



## **Proverbs 6:16-19**

**7/2/2023**

We'll go to Proverbs 6 today.

Intro: Wisdom Builds

One of the themes of Proverbs is that wisdom builds. The wise build community, they build families, and they build society. Later, in chapter 9, wisdom is pictured as a wise woman who has built her house from the ground up, set a table, and calls us in:

### **Proverbs 9:1-6**

- [1] Wisdom has built her house;  
she has hewn her seven pillars.**
- [2] She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine;  
she has also set her table.**
- [3] She has sent out her young women to call  
from the highest places in the town,**
- [4] "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"  
To him who lacks sense she says,**
- [5] "Come, eat of my bread  
and drink of the wine I have mixed.**
- [6] Leave your simple ways, and live,  
and walk in the way of insight."**

Wisdom builds, then calls to others to come in and learn wisdom.

You see in Proverbs homes and families being built by wisdom, while folly destroys them:

### **Proverbs 14:1**

- [1] The wisest of women builds her house,  
but folly with her own hands tears it down.**

Wisdom builds a city, folly destroys it:

**Proverbs 29:8 - Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.**

Wisdom starts with a fear of the Lord, it sees all things as connected to God, it understands how the world works, and builds accordingly. Wisdom recognizes that there is a sacred order to things, that God is at the center of all things and the foundation of all things, and creates greater stability by building order in light of God's ideal design for things.

So there's a design for family, for society, for friendships, for work - and the wise learn that design and build according to those blueprints.

But there are always forces at work to tear those things down. Building is hard, but tearing down is easy.

I would be totally unable to build a house, but I could definitely destroy one. You need tools and skills to build a house, you just need a match to tear one down.

I could barely ever repair a car, let alone make one. But I have all the skill necessary to total one.

And so the book of Proverbs calls us to be wise builders, but warns against many of the ways people tear down - and there are many. Many forms of folly are always tearing down what wisdom builds.

So last week and today in Proverbs 6 we continue looking at those who tear down community. Last week we saw the sluggard, the lazy person, as one who harms the community.

And now we pick up with a shocking passage in Proverbs 6:16:

### **Proverbs 6:16–19**

**[16] There are six things that the LORD hates,  
seven that are an abomination to him:**

**[17] haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,**

**[18] a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,**

**[19] a false witness who breathes out lies,**

**and one who sows discord among brothers.**

This is a hard text. It contains hard words against serious sins. Sins that destroy, and sins that God hates.

And there are two wrong ways to listen to a hard text.

**One is to expect that the job of the sermon, the job of the pastor, is to soften it and basically be a PR guy for God.**

One job I would never want is the job of Whitehouse Press Secretary. All day long you get notifications about what a president said or did, and your job is to face a hostile press and explain what he really meant, how he didn't mean that thing, how those words were taken out of context. And then you go back home, your phone blows up, and there he is creating more work for you - how am I going to answer this tomorrow? How am I going to spin this? How do I soften this?

And that's not what the job of a pastor is when he is preaching. The job of a preacher is in part to be prophetic - to declare the word of the Lord, not to spin it or soften it. It isn't to be the PR guy who makes everything very palatable.

And so the expectation in hearing a hard text shouldn't be, "Tell me how this doesn't mean what it says - soften this for me!" When this says the Lord hates these things, you shouldn't expect any softening of the hard edge of this text.

We believe this is the word of God, and if the words are harsh-sounding, God intended them to be, and we sometimes need that. In other places, there are also softer and more comforting, and we should expect those to be declared as softer and comforting. Some people like to spin comforting passages into harsh passages to fit their temperament, and we shouldn't do that either.)

So don't listen hoping the hard words can be made softer.

**Another wrong way to listen to a sermon on a hard text is to think, "Yeah, go get em! These people need to hear this!"** And we as a church definitely need to hear this passage, we need to repent in some specific ways. And so do I. We should listen to a hard passage asking the Lord to "search me and know me, and see if there is any wicked way in me."

When Jesus's disciples had that "go get em" attitude, Jesus always turned it back on them. When the tower of Siloam fell and killed 18 people and the disciples thought, "They must really have deserved that," Jesus said:

**Luke 13:4–5 [4] Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? [5] No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."**

He turns the "they deserve it" sentiment to "look at yourself - you are the 'they'" So ask with me as you hear this text, "How does this call me to repent?"

