

Pornography Unmasked

The following is a proposed sermon outline based on Proverbs 7.¹ Feel free to adapt this outline to your needs. This outline can easily be split into multiple sermons if necessary.

I. Background

In the text, King Solomon is looking out his window, looking down on the streets of Jerusalem, giving his commentary about a naïve man he sees strolling by the door of a prostitute. She lures him in. He follows. Adultery ensues.

Many men who have been ensnared by pornography cannot help but see themselves in this text. The Internet, the magazine rack, the adult bookstore . . . these places have been the modern brothels that have enticed men into a life of impurity.

The word “pornography” is a compound word meaning, “writing by/about prostitutes.” The dark forces that drive prostitution are the same forces that drive the demand for sexually explicit material online.

Solomon paints a vivid picture of this woman. She is alluring, sensual, and beautiful. As we read it, we find at least six lures this woman uses, six reasons why this man is enticed to follow her home—the same six reasons why many men find it so enticing to look at porn again and again.

II. The Six Lures of Porn

Lure #1: The Forbidden

The first thing Solomon says about this woman is that she is an adulteress (v.5). Other translations say “*strange woman*,” and this carries the idea that the woman is someone else’s wife. The idea is that she is *forbidden*. She is *off-limits*. She is not his to have. A few chapters later Solomon sums up the motto of the adulteress: “*Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant*” (Proverbs 9:13).

This is one reason why pornography is so tempting: *it is forbidden*. One of the marketing strategies of the porn industry is to paint settings and scenarios that present the lure of the forbidden.

It is simply part of our fallen nature and habits: *we want what we are told we cannot have*. For instance, Paul writes about the time when he first contemplated the 10th commandment, “You shall not covet.” He writes, “But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died” (Romans 7:8-9). As he was told what coveting was and why God hates it, his sinful heart immediately began seeking every opportunity to covet.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references come from the English Standard Version.

And this is also the nature of lust: we sexually covet those who are not ours to have.

Lure #2: The Physical Body

In verse 10, Solomon says she is “*Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.*” She looks the part. She’s not only seductive, she also holds some form of respectability: she holds down a home and has a husband. So, she is dressed seductively, but she doesn’t come off as just a common prostitute for hire. In many ways, she is a fantasy woman: the girl next door, but dressed to kill.

This is, of course, one of the reasons why pornography is attractive. The women in the photos and movies are “untouchable” and “beautiful,” yet thanks to the Internet they have become accessible and eager. These pictures and movies draw in a man visually, begging him to peak at more.

To be drawn to physical attractiveness is not a sin. When we read Genesis we see that the apex of God’s physical creation is the human body. So, it isn’t surprising that when people choose to make idols out of the things that God has created, the human body comes at the top of the list every time. Sexuality is in many ways worshiped in our culture and around the world. When our eyes lock on someone’s physical form, there is a very natural part of us that acknowledges the incredible beauty of the human body. Something draws us to see the naked human form. This natural and good appreciation of beauty turns into lust in our sinful hearts, and every form of media that uses tight clothing, nudity, and seductive images is propping up the naked human form as a rival god.

Pornography trains the mind to objectify people, to dehumanize others and see them as objects to be used. Contrast this with godly sexuality, which, when practiced in the context of marriage, does not dehumanize but rather fully celebrates our humanity. Porn trains our minds to rate others by the size, shape and harmony of their body parts. The result is that the fantasy women become the standard by which we judge the physical beauty of others.

Quite frankly, what real woman can compete with the pixels on the screen, all the makeup, hair extensions, camera angles, lighting and silicone?

Lure #3: Passivity

In verse 13 Solomon says, “*So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face she says . . .*” She presents herself as sexually assertive. She embraces him and holds him close. She kisses him. She has a strong, shameless, unembarrassed look on her face. She looks right in his eyes and she tells him more with her gaze and her body language than all her words can say.

Of course there is nothing wrong with a woman exhibiting sexual assertiveness with her husband. But the message that pornography tries to get across is that the woman on the screen is easy, vulnerable, and eager, that she will assertively give herself to the man who’s watching the screen. In other words, there’s no need for him to be assertive in order to have this fantasy experience. He can be passive.

Real relationships that lead to marriage and godly sex require a man to be assertive every step of the way, to take initiative. Real relationships require him to step up to the plate and take action, to serve, to romance, to woo.

Pornography's message is that the man can take it easy; he can avoid the assertiveness of real relationships and reap the benefits of sexual pleasure anyway. Porn makes him feel like a man without requiring him to be one. If he wants to have the sexual experience, there's no need to mess with the difficulties of cultivating real intimacy with a woman. He can have the fantasy on his terms and require nothing of himself.

