

“Seduction” (PG-13)
Proverbs 7 on July 19, 2020



Before going further in this transcript, please read Proverbs 7:6-23. Also, please note: This message on Seduction and will touch on some PG-13 material.

There's an old episode of Little House on the Prairie¹ when Charles is turned down for a business loan that he tries to get from the new banker in town. Unaware of the business tension between the banker and her husband, Charles' wife, Caroline, brings the banker a basket of home-baked food as a way of welcoming him to town. But the banker thinks Carolyn is meddling in her husband's business, and he accuses her of “using her wiles.” As an upstanding, God-fearing woman, this of course, greatly upsets Caroline. When she tells Charles, He is furious. “How dare he accuse my wife of using her wiles!” When their kids overhear this, they ask the obvious question: “Hey pa, what are wiles?”² Charles answers rather briskly, “They are something your mother NEVER uses!” What are wiles? Well, there a way of referring to seduction. **Seduction** = powerfully enticing someone toward a course of action, often sexual in nature.³ Proverbs 7:21 says, “With persuasive words she led him astray; she **seduced** him with her smooth talk.”⁴

Proverbs is a book of Wisdom & Warnings. Today, Proverbs warns us about the danger of SEDUCTION. Some of us are all too familiar with sexual seduction, but others of us are probably more familiar with the seduction of power/money/popularity or whatever else it may be. To be clear, the immediate context of Proverbs 7 focuses on sexual seduction. However, many of the principles in this chapter can be broadly applied to other types of seduction as well. Let's make sure to note, both men and women can be sexually seduced. And, both men and women are capable of doing the seducing. Seduction works in both directions, with both genders. Therefore, let's make sure that we approach Proverbs 7 as a “symbolic representation” of seduction, rather than an unfair stereotyping of men and women.⁵ Proverbs 7 offers each one of us wisdom & warnings regarding seduction. This morning, we are going to focus in on 3 particular aspects of seduction: 2 warnings and 1 word of wisdom. The first warning is that...

1 Seduction strives to derail our devotion to Jesus. Proverbs 7:25 warns, “Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths.” Seduction entices us to change course. We're headed in a good direction, but seduction nudges us to go astray, to abandon our allegiance to Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.⁶ Seduction is nothing less than a real and immediate threat to our Gospel allegiance. Any Christ-follower who genuinely desires to become a more fully devoted followers of Jesus, must take Proverbs warning about seduction seriously. Unfortunately, one of the best illustrations of seduction derailing someone's faith, is found in the story of King Solomon himself. Seduction is SO powerful and effective, that it even derailed the faith of the primary contributor to the book of Proverbs.

Take a look at 1 Kings 11:4-5, “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.” (So much for growing older and wiser! As Solomon grew older, his faith was derailed because he failed to put all his great wisdom into action.) 1 Kings goes on, “He followed Ashtoreth⁷ the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites.” (Just to be clear: Ashtoreth was a goddess whose worship involved lewd sexual activities.⁸ Molek was a pagan deity whose worship

¹ Starring Karen Grassle and Micheal Landon.

² I believe it was half-pint, aka Laura, who asked this question.

³ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/seduce>

⁴ “**led him astray**” (הָטָה = “Bend, turn, incline”) Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (p. 640). Oxford: Clarendon Press. “**seduced**” (הָטָה = compel or force by flattery) Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (p. 623). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁵ In fact, we see a similar kind of personification in the next two chapters, where Proverbs 8-9 introduce us to Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, pp. 367-368.

⁶ See Proverbs 14:12. Jesus teaching His disciples in Matthew 7:13-14.

⁷ *ASH tuh reth* and *MOH lek* (Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That's easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 117). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

⁸ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 360 footnote on Judges 2:13.

even went so far as to sacrifice children, by throwing them into the fire!⁹ In other words, even though Solomon possessed great wisdom, there were areas in his life where he didn't put it into action. In fact, take a look at one of the Proverbs that was written by Solomon himself:¹⁰ In Proverbs 19:27 Solomon warns, "Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge."¹¹ Not only do we need to BEGIN listening to wisdom, we also need to KEEP on listening!¹² Solomon's folly is a stark reminder that seduction wants to derail our faith. A second warning about seduction is that...

2 Seduction strategizes for our destruction. Now, if the word "destruction" sounds a little dramatic here, let me explain. Seduction is NOT content with merely causing a moral failure or derailing our devotion to Jesus. Seduction is hell-bent on destroying our entire lives. Here are some ways that seduction brings destruction: Ruined reputations, financial losses, loss of job or job promotions, ruined families, heartbroken children, the revenge and fury of a jealous spouse, embarrassment of being tricked, lost dignity of our bodies, lost assurance of our Christian faith, lost integrity of Christian ministries, and so on. Frankly, I don't have the heart to brainstorm any more. As you consider this list, let me read some other proverbs to you. Proverbs 5:8-10 warns, "Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your honor to others and your dignity to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another." Proverbs 6:32-34 warns, "But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away. For jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge." How many stories do each of us know about how someone's infidelity destroyed their life and the lives of those around them?¹³ The train-wrecks caused by seduction go on and on.¹⁴ The irony, is how many of the victims of seduction, end up asking themselves: "how did I ever get myself into this mess?" Proverbs 7:26-27 concludes the chapter, "Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave leading down to the chambers of death." In Proverbs 7, this father is warning his son, that seduction is about so much more than sex. Sex is just the enticement, used to distract us from our looming destruction.