So yes, that person you're thinking about probably needs this hard passage. But so do you and so do I. And let's today look at the logs in our own eyes first.

So this proverb starts

**[16] There are six things that the LORD hates,  
seven that are an abomination to him:**

And this is a common Hebrew poetic device: one line says something, the next line picks up and says the same thing and goes further. It's done for emphasis. So line one says "There are six things the Lord hates," line two goes further - seven things are an abomination to Him. Abomination is an even stronger word than hate, it means a despised and repulsive thing, a thing that God can't have in His presence.

God despises these 7 things, He hates them.

But isn't God loving?

Yes, but hatred is not the opposite of love. You always hate when you love. If you love your children, you hate the forces that could harm them.

And what you hate tells us about your character.

Once, our church was working on buying a building that fell through, and the owner there warned us about the neighbor, "He hates the sound of children laughing." That told us everything we needed to know about a would-be neighbor. What he hates tells us what

he's like. It tells us what he loves: he loves his quiet, and hates anything that might interrupt it. His hatred revealed his heart and the self-centeredness in it.

But I've also sat with someone who was devoted to the cause of liberating children from trafficking, and he, whether he was on a stage or across a table at a restaurant, couldn't speak about the evil he was opposing without his nostrils flaring and showing his fangs. He hated that evil, and rightly so - it was a commendable hatred. You saw clearly what he loved by seeing what he hated. You saw what his character was like.

So this is a list of things that make the nostrils of God flare up. Things God despises.

And it's even stronger in the original - we don't catch it in English, but this list repeatedly and intentionally uses words with a strong "s" sound<sup>1</sup> intentionally as it describes these hateful things in the original Hebrew- so you would hiss a lot as you read this list in Hebrew. God hates these things.

So let's walk through these things - in this list of 7 things there are 5 body parts associated with them - haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, and feet that make haste to run to evil. Then there are two whole person sins - being a false witness, and sowing discord.

So let's start with haughty eyes:

### **[17] haughty eyes,**

These are the eyes that have an arrogant, mocking pride behind them.

God hates human pride.

This kind of pride says, "Look at me and how great I am. I'm better than others, I'm above them, I'm deserving of praise, I've got it all together.

An arrogant person thinks very highly of himself, and works hard to always be the center of his universe - which runs contrary to wisdom that puts God at the center and says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Waltke, Proverbs 1-15, part of the New International Commentary on the Old Testament published by Eerdmans. Page 346.

And you can be proud in both inflated and deflated ways. We can easily recognize a proud person who walks with an arrogant swagger and says “look at me!” But a person with low self-esteem can have just as much pride, saying “Everybody is staring at me. Everybody thinks I’m a jerk. Everybody is laughing at me. Everybody is against me. I’m a martyr.”

This deflated proud person is still the center of his or her universe.

Pride can be boastful and arrogant, or it can be timid.

Pride is reliance on yourself - and that self-reliance can either be secure - you’re relying on yourself and killing it in life, or insecure, relying on yourself and coming up short.

Pride can say, “Look at me” and pride can also say, “Woe is me.”

Both of these forms focus our attention on ourselves, rather than on Jesus. **If you look at yourself primarily, you are proud. Whether you see a slug or a rockstar is beside the point** - its the constant looking to yourself, the self-centeredness that is pride.

**Cs Lewis wrote, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.”**

Pride is an excessive focus on yourself. And, according to Proverbs 21:4, pride can become your lamp:

**Proverbs 21:4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.**

He calls pride and haughty eyes here the “lamp of the wicked.” And the way a lamp works is that when you use a lamp at night, it affects the color of everything you see. If you have an orange lamp at night, everything’s orange.

If you have a lamp of pride, everything is about you. Every decision gets made based on what will benefit you. Every person becomes not a friend, but a prop in the great play that is all about you. You start to use people, run over people, ignore people, feel burdened by people, dispose of people who are not useful to you. You are at the center.

Wise people see all things as connected to God and made by God and for God’s glory. But pride becomes the lamp of the wicked that colors everything and makes it all about me.

So it tears down what wisdom builds. One of the more famous proverbs is:

**Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.**

Pride, left unchecked, will destroy you. And the natural consequence of worshiping yourself - which is what pride is, self worship - is that you are putting a weight on yourself you were never made to bear. And it breaks you.

