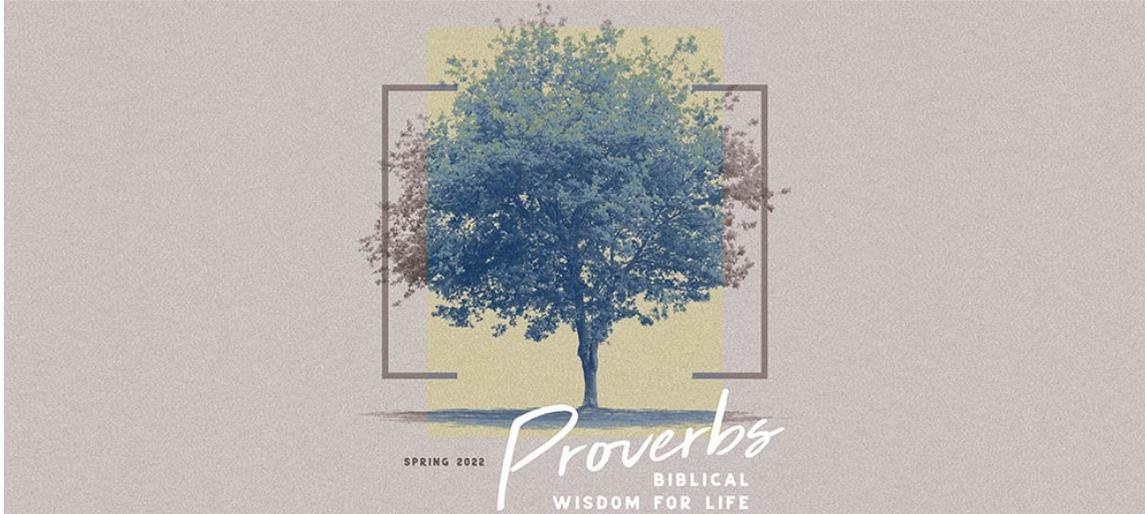


Week 21: Proverbs: Wisdom in Marriage

Hook



Main Point: Godly spouses love each other well and bring each other closer to God.

Below are some of the most popular TV series by decade:

1950s: *I Love Lucy*

1960s: *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

1970s: *All in the Family*

1980s: *Family Ties*

1990s: *Home Improvement*

2000s: *Friday Night Lights*

2010s: *The Big Bang Theory*

Q: How did these series portray marriage? Would you describe any of these marriages as God-honoring?

Q: What do these series depiction of marriage say about the culture at the time?

Week 21: Proverbs: Wisdom in Marriage Book

Main Point: Godly spouses love each other well and bring each other closer to God.

Proverbs 5:18–19; 12:4; 18:22; 19:13–14; and 31:10–31 [Read]

Talking Point 1: A spouse of good character brings life, joy, and value.

Q: Why is having a spouse of good character more important than one who is attractive by the world's standards?

Q: In what ways does a godly spouse add value to your life?

There are lots of different family dynamics – people who are married, divorced, widowed, remarried, never married, and some who feel called to singleness. We don't expect that everyone in our groups will be married or even want to be married. There may be some who even have deep hurt from a marriage or other relationship. We want to be sensitive to these situations while still looking at what Proverbs has to say about marriage.

Though not everyone is married, we believe marriage is important to discuss because, in the Bible, it is the central relationship of the family unit. At the same time, many single people played important roles in the biblical story – Paul, Anna, Simeon, Mary, Martha, Jeremiah, Naomi, and others, not to mention Jesus Himself! Talking about marriage does not mean that we don't see incredible value in the lives of those who are single and their contributions to our church family.

There is plenty of brokenness and hurt in many marriages, especially in our world today. Divorce statistics, even among Christians, tell us that very plainly. But Proverbs tells us that we can find pleasure and fulfillment in marriage if we do marriage God's way (5:18–19). Solomon told his sons that finding a good wife is a good thing (18:22) and that a good wife is a gift from the Lord (18:22; 19:14). She is "far more precious than jewels" and difficult to find, but she will bring her husband good all the days of her life (31:10–12). The description in Proverbs 31 is long and detailed, but it comes down to being a wife of "noble character" and "a woman who fears the Lord" (31:30), connecting the qualities we should look for in a spouse to wisdom, the general theme of Proverbs. Not only should we fear the Lord and pursue godly wisdom ourselves, but we should also partner ourselves only with someone who fears the Lord and pursues godly wisdom as well.

