

Prov 5:18 Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

We now enter our study of Proverbs in an area that affects in a major way every believer. On one hand God's word has much to teach about the dangers of sexual promiscuity. The problem is that this is where most of the emphasis is made in fundamentalism. God's word also has much to teach about the positive side of the believer's sexuality - particularly about God's wonderful design for men and women when they are brought together in a union called marriage where God, Himself is the designer *and* sustainer.

Marriage is pictured in our text as a source of life-giving water. Marriage is more than a legal agreement for living under the same roof. Oh yes, it certainly is made "legal" by a contract between two. But the Holy Spirit shows us by this wonderful word picture the "rest of the story." God's word teaches that marriage is not merely an agreement made binding by the state for two to live together as husband and wife. **It is a union that God, Himself, cements together in heaven.** But it even goes beyond that and reaches into the very souls of the two made one. God designed marriage for the souls of each right man and the right woman in such a way that they respond to each other sexually that can only be described as a well of water. The Hebrew word used here is *ma`yan*, a life giving well-spring.

Hebrew ma`yan, mah-yawn'; or ma`yenow, mah-yen-o'; ({Psa. Heb 114:Heb 8}), or (fem.) ma`yanah, mah-yaw-naw'; from Heb [strong's 5869] (as a denom. in the sense of a spring); a fountain (also collect.), fig. a source (of satisfaction):-fountain, spring, well.

This sexual vigor (as I would like to call it) is so pure, so perfect for the souls of each spouse that it is a proper picture of the love of Christ for his church (make that his bride) and the love of the Church for Christ¹. Sexual vigor occurs *only* within the confines of heavenly inaugurated marriage. Trying to force sexual activities *outside* of marriage results *only* in exploitation of one's lust and can destroy one's capacity for legitimate sexual vigor.²

The reference to "**the wife of thy youth**" implies a life-long commitment. It is not God's design for two to come together in some sort of state-sanctioned agreement, live together until they wish to get a divorce and then remarry someone else. It's God's design that two are brought together by God, Himself and that they live together, blessed by God by this refreshing fountain of sexual animation / bond for the rest of their lives.

We owe it to our children to make this "good news" available to them so that they might not make tragic decisions where their options for life are greatly reduced and they become alienated from their Lord.³

1 Read the book of Song of Solomon. This is filled with graphic expressions of Solomon's love for the Schulumite woman, whom I think was his right woman. Solomon wrote this book early in his life probably *before* he became entangled with the many unbelieving women of his harem.

2 Read Proverbs 5:9-14. The language is very strong in the original. Verse 9, refers to his self esteem, especially sexual. Verse 10 refer to his capacity to initiate sexually. Verse 11 - Reducing it to the most possibly acceptable terms, the man's flesh (his physical sexual capacity) is impotent and his body (a general reference to his physical condition - could possibly refer to sexually transmitted diseases) is in a state of ruin. The rest of this section is referring to his regret for his sexual promiscuity and his reputation - which is ruined.

3 Solomon great spiritual insight and his wisdom was completely nullified because of his promiscuity *and* his wrong relationships with unbelieving women (1 Kings 11:4-11).

God Has Given Every Christian Man and Woman Marriage with a Right Spouse Or Celibacy in Service to Him.

First, we need to understand that not every man or woman is going to get married. This is obvious. We need to understand that even this area of the believer is under God's sovereign mandate. **This is important. A young person (or for that matter an older person) must not feel that is up to him to go out and actively seek marriage.** This does not mean that young people need to assume anti-social attitudes toward the opposite sex to be spiritual. It does mean that any anxiety in this area may be turned over to the Lord.⁴ **This is an important principle: you are to concentrate on your proper relationship with your Lord and others around you, including the opposite sex and God will, in His sovereignty provide your right spouse - period!** Any attempt to get around this principle will complicate your life a lot!

The Christians of Paul's day had come from a pagan background. They had brought with them a lot of "baggage." By that I mean that the pagan world had little to offer a couple that would join them in a proper relationship *and* maintain it over the long term. Many pagan practices were actually detrimental to marriage, especially for the woman. The pagan house wife actually had no rights. She was virtually under "house arrest." Probably in an arranged marriage, her *only* function was to provide for her husband the proper gene pool for good progeny. Some marriages were made out of convenience for political advantage or family prestige. This diametrically opposed to the biblical point of view, especially from the old testament where the woman was to be subject to her husband but he, in turn, was to honor her.⁵

Some of the problems that Paul had to deal with included the withholding of conjugal privilege out of revenge (a common practice in the pagan world in Paul's day). Other problems had to do with the salvation of one spouse only and the friction between the two because of this. Another problem Paul had to deal with was the accepted practice of promiscuity.

It was also accepted in the pagan world that lust between the sexes was a way to gain a spouse, other than an arranged marriage. Still another problem was the practice of the man of the household to have sex with temple priestesses (make that prostitutes) as an accepted religious practice. The wife was almost *never* included in social affairs. Specially trained "escorts" were used for this practice. The wife stayed home in her "house arrest."

Church leaders were writing to Paul asking what to do about these problems. We enter Paul's answer right in the middle of his response, he sets down a basic principle in this seventh verse. Here's the basic principle:

Marriage Is a Gift from God.

1 Cor 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

⁴ 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

⁵ See Proverbs chapter 31 for a good Biblical view of the woman's role and value in the household.

We are not to seek in a frantic search for happiness a spouse but rather view marriage as a God-ordained, God arranged gift from God in his sovereignty over our lives. The early Christians in Corinth were having many different problems from their marriages that were formed in their former lives as pagans.

Eccl 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Ecclesiastes is an interesting book for the Holy Spirit to have God-breathed and included in the canon of scripture. Ecclesiastes seems to fly in the face of the rest of God's word. Keep this in mind:

1. The Holy Spirit put Ecclesiastes there for our benefit,
2. The Holy Spirit God-breathed it.
3. Solomon wrote it after his recovery from carnality and was writing it as a restored believer who had turned his heart away from God "big time" but was now in right relationship with Him.

You will see the term "under the sun" a lot in Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes was written from the point of view of life without God. It has a lot of futility in it as well it should. However, one verse stands out like a point of light in this book. Ecclesiastes 9:9 contains a very important principle. Stated clearly, this verse says that even though man may not have a personal relationship with the Lord, the Lord, in common grace, has provided for him a wife that he might enjoy in this life.⁶ This may appear to be "chance" to ignorant man⁷ but this important principle takes the seeking of a spouse out of the hands of the man and assigns it to a gracious act of God. **A common misconception by fundamentalism is that God only figures in marriages between believers and that unbelieving man is on his own.** Even the marriage of unbelievers is to come under the sovereignty of God. Here and in other places we learn that viable marriage is not the province of man but of God.

Getting back to Paul's stated principle - whether or not one has the gift of marriage is a matter of God's sovereignty. Finding the right spouse is like every other issue in the Christian's life. We need to know the will of God in this matter just as we do in every other area of our lives.

⁵ God gives man days in which to live, whether or not he believes in the Lord. Most references to life "under the sun" refers to emptiness and frustration. The one jewel that stands out in this dreary book is the life that God gives a man with his wife.

⁶ Verse 11.