This is why so many child celebrities get so weird. You can see the path that child-stars are on - nearly all of them go off the deep end at some point. As children, these stars are worshiped as gods. And as pride becomes their lamp and affects all of their thinking, they get strange.

And they work to get more attention from people, because it's never enough. They know deep down that they're not as awesome as everyone thinks they are. And eventually the fall comes.

(And be careful with allowing young kids to have social media - it turns them all into child stars who live proudly, looking for likes.)

And remember God doesn't hate in spite of his love, he hates because of His love. And God loves his glory and God loves his people. Pride obscures his glory and destroys his people, so He hates haughty eyes.

In God, in the trinity, there is Father, Son, and Spirit. And within that trinity there is a mutual delight in the other persons of the trinity. The Father delights in the Son, the Son delights in the Father, the Spirit delights the Son - you see this God who is love - At the heart of God is an other-orientation. And if you live to get glory rather than give it, you're working against the grain of who God is.

And you're on a collision course with God and what he's going to do with the future:

**Habakkuk 2:14 “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”**

But the proud want the earth filled with their glory. To be proud is to be on the wrong side of history. In the future, his glory fills the earth like waters fill the seas. God will make it so that one day every human being gives glory to God. That's the way his train is going.

To be proud is to stand on the tracks and try to stop that train.

So God hates haughty eyes.

### **Proverbs 6:17 “...a lying tongue...”**

God hates lying.

Remember, what you hate tells us something about your character. We worship a God who is totally holy, and one aspect of his holiness is that He is totally true<sup>2</sup>. He cannot lie. He never deceives.

And when we lie, we are living contrary to His ways.

As wise people who build community, we use our words for the good of those around us. But lies tear them down.

**In the old Heidelberg Catechism, which was a series of questions and answers that taught the Christian faith, the question was “What is required in the ninth commandment (which is the command not to lie or bear false witness).”**

Here’s the answer - listen to this evaluating yourself - do I lie?:

*I must not give false testimony against anyone,*

*twist no one’s words,*

*not gossip or slander,*

*nor condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard.*

*Rather, I must avoid all lying and deceit as the devil’s own works, under penalty of God’s heavy wrath. In court and everywhere else,*

*I must love the truth,*

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<sup>2</sup> Titus 1:2



*Speak and confess it honestly,*

*and do what I can to defend and promote my neighbour's honour and reputation.*

Are we that truthful? Because God hates when we aren't.

**and hands that shed innocent blood,**

Human life is sacred. People are made in God's image.

And to take the life of a person who is innocent is an affront against God.

The way we treat people says something about what we believe about God, in whose image they are made.

If I tear up a photo of my family, I am saying something awful about my family, not just something awful about the paper that photo is printed on. And to take a human life is to tear up a picture of God. So God hates the taking of innocent life.

Whether it is innocent life in the womb, innocent life on the street, innocent life in an unjust war, God hates when innocent blood is shed.

**Proverbs 6:[18] a heart that devises wicked plans,**

There's evil we commit without thinking about it ahead of time, we sin in the moment, and that is still sin. But to use the minds God has given us to plan to do wrong is next level evil.

It's absent of the fear of the Lord. When we sin in a moment, it doesn't take as much work to set aside the fear of the Lord. But when we plot out a sin, we are saying, "God isn't holy. God won't do anything about this. It doesn't matter what God thinks."

We are to use our hearts - the center of our being - to love the Lord and our neighbor. And when we use it to dismiss the Lord and plan harm to our neighbor, we are using it for the opposite of its intended purpose, and God hates it. We devise good plans, helpful plans, fruitful plans, not plans to harm.

The next thing God hates:

### **Proverbs 6:18 “...feet that make haste to run to evil,”**

When we use our strength and our energy and our zeal to pursue evil, not good, we are using our lives wrongly.

God wants us to be up early, working hard, making the most of opportunities. But those should be opportunities to do good and fruitful things, productive things, God glorifying things.

When we enjoy taking risks, don't risk doing evil and getting caught, risk doing good, starting a new venture, building a family, starting an education, speaking to a friend about Christ. Use all the energy and desire to take risks for good.

### **Proverbs 6:[19] a false witness who breathes out lies,**

A false witness is not just someone who lies - God hates a lying tongue. But a false witness is someone who lies to bring intentional harm to others (usually in court, but this happens in society as well - to speak things that will malign a person's character and harm them.)

