

Proverbs 7:11-21

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-7/proverbs-711-21/>

The seduction of the adulteress is a master class in temptation, full of lies and clearing the way into sin. The young man yields.

In the previous section, Solomon began narrating a parable to show his young audience how easy (and prevalent) it is to be enticed into the path of wickedness. In those verses, Solomon told of a young man lingering near the house of an adulteress under the cover of darkness. His demise began with him flirting with temptation.

In verse 11, he continues with an explanation of this woman and how she operates. This narrative serves as a warning against adultery and, more generally, against the path of wickedness that drives us away from the heart of God and into the bosom of evil.

The adulteress has gone out to meet the young man, not merely waiting for him at her house. Solomon describes her as *boisterous* (literally “loud”) and *rebellious* (or “stubborn,” literally “turning away”). As she is approaching the young man, the first thing Solomon notes is her appearance, being dressed as a harlot (verse 10).

The second thing he notes is her demeanor. She is loud—*boisterous* and unapologetic. She is an attention-grabber, wanting you to focus on her. This makes sense in the allegory—the woman represents Wickedness, which assaults our senses in an attempt to overwhelm them and silence the nagging voice of wisdom within us. She is, therefore, also *rebellious*. She is actively and stubbornly “turned away” from the true path.

The next description is that *her feet do not remain at home* (vs 11). Like in today’s world, the house (or *home*) represents our base of operations. It is where we are “truly ourselves.” When we want someone to let their guard down and feel safe, we tell them to “make yourself at home.”

Solomon, in the beginning of this narrative, describes himself as viewing this scene from inside his house, looking out the window. The adulteress, however, does not *remain at home*. She is out to meet the young man in the street—not wanting to show her cards, to let us into the truth of her foundation. This would expose her more than she desires and might awaken us to her true nature. Instead, she is loud and a demanding presence in the street.

She has fled her home, which may also be an allusion to Satan departing from his proper role as a servant of God. Satan chose instead to seek to ascend to take God’s place (Isaiah 14:13). Evil does not truly have a “home,” per se. It is a perversion of the only true home—Heaven. Evil is just a perversion of good, not an original idea.

Also, Solomon warns (primarily in Proverbs 5:9-10) about losing what is properly yours to another. So, she is leaving her *home* to entice the young man to hand over his life to her. Wickedness is looking to steal, to work him into a forfeit, and take control of his assets.

Having abandoned (or chosen to hide) her home, *she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner* (vs 12). This has a clear contrast to Lady Wisdom who “called aloud in the streets” in Chapter 1 (Proverbs 1:20-23). The adulteress is lurking around *every corner*. It conjures an image of someone sneaking around, looking to pick off the weak and uncertain ones at the fringes. Lady Wisdom calls openly, inviting all to engage. The adulteress *lurks*, ready to pounce and capture. The word for *lurks* means “lies in wait.” She is seeking someone to entrap.

Having set her sights on the young man, she wastes no time: *she seizes him and kisses him* (vs 13). Solomon has warned how suddenly sin can creep up on us. He also warns about what it looks like to give one’s life to another. So, the young man is flirting with the possibility of wickedness under the cover of darkness and has put himself into a place to be caught.

The adulteress pounces on the opportunity, *seizes* (literally, “catches”) *him and kisses him*. She turns his theoretical idea into a practical act as soon as possible. You often hear young people say something “just happened” and perhaps this is the effect she is going for. Now, the young man has committed an act. It may be easy to convince him he is past the point of being able to choose a different path.

And with a brazen face, she says to him (vs 13)...Only after this initial *kiss* does she speak. She does so with boldness, matching her description in verse 11 (*boisterous*). She needs to be bold, because her next move is as absurd as it seems to be effective.

Her first words to the young man are not what you would expect in a seduction. She says, *I was due to offer peace offerings; Today I have paid my vows* (vs 14). This is probably meant to clear a path to the adultery she is enticing him into.

Peace offerings (found in Leviticus 7:11-21 and elsewhere) were given for three reasons. Two seem unlikely to be what the adulteress is referencing to (as thanksgiving for God providing in a dire need and as a way to thank God for unsought blessing). The third reason for a peace offering was in accompaniment to a fulfilled vow. Since the adulteress says, *today I have paid my vows*, it seems likely this is the reason for her *peace offering*. This kind of *offering* was given once a vow was finished to show that the person holds no resentment for fulfilling the vow, to show God they did so willingly and with *peace* in their heart.

She is likely showing that her accounts are all clear. In the covenant with Israel, sin required a payment. An offering or sacrifice. The harlot seems to be showing that her slate is clean. She is all ready for a new batch of sins. She was *due to offer peace*, meaning she has successfully and completely fulfilled her vow. She is saying that there is nothing improper here. An assertion that there is no uncleanness or other obstacles to contend with. She is taking the position that her actions can be covered up, with no consequences incurred.