Lure #4: Comfort

She says to him, "*I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows*" (v.14). Peace offerings were animal offerings, presented and slaughtered in the temple, and then a portion of it was given back to the one who brought the sacrifice. It was to be eaten in fellowship with friends and family that day. These peace offerings were the choicest meat.

She continues in verse 16, "*I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt.*" Here she speaks of her couch. People in her culture would recline to eat, and she is describing his special seat reserved for him at the table, covered with an expensive, exquisite cloth from Egypt. This is the luxury linen of Solomon's day. She assures him that this will be a luxurious dining experience. These cunning words say that she's hospitable. She's got a table set for him and is ready to entertain. She's spared no expense. She wants to take care of him. She wants him to be as comfortable as possible.

One of the ways that pornography lures us in by presenting itself as a refuge. One of the self-justifications we often use when we gear up to view pornography is that we want to unwind, we want to relax, and we want to reward ourselves after a hard day.

Pornography is often a way to self-medicate. The stress of life, deep feelings of dissatisfaction with life, and discontentment lead people to seek out "little releases." Pornography presents itself as a refuge, a hideaway, a place to find needed comfort.

Lure #5: Ego-Fulfillment

The forbidden woman continues, "*Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you*" (v.15). Notice how she strokes his ego here. "*I've come out to meet YOU, to seek YOUR presence earnestly, and have found YOU.*" She probably would have said the same thing to someone else had they come along at that time, but she insists that he's the one she wants to be with. She makes him feel desired, wanted and attractive. Solomon says in verse 21, "*With her many persuasions she entices him; with her FLATTERING lips she seduces him.*"

The man that repeatedly returns to pornography is caught in the fantasy experience that the woman on the screen is selling to him: she wants him, she notices him, and she makes him feel like a real man. This idea of ego-fulfillment is another way to say that she is validating him. It's a lie men learn in our culture very early on: that our masculinity is validated based on the "beautiful" women that notice me, the women I can "win."

It is very common for a man's ideal fantasy encounter to include a feeling of manly validation. When men feel unattractive or unwanted, they naturally turn inward, filling their mind with a host of fantasy scenarios where they are the hero, where they are irresistible to the women they desire. When pornography comes along they often find a virtual storyboard that feeds these fantasies.

Lure #6: Secrecy

She continues, “*For my husband is not at home, he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home*” (v.19-20). The idea is that the man of the house is gone on business and isn’t at all expected to return until the next full moon (the season in which community festivals are celebrated). In other words, she tells this man, “We have no worry of getting caught.”

Often what makes porn so enticing is that it is viewed in secret. Pornography thrives on secrecy.

Psychologist Al Cooper has coined this idea of the “Triple-A engine” of Internet pornography and cyber-sex. People are drawn to porn because it is (1) affordable, (2) accessible, and (3) anonymous. Affordable—porn is relatively cheap or free online. Accessible—the Internet brings it right into the private corners of your home at high speeds. Anonymous—no one has to know that you see it; it is secret.

It is like a three-legged stool. The last leg is the secrecy of Internet pornography, the security of not being caught. If we want to knock down this stool we need to kick out one of the legs. So, one of the best ways to break the lure of porn temptations is to break the leg of anonymity, the leg of secrecy. Bring your weaknesses, your temptations, and your sins into the light of confession and accountability.²

III. A View from Solomon’s Window – How to Fight Pornography

Solomon’s point in writing this chapter is to help his readers to see things from his point of view. Solomon is looking at this young man through his lattice. Literally and figuratively, he has a birds-eye-view of the situation. Solomon sees the danger this man is headed for. Had the young, naïve man seen things from Solomon’s point of view, he would not have made a trip down that road.

Let’s look through Solomon’s window for a moment, let’s see things from his point of view. What words of instruction does he give?

1. Give no opportunity for the flesh.

Notice how Solomon talks about the naivety of this young man: “*Passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness*” (v.8-9). The setting is painted well for us; it is twilight, no house lights are burning, and this man is walking quite deliberately in her direction. Does he know that she’s there waiting for a man to walk by? We aren’t told. But this man should know full well that walking through the streets of Jerusalem at night could lend itself to temptation.

The lesson is so obvious it should not need to be stated: don’t put yourself in the path of temptation, don’t go where you are likely to stumble. For each of us it may be a different stumbling block: a time of day or night, a certain place, a certain computer, a certain set of conditions.

² This could be a great time to talk about the tool of accountability software. Go to CovenantEyes.com for more information.