In their day, when someone committed a crime, the most powerful evidence they had to convict them was the aligning testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses in court. They didn't have DNA evidence and all the CSI gadgets we have, so a person's word was powerful evidence.

So if you said “I saw him walking away from the murder scene covered in blood,” that person could face the death penalty if your story lined up with someone else's. Life and death were in the power of your words.

### **Proverbs 18:21 “21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”**

So God says “don't bear false witness.” Don't lie, because your words have the power to destroy someone.

God was so serious about this that under OT law, if someone falsely accused another, and that was found out, they would get the punishment they were trying to get for the other.

So if they decided to lie to get someone convicted of stealing and it was found out that they were bearing false witness, they got the punishment for stealing they were trying to get for the other:

**Deuteronomy 19:16–20 [16] If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, [17] then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. [18] The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, [19] then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. [20] And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.**

There is very little fear of the Lord in our day when it comes to making an accusation. We can be quick to say things that harm a reputation, to twist words, to get revenge by painting someone in a worse light than they deserve to be painted in. And we think it's justified because they're my enemy - I've had problems with this person so now I can say what is necessary to win.

But that's a self-centered, no-fear-of-the-Lord view of reality. Don't be a false accuser. God hates it.

Proverbs 6:19 concludes the list with:

**Proverbs 6:19 "...and one who sows discord among brothers."**

This is someone who spreads distrust, who divides people who should be united.

**Romans 16:17 "17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.**

**Titus 3:10-11 [10] As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, [11] knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.**

God has a strong hatred for the sowing of discord among brothers.

Which means God loves a unified Christian community.

This doesn't mean you never confront. I've heard these verses used to try to silence victims of crimes and abuses at the hands of pastors, and that's not how they're to be used.

But they do mean something. They mean that God loves a unified Christian community.

And when the world is hard, we need it. So to, in the name of self-interest, sow divisions, harms a ton of people.

Now maybe we hear all of this and still think, "Yeah go get 'em."

Romans 3 has a similar list of sins - where it connects body parts to sins...

### **Romans 3:9–20**

**[9] What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, [10] as it is written:**

**"None is righteous, no, not one;**

**[11] no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.**

**[12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good,  
not even one."**

**[13] "Their throat is an open grave;  
they use their tongues to deceive."**

**"The venom of asps is under their lips."**

**[14] "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."**

**[15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood;**

**[16] in their paths are ruin and misery,**

**[17] and the way of peace they have not known.”**

**[18] “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”**

**[19] Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. [20] For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

So this passage overlaps with the Proverbs passage, it says their feet are swift to shed blood, their mouth is full of bitterness. But it says that this passage is about all of us: it tells us all are under sin (v. 9) and that this law lets us know we are all sinners (v.20).

This means that the things that God hates are in all of us.

And the solution is not inside us. Because the sin is so connected to who we are.

Wisdom calls us to realize that we have torn down, but we can't rebuild on our own.

We need wisdom personified in Jesus.

Jesus:

Eyes that looked with love on those He came to save.

Tongue that spoke truth.

Hands - didn't shed innocent blood, but dripped innocent blood

Heart - that didn't devise trouble, but was pure, troubled for us

Feet - beautiful because they were swift to spread the Gospel.

Spoke no false witness, but was born false witness against.

Sowed no discord, but sowed all the seeds of forgiveness and grace.

To really respond to this proverbs passage in wisdom, it sends us not first to ourselves to fix it. That would just be pride.

It sends us to Jesus to fix it.

**Proverbs 9:[5] “Come, eat of my bread  
and drink of the wine I have mixed.**

The bread of wisdom personified is the torn body of Jesus.

The wine of true wisdom is the cup that represents the blood of Jesus that was spilled.

Yes, let's leave our folly. But we can't do so without first eating the bread and drinking the wine.

Lord's supper and prayer of confession.

**Assurance:**

**Isaiah 44:22**

**[22] I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud  
and your sins like mist;  
return to me, for I have redeemed you.**

**Sermon Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What does this list of things God hates reveal about His character?
- 2) Is this a surprising list? Do some of the things God hates seem small and less significant to you? Why do you suppose there's a discrepancy between what God hates and what we think He should hate?
- 3) What does this passage teach you about God's concern with justice?
- 4) Why do you suppose pride is so serious?
- 5) Who do you suppose sowing discord is so serious?
- 6) How does the wisdom in this passage lead you to Jesus?