Proverbs most often talks about the need for a man to find a good wife because in the culture of the Old Testament, marriage was the man's choice. Marriages were arranged between the fathers and used to connect two families. Parents were careful about choosing spouses for their children who would bring honor to their family. Proverbs 12:4 uses contrasting or antithetical parallelism to tell us that an excellent wife (literally "a wife of noble character") brings glory and honor to her husband ("a crown"), while a wife who brings shame to him "is like rottenness in his bones," meaning she will eat away at his strength and destroy his happiness (12:4). A wife who behaved nobly in the community would raise her husband's standing in the community, but a wife who behaved disgracefully would lower his standing.¹

Even though we don't live in the same kind of honor/shame culture today, it is still true that a partner of noble character will bring honor and happiness, while a partner of ignoble character will bring you down, not only emotionally and spiritually but in tangible ways, too.

Today, marriage partners are chosen by individuals, not by families, so this Proverb is still applicable to us today: choose wisely! Both partners have a choice; neither women nor men should settle for a partner who doesn't fear the Lord and live in an honorable way. When you choose a person to marry, you are choosing a partner for life; you must be sure that this person has the same values and character, goals, and love for Jesus. You can't base your decision on romance, emotions, what you see on TV or in movies, or what you hear in love songs on the radio.

As with friendship, you need to connect yourself with someone who can sharpen you like "iron sharpens iron," someone who will make you stronger. But the decision of a marriage partner is even more important because it is a *life-long* partnership that will affect all areas of your life.

Q: Describe ways you have experienced your spouse helping to make you better or ways you have seen other couples sharpening each other.

Q: In what ways is a biblical list of what to look for in a spouse different from a list created by the world, including romantic movies and songs?

Proverbs 5:3, 15–20; 6:25–35; 7:25–27; 22:14; and 23:26–28 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Don't give into the temptation of adultery; it will destroy you.

Q: What are some reasons that adultery can be tempting?

Q: How can rejoicing in your own spouse help prevent that temptation?

Some may think that in a room full of people who love Jesus, we wouldn't need to talk about adultery, but statistics tell us that adultery rates in the evangelical population are nearly the same as the general population in the United States.² A *Christianity Today* survey even found that 23 percent of the *pastors* they surveyed admitted to inappropriate behavior with someone other than their wives while in ministry.³ Being a follower of Jesus doesn't make you immune to temptation. It might make you even more susceptible because if you think you're immune, you might not put wise boundaries and safeguards in place to protect yourself.

Proverbs 5:3 uses synonymous parallelism to emphasize that the words of a tempter are smooth – their “lips ... drip honey” and their “speech is smoother than oil” (5:3). But the tempter's mouth is a “deep pit” (22:14; 23:27), a trap that goes “down to the chambers of death” (7:27). When someone is tempting you to commit adultery, they may flatter you with all kinds of compliments or tell you it's no big deal. But adultery always leads to pain and devastation – for your spouse, your children, even other family members and friends. It's never *not* a big deal. Proverbs tells us that no one who even touches someone else's spouse will go unpunished (6:29). Solomon used vivid imagery, similar to our modern proverb, “if you play with fire, you're going to get burned” (6:28). He said those who commit adultery destroy *themselves* (6:32) in addition to how much they hurt their spouses.

The book of Proverbs gives us straightforward instructions to simply stay away from those who try to seduce us (6:25). The wise person sets up healthy boundaries and safeguards his or her life. But Proverbs doesn't just give us “do not's.” It also tells us something *to do* to prevent temptation — “Drink water from your own cistern.” Enjoy your spouse, let them fill you with delight, and “be intoxicated always in [that person's] love” (5:15–20). Scripture does not shy away from describing a healthy intimate relationship between husband and wife.

As a modern proverb says, “If the grass looks greener somewhere else, go home and water your own lawn.” If you are tempted to stray, go home and work on your marriage. Contact a minister and seek recommendations for Christian counseling. Pray together. Find out what it is that you feel you aren't getting from your marriage and work on it together instead of looking for it somewhere else. Proverbs does not put the onus on one spouse to “be more attractive” to “keep the other spouse interested” but on the one who is beginning to wander to refocus on the marriage.

