

Proverbs 7:6-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-7/proverbs-76-10/>

Solomon tells a parable about a young man flirting with the adulteress and tempted by the way of wickedness.

Solomon narrates a mini-drama, and casts himself into it, to make a point. This story (Solomon tells it in the first person) begins with him watching a scene unfold: *for at the window of my house I looked out through the lattice* (vs 6). Solomon is watching, observing the world. The central agenda of this story is to convey what he sees as all-too-prevalent. The warnings and repetitive pleas to follow come from a constant observation of the world around him. So, Solomon is watching from the *window* of his *house*. He is observing neighbors, those close to home—likely a reference to fellow believing Israelites. This is not a “they” problem; it is an “us” problem.

Solomon watches from the safety of his *house*; the illustration of *house* has been used in Proverbs to talk about one’s foundation. One’s home. Solomon is safe there, refusing to engage with the dangers he observes (heeding his own advice to stay far from wickedness, Proverbs 5:8). He watches *through the lattice*—a *lattice* being a sort of design covering windows.

From his window, Solomon *saw among the naïve and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense* (vs 7). This phrasing carries the idea of zeroing in. He first *saw among the naïve*, which is to say a group of *youths*. The word for *naïve* means “the innocent or simple ones” or “the fools.” This likely refers to their age and lack of experience.

The progression comes as he *discerned*, not merely physical observation but a spiritual one. He does this *among the youths*. The word for *youths* is “ben” in Hebrew, which means “son.” It is the same word for familiarity and affection Solomon has used throughout Proverbs (Proverbs 7:1-5, 2:1-5). So, it is the same group of young men, but Solomon is seeing them more closely, more intently.

From this group of young men, he focuses attention on *a young man lacking sense* (vs 7). This is a singular person picked out of Solomon’s stated audience (Proverbs 1:1-7). The implication is that this could be any one of his readers. It is nondescript. And a warning that this is something he sees recurring. And, if one is not careful, it could be you.

The word for *sense* is the Hebrew word “leb,” which means “heart.” Solomon just used it: “write [wisdom] on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 7:3). This particular young man is lacking in *heart*; he has not internalized Solomon’s instruction and teachings. He is a case study in ignoring what Solomon proposes; a cautionary tale.

The narration continues with the young man *passing through the street near her corner* (vs 8). The *her* here is the seductress, the adulteress warned about in the early section of Chapter 7 and throughout the first seven chapters. She represents the way of wickedness.

Solomon has warned his audience not to give her the time of day, to avoid her at all costs (Proverbs 5:8). To be diligent and fervent in denying evil. But this young man just happens to be *passing by the street near her corner*. He could give a variety of excuses for being there. He is flirting with disaster but maintaining a plausible deniability. He likely tells himself he will only taste, but not drink. But once we begin to give into temptation a little, our ability to resist quickly decays.

And he takes the way to her house (vs 8) suggests he knows exactly where he is and what he is doing, even if he is pretending otherwise. As Solomon warned, he closes in on *her*. She has his focus, his attention; and just *passing by* will not satisfy the lust of the flesh. He gets ever closer.

Solomon's narration then provides a little setting. *In the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness* (vs 9). These four things are basically synonyms. This is a specific time. Which reveals that this young man's sojourn is premeditated. It is a time of *darkness*. He knows what he is doing is not the best thing for him, not what he ought to do, so he is seeking it under the cover of *darkness*.

One of these synonyms, *middle of the night*, is the Hebrew word “‘iyshown” and it is the same word from verse 2 for apple in the phrase “apple of your eye.” In verse 2 Solomon implores for his teaching to be the *middle* of one's vision. Instead, here, it is in the heart of *darkness* that the young man sleuths.

The adulteress is not content to wait. She meets him halfway, apparently pursuing him just as he pursues her: *and behold, a woman comes to meet him* (vs 10). It is important in Solomon's story that the young man makes the first inquiries. It is clear what he is looking for, and the woman is eager to act once he has made room for it. She does not initiate, but she also does not sit idle. She leaps at the opportunity before he can acknowledge (perhaps to himself) what he is doing. She helps him along the way by going to him.

This woman is *dressed as a harlot* (vs 10). In a sense, she is not hiding who she is. She is showing the young man what he came to see. The idea is that temptation tries to appeal to the part of our flesh that is looking for it. She is not hiding or apologizing. She is giving a physical allusion to the young man's sexual appetite.

She is also described as *cunning of heart*. What you see on the surface is not the full measure of her. In other words, she knows what she is doing. She is dressed one way—to appeal to physical lusts, but is prepared within herself for the more troublesome temptation, the more important one. A spiritual temptation.

It is important to reiterate that this kind of story is a specific warning for these young men not to engage in adultery. But it is not limited to sex. The real warning is about the flesh within us that leads us to betray Lady Wisdom. Lady Wisdom leads us to live and align with that which we were created for. This is about more than sexual lust; it is a parable for the way we stray from our true home (in God) for the seemingly enticing, yet wicked way of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

Biblical Text

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I looked out through my lattice,
⁷ And I saw among the naive,
And discerned among the youths
A young man lacking sense,
⁸ Passing through the street near her corner;
And he takes the way to her house,
⁹ In the twilight, in the evening,
In the middle of the night and in the darkness.
¹⁰ And behold, a woman comes to meet him,
Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.**