Jesus said that if your right eye or right hand causes you to stumble, pluck it out, tear it off (Matthew 5:29-30). He applied this directly to sexual temptation. It reminds me of the story about the mountaineer, Aron Ralston. This unfortunate man accidentally knocked a boulder loose and it pinned his right arm to a cave wall. Literally stuck between a rock and a hard place, he was all alone, trapped in a remote 3-foot-wide slot canyon in Utah, under an 800-pound rock. He was pinned there for 3 days before running out of water. After 5 days he decided he had only one choice to survive: he amputated his own arm with his pocketknife. Like the mountaineer, we may find ourselves trapped. If we stay pinned under the rock, it will be the end of us. We need to rid ourselves of anything that is pinning us to that rock . . . even if it means cutting off our own arm.

A test of your seriousness about this sin is how you treat the possibility of temptation. The real problem for most men who face pornography temptation is that for them *the temptation is a part of the whole experience*. Men revel in getting close to the edge. They revel in making those seemingly unimportant decisions that get them just one step closer to the porn: they turn on their computer, they “just want to check their email,” they get online late at night when they are all alone. Deep down, part of us is actually *hoping* we will encounter the temptation.

This attitude of wanting to “get close to the edge” *is itself a sin* because it is treating lightly something that God hates. To honor God in our sexuality means loving purity because God loves it, and hating lust and pornography because God hates it. When we see any other attitude rise up in us, one that would have us deliberately seeking out temptation, we need to recognize that we have already started facing the wrong way. At that moment we have a choice to make: will we run away, or will we walk into the trap.

2. Find a spiritual father.

I want to encourage all of you to find a “Solomon” to guide you on your path. Those first two words of Proverbs 7 are key for us: “My son . . .” (v.1). Ultimately this is a book of advice given from father to son, teacher to disciple, spiritual mentor to eager student. If we are going to make progress in this journey out of the snares of sexual temptation, we need to have spiritually wiser men around us to show us the way.

It is becoming less and less popular in our American ministry culture for generations to mix. We have peer groups for everything in the church, program upon program: groups for men, women, husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, single-mothers, seniors, teens, pre-teens, college-age, career-builders, young parents, divorced, remarried, dog-trainers, fishmongers, butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers. None of these life-stage or common-interest groups are inherently bad; but as we begin to buy into this sort of ministry culture, we also begin to believe that these groups have little to nothing to offer each other. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Listen to what Dr. Larry Crabb says in his book, *The Silence of Adam*:

“I see a few groups scattered here and there, across the Christian landscape, where godly character and spiritual wisdom are more honored than degrees and skill, and more valued than achievement and expertise. . . .

“I see these people stumbling into the living room of a lonely widow, making their way to the coffee shop to spend a couple hours with the tired widower, knocking on the door of a study where someone waits who is clothed with humility and eager for heaven, someone who is unself-consciously faithful as he warmly points to Christ.

“I envision a generation in which mentors are not in such short supply, in which pastors and elders are once again held in high esteem because they pastor and elder, in which Christian leaders are no longer asked to manage ministries the way executives build corporations, but rather are revered as men of godly influence. If I look hard into my dream, I can see an army of wise men and women distributed among God’s people, armed only with gentle discernment and penetrating wisdom, character qualities that have been forged in the fires of suffering. . . . These men are FATHERS, these women are MOTHERS, godly people whose quiet presence is felt and valued.”

Do you have someone like this in your life? Do we realize that such people are one of God’s means to overcoming habitual sin? “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:1a). Who are these “spiritual” people who can help you? They are the true elders among us. Find that older man, someone you can trust, someone who has a track record of walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), someone who has lasting fruit of Christlike character (Galatians 5:22-23). Find a true spiritual leader who *hears from God regularly, obeys His voice, and effectively models intimacy with God*. Find a true spiritual father who knows how to pray in faith, and has helped other men find healing from the hurts of unconfessed sin (James 5:13-16).

3. Repent of being so nearsighted.

The difference between Solomon and the man on the street is that Solomon sees through this woman’s alluring behavior. The man on the street cannot see past the end of his nose. He is near-sighted. To be nearsighted means that we can only see well what is right in front of us. We see these six lures of pornography, but we don’t see past them.

The apostle Peter wrote in his last letter that one of the main reasons why some Christians lack real virtue, real moral energy, lack self-control, lack patience and endurance, lack a reverent wonder of God in the face of temptation, is because they are nearsighted in their faith (2 Peter 1:9); they so easily forget how God transformed their life and has forgiven their sins. They forget the corrupting affects of sin that Jesus has rescued them from (2 Peter 1:4).