The intent here is to confuse the youth into thinking things are okay. To justify what she is proposing. That this is all not only above board, but somehow morally acceptable.

In reality, this is a perversion of God’s law. A denial of wisdom. And an excuse for wickedness. She cloaks these realities with lies based on God and the reality He has set forth.

The adulteress claims her *vow* was fulfilled *today*. What a lucky coincidence the young man has found her on the very day she is available.

She continues, *Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you* (vs 15). Now that she has met the supposed requirements for morality (fulfilling vow, peace offering), looking for him was the first thing on her to-do list. She got her check mark of moral justification, and now is ready to pursue more sinful living.

Having created a moral justification, the seductress now appeals to her target's pride. She is after him. She is looking for him. She came to *meet* him, looking *earnestly* (or "diligently"). We all like to be wanted and she is appealing to this base desire, suggesting a sexual manifestation of her affection for him.

Her next step of the seduction is to explain all of the effort she has made for him, *I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon* (vv 16-17). She now focuses on the physical, flesh-centered attraction of seduction.

Besides a hint of the erotic, she is telling him that she has pulled out all of the stops. She infers it would be impolite and quite a rejection to set aside someone who has gone through so much effort. She appeals not just to his vanity but to his desire to reciprocate. Surely, he does not want to offend?

In making her temptation, she follows the pattern set by Satan in Eden, and spoken of by the Apostle John (1 John 2:15-16):

- Lust of the flesh (*spread my couch*—invitation to have sex—*myrrh, aloes and cinnamon*)
- Lust of the eyes (she is dressed like a harlot, has *colored linens* on her couch)
- Boastful pride of life (*seek your presence earnestly*).

She describes an enticing fantasy world. There is no discussion of what will follow; only the immediate opportunity to indulge the appetite. The adulteress makes it clear that there will be no rejection.

This is a reason pornography is such an enticing temptation to the flesh—it creates an alternate reality where we do not have to wrestle with the messy challenge of truly sharing life together, exposing ourselves to rejection, or the complexity of delayed gratification. The adulteress tries quickly to move his mind to thinking of soft bedding and décor, and give him the chance to let his imagination run wild.

She moves in, as it were, for the kill: *Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning* (vs 18). She is about as direct as one can be. And certainly enticing to a young man— she is the aggressor. One of the core fears of men is female rejection and there is no need for this young man to worry about that: *Let us delight ourselves with caresses* (vs 18).

At this point, she has certainly turned his imagination to a fantasy night with her. The adulteress rushed through the legal/moral questions, into the lust of his flesh and sight, and his sense of pride, awakening the desires of his flesh. If the young man is not grounded in wisdom, it is very hard to see his way to it now.

Under all of these layers, she addresses any lingering excuses. Which, at this point, are just practical, *For my husband is not home, he has gone on a long journey* (vs 19). This is the first actual, direct mention of her husband. She has enticed the young man by setting the scene. The implication is that they can indulge in this affair and there will be no resulting consequence. And no interruption. She has thought of everything.

Now she is clearing the road, making the opportunity plain, *He has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home* (vs 20). This suggests the *husband* is away on a business trip. She gives a reason for his absence and a time for when he will return. *He has gone on a long journey*—plenty of time for us. No consequence. Nothing to fear. We can immerse in pleasure and there will be no negative affects.

This is the end of her verbal seduction. It is important to remember that she seized and kissed the young man back in verse 13, before she said a word to him. So, there is an act already committed. She has already aroused him. All of this argumentation is to try to get him deeper onto the path.

The other thing to recognize is that the young man has not said a single word in this entire scene. This is not a discussion; it is a presentation. She has taken over. He has forfeited to her. In the beginning of Solomon's narrative, the young man made decisions that put him in this position, and he has surrendered the scene to her—he is still responsible for his decisions and can flee from her at any point, but it gets more and more difficult with each layer of seduction.

The result is predictable—*with her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him* (vs 21). In short: it works. The word *entices* is the Hebrew word “*natah*” and it can mean “caused him to yield” or “stretched him out.” Her *many persuasions* have hit home. He has yielded, or forfeited. The inference is that this was a foregone conclusion from the time the young man decided to walk near her home.

The quick effectiveness of the seductress ought to be as concerning for modern readers as it was for Solomon's original audience. And that is his point in showing this whole process. We can so easily be distracted, “stretched out,” and led astray. The way to avoid it is to never take a single step in that direction. To flee is to stay far away.

Biblical Text

¹¹ **She is boisterous and rebellious,**

Her feet do not remain at home;

¹² **She is now in the streets, now in the squares,**

And lurks by every corner.

¹³ **So she seizes him and kisses him**

And with a brazen face she says to him:

¹⁴ “I was due to offer peace offerings;

Today I have paid my vows.

¹⁵ Therefore I have come out to meet you,

To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.

¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings,

With colored linens of Egypt.

¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed

With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;

Let us delight ourselves with caresses.

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He has gone on a long journey;

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