If you are interested in exploring helps that Prestonwood offers for your marriage, please visit prestonwood.org/marriage. There you will learn about programs like the *ONE Marriage Workshop*, you and your spouse will gain insight on how to communicate better, resolve conflict, and grow your intimacy so that your marriage can thrive. Looking for marriage mentors? *Mentors 4 Couples* pairs couples desiring help with their

marriage with a mentor couple to walk through designated curriculum to strengthen and enrich their marriage. *Revitalize* is a LifeGroup Bible Study that walks through a one-year curriculum building on the principles taught during our ONE events and Mentors4Couples.

Q: Describe some good boundaries you have seen couples set up in their marriages.

Q: In what ways does someone who commits adultery “destroy” themselves (Proverbs 6:32)?

Q: In what ways have you invested in your marriage in the past year? How have these actions impacted your relationship?

Proverbs 10:19; 17:13–14, 27–28; 20:3; 21:9; 26:21; and 27:15–16 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Being quarrelsome or vindictive will bring misery to your marriage.

Q: Why is it difficult to live with someone who is always picking a fight?

Q: In what ways does being quarrelsome or vindictive impact someone’s witness for Christ?

No one wants to live in a home with someone who is quarrelsome (21:9). A quarrelsome person kindles strife as wood kindles a fire (26:21). Solomon described them as “letting out water,” which means breaking a dam (17:14). Both fire and flood leave incredible damage in their wake. Being quarrelsome will absolutely destroy a marriage. Fools are quick to fight, but the wise control their tongues (10:19; 17:27–28; 20:3).

It's easy in a marriage to let your anger erupt in a fight, like breaking open a dam. Because you’ve been together so long, you have a long history of past transgressions you could bring up when you’re angry. Because you know each other so well, you know just how to “push each other’s buttons.” But the Bible tells us that love “keeps no record of wrongs.” That love is patient and kind and not easily angered (1 Corinthians 13:4–5).

Love is not a feeling, it's an *action* and a *choice*. Love is also a Fruit of the Spirit, as is self-control. When we feel ourselves being quarrelsome or wanting to let go on our spouses, we need to lean into the Holy Spirit and ask Him to guard our tongues and our hearts.

Q: What practical steps can we take to control our tongues in our relationships?

Q: How could patience, kindness and self-control change a contentious marriage?

Week 21: Proverbs: Wisdom in Marriage

Took

Main Point: Godly spouses love each other well and bring each other closer to God.

If you are married, plan a date night for sometime in the next two weeks. Each of you, plan to share with your spouse ways in which he or she brings joy to your life. Leading up to your date, ask the Lord to bring to mind areas in which you need to repent, sins that have made you less than the spouse that God desires you to be. Repent and ask forgiveness both from the Lord and your spouse.

CHALLENGES

THINK: *If you are married* – How would you rate your intimacy with your spouse right now? In what ways have you contributed to the level of intimacy in your marriage?

If you are single – What safeguards can you put in place to prevent you from being pulled into an unhealthy intimacy with someone you're not married to?

PRAY: For God to reveal to you the ways He wants to grow your marriage or grow you in your singleness. Ask Him to grow your own character so you can be a better partner now or in the future. Be specific. Don't just ask for "better character." Pray about specific areas in which you know you need to grow and change. Pray for wisdom to put up safeguards and boundaries in your life. Pray for patience, kindness and self-control in all your interactions with your spouse or other close relationships, even when you're angry.

ACT: *For couples* – Choose one way to build intimacy in your marriage this week physically, emotionally or spiritually. It may be as simple as spending time alone together if you haven't been able to do that much lately or as serious as signing up for marriage counseling to finally tackle issues you have been avoiding for years. Discuss together which type of intimacy you think you need to build most and choose an activity that will help you to connect this week.

For singles – Choose a godly friend who functions like iron sharpening iron for you and spend some intentional time with that person this week. You could pray together, serve together, or just go out for dinner and talk about what's going on in your lives, but make it an intentional time of connecting, not just hanging out.

¹ Allen P. Ross, "Proverbs," Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Proverbs–Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

² Dave Carder and Duncan Jaenicke, *Torn Asunder: Recovering from Extramarital Affairs* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008).

³ Cindy Crosby, "Why Affairs Happen: And What You Need to Know about Prevention and Recovery" *Today's Christian Woman, Christianity Today* - <https://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2008/september/why-affairs-happen.html>