Let's look at how Seduction strategizes for our destruction in Proverbs 7:10-20:¹⁵ Proverbs 7:10 says **Seduction is crafty**, "Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent." Seduction is dressed to kill, dressed for battle. What attracts you to the opposite sex? Well, whatever it is, seduction will dress to fit: A man who is easy to talk to, or muscular, or wealthy? A woman with all the right curves, or who treats us with respect, or who admires us? Seduction will dress itself up in whatever way it can to catch our eye, to convince us that going astray, is worth it.¹⁶ You'll probably think to yourself how it's an uncanny coincidence how well the two of you match up. You may rationalize that it's meant to be, that this might even be your "soul mate." But what's actually unfolding is a premeditated tactical strategy. Whatever sight or sound or smell will attract you, Seduction will use it, in its strategy to destroy you.

Proverbs 7:11-12 says **Seduction makes itself readily available**, "(She is unruly and defiant, her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.)" Seduction seems to be lurking everywhere. Never has this been truer for mankind than in this age of the Internet. Seduction is literally at our fingertips 24/7 (or maybe I should say our "thumb tips.") Our enemy, the devil, DELIGHTS in making sin and disobedience to God, so readily available to people.

⁹ For example, see 2 Kings 23:10.

¹⁰ *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1043 footnote on Proverbs 10:1.

¹¹ "If anyone asks how Solomon could be so wise and die a fool, his own proverb provides the answer." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, pp. 1188-1189.

¹² "Being wise one day is no guarantee of being wise the next." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1189.

¹³ So many real-life stories are out there of how seduction has removed pastors from ministry, torn families to shreds, ruined our financial security, and led to unintended pregnancies and STD's. Consider also the story of Alexander Hamilton.

¹⁴ Is it any wonder that our enemy, the devil, delights in seduction? Consider John 10:10.

¹⁵ Seduction is a clever, scheming huntress; we're the prey that's being stalked. Her tactical strategy is revealed in Proverbs 7.

¹⁶ Then, "all of a sudden," seduction sinks its hooks into you. (Like a bass on a Rapala minnow!) Rich Mullins is the guy who brought us songs like "Our God is an Awesome God" and "Step by Step." One of his lesser known songs is called "Save Me." One of the verses says this, "Save me... Save me from any woman who would be turned on to by the aftershave I use... Lord... please save me!" <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/richmullins/saveme.html>

Proverbs 7:13 says that **Seduction is shameless**. “She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said:” Seduction operates with brazen boldness. It has no parameters for what’s appropriate. It doesn’t abide by any social mores, or by some list of godly values. Proverbs 7:14 says that **Seduction even goes to church**, “Today I fulfilled my vows, and I have food from my fellowship offering at home.” In the Old Testament, fulfilling this vow would have included presenting a fellowship offering to the Lord at the temple. In other words, sacrificing an animal at God’s altar, and then bringing some of the meat home to eat. In the New Testament, the equivalent might be going to church on Sunday morning, putting our tithe in the offering plate, singing worship songs and listening to the sermon, and then bringing home some leftovers from the potluck. This is a shameless, sacrilegious, pretend faith that is designed to somehow make itself more attractive to a believer.

Proverbs 7:16-17 says that **Seduction is pleasurable**. “I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.” In addition to the good food from the potluck, Seduction offers the soft and silky, luxury feel of high thread count sheets. It even smells nice. Seduction’s strategy has now employed all 5 senses: taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell.¹⁷ Proverbs 7:18 says that **Seduction pretends to be love**, “Come, let’s drink deeply of love till morning; let’s enjoy ourselves with love!” Rather than calling it what it really is (sexual immorality or adultery) Seduction says we’re “making LOVE.” Proverbs 7:19-20 says that **Seduction promises we won’t get caught**, “My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon.” In other words, we both know that this is wrong (but no one will ever find out.¹⁸ We’ll get away with it!)

And then, Proverbs 7:22-23 says, “All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.” “All at once,” Seduction’s charm turns ugly.¹⁹ Only now, when it’s too late, does this gullible young man realize that he has been the hunted prey all along. He’s played the part of the fool. He thought he was going to a house of pleasure, but he’s been led to a house of slaughter. So, we’ve covered the two warnings, here’s the word of wisdom:

3 Seduction fails when godly wisdom is put into action. The father gave his son a great word of wisdom, way back at the beginning of Proverbs 7. Proverbs 7:2 says, “Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.” “Apple” is a way of referring to the pupil of our eye. In other words, guard wisdom’s teachings the same way you guard your eyes from danger. Don’t just listen to the commands, KEEP them. If he’d kept his father’s commands, the young man would have lived. In other words, wisdom calls for obedience. Seduction fails when godly wisdom is put into action. Godly wisdom can be put into action with 3 counter-strategies. First of all, **1 – Bring Seduction into the light**.²⁰ Consider the time of day that Seduction came out to meet the young man in Proverbs 7:9, “at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.” In the words of Shakespeare, “light and lust are deadly enemies.”²¹ In the words of Scripture, 1 John 1:5-7 reminds us that “...God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”²² This is Good News! There IS forgiveness for those who stray! We just need to agree with God that sin is sin. Ask God to shine his light, into the dark corners of your heart and mind. Ask Him to rescue you from the darkness that wants to seduce you. We need to bring Seduction into the light.

