

Can You Resist the Little Words?

**For the man is not at home,
He has gone on a long journey.
--Proverbs 7:19**

Removed from its context, this verse seems rather unimpressive. However, it was a statement made by a married woman who intended to seduce a young man.

Solomon had described the adulteress and the many preparations she had made for an unsuspecting young man with whom she could find pleasure. The statement above was her way of luring him in.

Let's take a close look at her statement and learn something about *manipulative* behavior.

'For' - The word 'for' introduces an explanation. In other words, the woman is attempting to *explain* why it is safe for the young man to accompany her. It is called *rationalization*, that is, *an explanation given to make things seem rational or sensible*.

Her *rationale* (thinking) could be summed up: "No one will know." However, her rationalization is merely a clever way of hiding the reality that her actions are sinful. (If her actions were not sinful, then why would she need to make them seem rational?)

'The man' - The woman refers to '*the man*.' In the ancient Hebrew language there was not a specific word for 'husband,' so a husband was referred to as a *woman's man* or *her man*. So the woman in this text would

have normally referred to her husband as '*my man*.' However, by saying '*the man*' she softened the reality that 'the man' was actually her husband. In our day it might sound like: '*the man of the house*' instead of '*my husband*.' (And her wedding picture is placed face-down on the dresser.) The impersonal nature of '*the man*' detaches the woman and her new found young man from reality: *She IS married*.

Rationalization through word play is a key ingredient to manipulation.

When you are faced with a morally questionable situation, if a friend or acquaintance or boss or coworker begins to *explain* why you should go along with the questionable idea, listen carefully to the explanation. Is it clear and simple *honesty*? Or do you hear words that soften reality, blur lines of clarity, excuse right behavior, and/or rationalize wrong behavior?

Recognize that whether it is sexual sin (as in Proverbs 7) or any other kind of sin, there are many people who will *rationalize* and *manipulate* you into doing wrong.

'*The man*' may not be at home, but wrong is still wrong; sin is still sin.

Avoid being manipulated.
Listen for the little words.
Be wise.