Before we ever go down the painful road of sin, Solomon is giving us a snapshot of the long-range view, the farsighted view. Read some of the imagery Solomon uses. This foolish man is like “an ox that goes to the slaughter,” and “a bird that hastens to the snare.” Solomon is clear that this man is headed for death. He says the prostitutes house “is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.” He’s playing on words here: the man on the street is going to her bed chambers, but really it is a chamber leading to Hell.

Pornography will lead your heart into turmoil. He writes, “*Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, . . . until an arrow pierces through his liver.*” In Hebrew thinking, the liver was thought to be the seat of our passions and feelings. This is why when Jeremiah wants to talk about pouring out his emotions, he writes, “*Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth*” (Lamentations 2:11, ERV). It was this young man’s passions and emotions that led him into the snare, and now a deadly arrow pierces the place where that lust began. Solomon says that the suffering he encounters will be a sharp pain in his heart. Porn will ruin your heart.

The worst thing you could be telling yourself right now is that YOU are the exception to the rule. You are not. Porn makes no exceptions.

If you are guilty of being beguiled by one or more of these lures that pornography uses, then repent of this. Get together with a trusted Christian friend, or someone who can be a spiritual mentor, and discuss the six lures, talk about which of these lures porn has used to draw you in. Confess these weaknesses and pray for each other.

When we truly repent we turn from something, but we also turn to something else. So we are not merely saying “no” to the lures of sin; we need to say “yes” to Someone more alluring. The only way to overcome the lusts of this world is to have a fixed gaze on a greater Beauty, God Himself. Worldly pleasures can and do put a spell on us. C.S. Lewis wrote, “*You and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness.*”

This is where the last application comes in.

4. Let the Word of God live richly in you.

Solomon wants us to have a special relationship to the Word of God. He uses a number of descriptive phrases here to make his point: “*My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your intimate friend*” (v.1-4).

- “Keep” my words (v.1) – This word describes the way someone guards and protects something, like a watchman. It implies that while we may hear Solomon’s words, they have a tendency to leak out or get snatched away from our minds, so Solomon says that we are to guard these words of advice like a hawk.
- In verse 2 he amplifies this more by saying that we are to keep these teachings “as the apple of your eye.” The apple of the eye is the pupil. When something is coming at our eye, our gut reaction is to protect our eyes, to flinch. Here, Solomon says that when we begin to lose our grip on Solomon’s words, we need to have the same gut reaction and hold on to them, to grip them all the tighter.
- “Treasure” my commands (v.2) – This word means that we store up and hide Solomon’s words like they were pure gold, the finest treasure in the entire world.
- “Bind” them on your fingers (v.3) – We are to have Solomon’s words at our fingertips, always fresh in our minds. A wedding ring on our finger is a sign and symbol of the covenant we have made with our spouses. It serves as a constant reminder, but it is also an ornament, it shines, it stands out from our hand. These words need to stand out in our mind, being a constant reminder.
- “Write” them on our hearts (v.3) – We are to engrave these words on our hearts. The heart is that part of us that moves us to action, that which propels us forward. Solomon is saying that deep down these words need to *inspire you*.
- “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your intimate friend” (v.4) – We need to stand next to God’s words in the most intimate way.

Overall, we need to have a sober view of the words contained in this book. These are not just Solomon's words, but God's words. God has entrusted his very words to us so that we may read them, study them, memorize them, and let them be woven into the tapestry of our minds and hearts.

Notice that Solomon's advice is not simply "memorize more of the Bible." Don't be tempted to think that internal change is as easy as a recipe. No, Solomon tells us that we need to have a certain *attitude* about God's words. We need to see it as our spiritual food, our very life. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Some of the last words of Moses are, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but *your very life*" (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).

If we are going to break free from the lures of pornography, we need to *let the Word of God become the window through which we become captivated with a greater Beauty, God Himself*. Someday soon we will see Him face to face. The only way that attractiveness of sin is crushed is when we begin to fall in love with the beauty of the coming kingdom of God. We see a new world coming, one where Jesus is King, where the natural world no longer groans under the weight of decay, where death is put to death, where all idols are destroyed, and where no one is engrossed in themselves anymore, but rather engrossed in the King of Kings.

Someday we too will be like Frodo Baggins aboard the white ship passing into the West: "*the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise.*" Only when Christ returns, we will not merely approach the sunrise; it will approach us and transform this whole world.

This is why purity is more beautiful than the seductiveness of sexual sin. In that new world, all will be pure. We will experience there a new definition of intimacy and pleasure as we see Jesus, our Groom, when we enjoy our wedding feast. For eternity we will be married to the Lord of the Universe.

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).