

# Proverbs 6:26-29

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-6/proverbs-626-29/>

*Flirting with temptation is dangerous. Sin has consequences that cannot be avoided. Submitting to wickedness interrupts a productive life.*

It is important to remember in these verses that Solomon is speaking on two levels. He has been consistent since verse one of The Book of Proverbs that this is all about choosing the path of wisdom, as designed by God. Wisdom is a practical enterprise—it seeps into every tangible area of our decision-making. When we choose to walk in wisdom, we chose a path to our greatest self-interest. The alternative is a path of destruction. And we make this binary decision day by day.

Throughout the first six chapters of Proverbs, Solomon has consistently used the metaphor of two very different “women”—Lady Wisdom shouting from the streets the way of life and “the adulteress” tempting the young away from the foundation of creation (both in terms of creation at large and in terms of one’s individual life).

When Solomon says *on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread* (vs 26), he is using one specific example of how wickedness corrodes us to allude to the general, binary option we have in life—which path will we walk, wickedness or wisdom?

The phrase *reduced to a loaf of bread* might be an idiom that has been lost through the ages. Ostensibly, it seems to mean that giving in to a *harlot* (the temptress, evil one, wickedness) reduces a man to very little. A bland, meager loaf of bread. He exists but does not live. He is alive but not thriving, not fulfilling the purpose to which he was created. He is just reactive; something to be used by others. He has lost his agency.

The conjunction *and* supports the idea that *harlot* and *adulteress* are synonyms here. They are both referring to idolatry—a betrayal against God’s ways. And *the adulteress hunts for a precious life*. Your life matters and is important, it is *precious*. The temptress comes to capture a life that is important, one who matters. When the *precious life* is captured, it is destroyed.

The spiritual forces of darkness want to get you away from the path of wisdom because you are important and valuable to The Kingdom of God. They would not waste their time on someone who is not otherwise effective for their enemy (Psalm 8:2). This is a subtle compliment for us and for Solomon’s readers—he is trying to name the reality of their value and implore them to steward it well. The enemy and avenger seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. But God’s goal of wisdom is to bring abundant life (John 10:10).

Earlier in Proverbs 6:10, and scattered throughout the first six chapters, Solomon has warned about the danger of getting close to evil, giving it an inch. He warns against laziness, about the idea of giving in to evil a little but not all the way. Clearly, Solomon is trying to warn his young

audience of the extreme dangers of the path of wickedness and imploring them to stay far from it.

*Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned* (vs 27) sounds a lot like our modern saying, “Play with fire and you are going to get burned.” And this is exactly Solomon’s message. This rhetorical question is trying to point out an absurdity of modern logic—that we can give wickedness a try (sow some wild oats) but not have to deal with the consequences. Reality does not work that way. Just as God made the world with a physical cause-effect, He also created a moral cause-effect. Choices have consequences.

Solomon repeats the same idea: *or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched* (vs 28)? We cannot partake in wickedness without experiencing the consequences of wickedness. We cannot entertain the seductions of the adulteress without, by very definition, committing adultery and reaping the consequences therein. Romans 1 speaks of the wrath of God as Him giving us over to the natural consequences of sin—and they are severe (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

*So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished* (vs 29). Again, Solomon is writing to a young, male audience. One who wants to be married to a loving wife. Just like in today’s world, we often obsess over what we want in a spouse with little thought given to what kind of spouse we are going to be ourselves. Solomon is encouraging these men to adopt a mindset, a perspective that allows them to be good husbands. A substantive part of the mindset he desires them to choose is to be loyal to their wives. To seek pleasure only in them, not in the wife of their neighbor (Proverbs 5:18). In this way they can invest in a lasting harmony. As with all wisdom, this investment ultimately benefits the investor—but there is a delay (Ephesians 5:28).

More than that, this is an illustration for all of us about what we were created to be. The life we want to live. Wisdom is in our own best interest. If we take things that don’t belong to us, *we will not go unpunished*. If we stray to the path of the evil one, *we will not go unpunished*. If we seek to extract from and exploit others, the ultimate result will be our own exploitation.

Our sins have consequences. One of the great lies of temptation is that we can enjoy the short-term boost without having to face the long-term consequence. We jump into instant gratification without a thought toward where it will lead. This is a lie. Actions have consequences. There might be a delay, but the cause/effect of justice will always be served.

Solomon is warning us that the sweet-sounding, tempting lies of worldly pleasure will produce significant results. But he also makes clear that we have a choice, and advises us to choose a perspective that will recognize the true path of life, and not follow the world’s deception that promises life but leads to death.

## **Biblical Text**

**<sup>26</sup> For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread,  
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.**

**<sup>27</sup> Can a man take fire in his bosom  
And his clothes not be burned?**

**<sup>28</sup> Or can a man walk on hot coals  
And his feet not be scorched?**

**<sup>29</sup> So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife;  
Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.**