

Playing With Fire

by Bryan Gibson

“Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. **Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned?** Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent” (Proverbs 6:25-29).

“Play with fire and you’ll get burned”—it can happen in the way described above, as well as a number of other ways.

Married people, you’re playing with fire when you get too friendly with someone else’s husband or wife (or anyone else of the opposite sex). “Walk circumspectly” (Ephesians 5:15)—be alert to compromising situations and avoid them.

Young people, you’re playing with fire when you don’t set strict limits for your behavior on a date. Lasciviousness or lewdness (Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:19) will soon be an issue, not to mention the real possibility of fornication. Remember young men, her body is not yours unless you are married to her (and vice versa—see 1 Corinthians 7:4).

Speaking of dating, you’re playing with fire when you date seriously a non-Christian, especially one who indicates little or no interest in learning the truth. Make it your goal to marry a Christian—one with whom you can pray, with whom you can labor together in the kingdom, and with whom you can bring up your children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

You’re playing with fire when friends in the world influence you more than friends in the church. The folks with whom you work, with whom you go to school, the people with whom you’re involved in your children’s activities—are they pulling you back into the world, slowly but surely? Have you become “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14)? Let that continue and you’re sure to get burned.

Congregationally, you’re playing with fire when you don’t confront error—whether it comes in the form of sinful behavior or false teaching. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9)—that’s the “fire” you’re playing with when you don’t take appropriate action (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:10-11).

Parents, you’re playing with fire when you give your children too much freedom, when you fail to restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13). You can’t be “Mr. and Mrs. Positive” all the time. Reprove, rebuke, warn, admonish—these forms of instruction apply to parents, too. This new mentality of preserving their self-esteem at all costs is a bunch of hogwash. Children need parents with convictions, who aren’t afraid to express those convictions. Be weak and vacillating and they will take advantage of you in most every case.

You’re playing with fire when you set a timetable for repentance—“I’m going to make things right as soon as...” Take that approach and you may become “hardened through the

deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). If it doesn’t bother you NOW to grieve God and show contempt for the sacrifice of His Son, what’s going to move you to repentance THEN?

Play with fire and you just might end up in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).