skylar Bernick

INTRODUCTION

Our God made Marriage, including the physical aspect of the relationship, to be a fountain of joy and strength for those who enter into it. Holy marriage and holy singleness are both wonderful gifts from God (1 Cor 7:7) and part of the Path of the Wise in Proverbs. But in Proverbs, there is always "another way." Proverbs Chapter Five teaches the Doctrine of Life as it relates to marriage and warns us to avoid the deadly other-way: the way of the strange woman.

Who is the “strange woman.” To the Hebrews this word means a woman who is not Hebrew and does not worship the God of the Hebrews. She is a "stranger" in the sense that she is not part of the people of God. It could also mean another man's wife, but that meaning is very rare. Either way, the point is that she is "strange" in that she is off-limits or unauthorized for the people of God.

But why not have some fun with the strange woman? Why is she off-limits?

God commanded his people in the Old Testament to not intermarry with the unbelieving nations around them (Josh 23:12-13) and God commands His people in the New Testament to not intermarry with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). **Joke So, hopefully, that's reason enough for you. But either you or the people you influence will be tempted to flirt with the strange woman so you want to have a good biblical about what God commands and why?**

Why is this?

The people of God are supposed to be separate from the World. There is some room for Hebrews in the Old Testament to marry foreign woman, but Lev 21:13-15 places a more exacting demand on priests: priests had to marry a wife who was physically and spiritually part of the People of God. This was so that their especially holy office would not be compromised.

It is always a bad idea to marry a spouse who does not share your values, but it is absolutely forbidden for a priest to marry someone outside of the people of God. A priest cannot live a life of dedicated service to God if their spouse will not share that commitment. But what does this have to do with us today?

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

As a Christian you are a priest and your priesthood is as real, important, and life-defining as that of the Levites who came before you. How could a priest be very holy, and serve God continually, if their wife is a stranger from God and the people of God?

The “strange woman” for Christians is the woman who cannot share our priesthood because she is not of the people of God. These warnings about the strange woman apply to any potential spouse who by confession or conduct, marks themselves as outside of the family of God.

Flee from attractive partners who do not share your confession. And, if God has not given you the gift of singleness, focus on a God-given relationship with one person who shares your values!

Proverbs 5:1-8 Identifying and Responding to the Strange Woman

Vs 1-4 The strange woman (or man) says sweet things but she leads you to a bitter end. Her speech makes her seem healthy and healing, like oil, but she will hurt you like a sword. She tries to lead you along her road and it feels very good for a little while.

Vs 5-6 She is unstable but the general direction of her path leads to destruction. Here is another good description of “the strange woman”:

Pr 2:16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; 17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

So, she is bad news. But how do you respond?

Vs 7-8 Stay with wisdom and stay away from her! Don't try to win her over, don't try to “show her Christ's love” by entering into an ill-advised relationship. Either she will lead you to ruin or she will break away from you as she goes down the path of ruin.

Stay away from partners that lead you off the path of life! It will be fun at first and miserable forever after.

Proverbs 5:9-14 The Path of Death

Let's say you don't avoid her. Let's say you bind yourself to a spouse who does not share your values, eventually you will follow her or the marriage will break up. The strange man or woman and the Christian are going in different directions; the relationship will always be strained. So what happens if you allow her to lead you off the Path of Life?

Vs 9-10 dishonor, wasted time, wasted money, wasted work. Your respect, time, money, and effort will be taken from you.

Vs 11-14 Finally, if you come to your senses when you have lost nearly everything, you will see that you should have listened to wisdom! This tragically illustrates that fact all people come to value wisdom, some before they wreck their lives, and some after.

You have been warned! Now, warn those you love to avoid spouses that do not share their values and faith!

If you are already in such a relationship, God's will is for you to persist and try to win your spouse to the Lord (. You are not in an ideal position, but many godly people have been where you are, “ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” At the very least you must not allow them to play the part of the “strange woman” by leading you into wickedness; maintain your relationship as much as possible, but your walk with God comes first.

Proverbs 5:15-20 The River of Pleasure

There are pleasure and joy in the path of life, and it will last as long as you attend to it. These five verses vividly illustrate the blessings of a spouse who shares your values and faith.

Vs 15-17 This illustrates that the physical relationship on the Path of Life is a dedicated relationship that produces an abundance of joy. The World and the strange woman preach that a verity of partners leads to sanctification and experience. Virginity is seen as a cause for embarrassment.

Wisdom flatly contradicts this! Private, exclusive intimacy brings forth pleasure and strength like cisterns, wells, fountains, and rivers all pouring forth water.

Vs 18-19 This fountain is blessed and full of joy. Enjoy and give strong attention to right physical relations with the spouse that you share the Path of Life with.

Vs 19-20 ravished always with her love. This is fascinating use of language: "ravished" means to be lead by, deceived, or taken captive by. Naturally, It is a bad thing every time, but for one exception: Vs 19 a husband and wife are supposed a husband and a wife are supposed to be so physically taken by each other that it is almost like they are each other-others captive!

Maybe Paul was thinking of this when he, by the Holy Spirit, taught that wives have authority over their husband's body, and likewise the husband over the wife's body (1 Cor 7:4).

Vs 20 In light of the strength of joy on the Path of Life, the strange woman and her corrupt path really have nothing good to offer.

Be wise and you will have God's best!

Proverbs 5:21-23 The Two Paths are Before You

Vs 21 Ending where we begin: There are two ways and God knows the end of both and the steps of every man.

Vs 22-23 The way of the wicked is the way of self-destruction and the wicked walk right into their own traps. He who goes down the path of death will die alone without instruction.

Choose, and teach people to choose spouses who are on the path of wisdom!

Flee from attractive partners who do not help you live out your values. And, if God has not given you the gift of singleness, focus on a God-given relationship with one person who shares your values!