¹⁷ Anyone good at fishing knows, you just keep trying different baits until they go for the hook!

¹⁸ Talk about naive and gullible. This is when it becomes clear that the young man in this story is beginning to believe what he wants to believe. He is so caught up in the web Seduction is weaving, that he isn’t even thinking straight. That leads him right into her trap.

¹⁹ See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p. 367.

²⁰ Joseph’s flight from temptation in Genesis 39:1-12 comes to mind. Sometimes, the best defense in warfare is to run away. Choose flight rather than fight. Especially when you are outmatched. Be humble enough to recognize your weakness. When it comes to sexual seduction, there’s nothing honorable about sticking around when you know that you are going to lose. RUN AWAY! Perhaps some of us would respond, “Run away? What a wuss! What kind of person runs away from a fight?” I’ll tell you what kind of person runs from seduction: a godly person! A person who wants to avoid sinning against God. A person who wants to save their marriage/family/career/reputation/ministry/etc.

²¹ Quoted by Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004 p. 373.

²² 1 Peter 2:9 says that we are to, “...declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

A 2nd counter-strategy is to **2 – Maintain genuine accountability and support**. Galatians 6:1-2 has some great advice, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently...Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” This phrase in verse 2, “carry each other’s burdens,” is emphasizing a MORAL burden; not a physical weakness but a MORAL weakness.^{23 24} Perhaps you are thinking, “Pastor Jerry, I’ve heard you talk about accountability MANY times before!” Good, I’m glad you’ve been listening. But have you put it into practice; are you maintaining genuine accountability and support for your Christian walk?²⁵ Seduction only fails if we actually put godly wisdom into ACTION. If you or someone you know would like some help with this, please send me a confidential email at PastorJerry@efcbemidji.org

A 3rd counter-strategy is to **3 - Develop a robust, happy marriage**. Proverbs 5:15-20 offers this wisdom regarding marriage, “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.”²⁶ Rather than WASTING our time and energy, running after seduction, we need to INVEST our time and energy, into pursuing our relationship with our spouse. Now for those of us who are SINGLE, our counter-strategy to seduction should be to develop a robust, happy life of singleness, sexual purity, and abstinence. Purity/abstinence are God’s good gifts for those who are single; they are opportunities to trust and honor God. For ALL of us, Seduction fails when godly wisdom is put into action.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 urges ALL of us to “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”²⁷ Whether through abstinence or through sex within the covenant of marriage, we have the opportunity to honor God with our bodies. Let’s consider this rather direct counsel from Romans 6:13, “Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”²⁸ Allow me to be blunt here. We are to offer EVERY PART of our body as an instrument of righteousness. This includes our sexual body parts; this includes our penis or our vagina. In other words, Romans 6:13 is saying that our sexuality can be used as an instrument of wickedness, OR as an instrument of righteousness. God is glorified when we live out God-honoring sex lives. Let me take this one step further. In Romans 6:13, the Greek word for INSTRUMENT can also be translated WEAPON. Far too often sex is used as a weapon of wickedness, for all kinds of ungodly purposes. But sex can also be a weapon of righteousness.²⁹ Sex is not bad and sex is not evil; it’s neutral. It can be used for good or for evil. Seduction entices us toward WICKED sexual behavior. Godly wisdom compels us toward RIGHTEOUS sexual behavior.³⁰

Therefore, Brother or Sister in Christ, let’s put godly wisdom into action, so that seduction will fail, so that our devotion to Jesus will stay on-track.

This sermon was preached onsite & online at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
on July 19, 2020 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

²³ NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1979 footnote on Galatians 6:2.

²⁴ The word restore is the same word that’s used for mending nets with holes. For example, Mark 1:19 uses the same Greek word as Galatians 6:1. (NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1979 footnote on Galatians 6:1) In other words, a net with holes is pretty useless. But, mending those holes makes it useful again. Likewise, helping a Brother or Sister in Christ who is caught in sin, is how we gently restore them to wholeness again.

²⁵ James 1:22.

²⁶ This is probably the only place where the Bible actually encourages intoxication. Also consider the wisdom of 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

²⁷ See 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

²⁸ μέλος = “a part of the human body, member, part, limb literally of parts of the human body.” (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 628). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.) By the way, the word “instrument” here (ὄργανον) can also be translated as weapon or tool. (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 716). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.)

²⁹ So, the end of Romans 6:13 could be translated something like this: “...offer every part of your body to God as a weapon of righteousness.”

³⁰ In college, I remember our entire class being utterly shocked when Professor Harvey Martin told us we should be able to pray during sex with our wife.