

The Proverbs

Lesson 6

Proverbs 6

Deliver from a Surety or Pledge

Proverbs 6:1 My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger,² if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth,³ do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.
4 Do not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids; **5** deliver yourself like a gazelle from the *hunter's* hand, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Solomon's words are most sobering to us as well as his son. "If you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger, if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth, do this then, my son . . ." What is a surety? When you have become responsible for the debt of someone else, when you have taken on the debt as your own even though you are not the one wanting to make the loan you have become a surety. What is a pledge? When you have signed your name that you promise with a solemn oath to pay, and in this case, pay the debt when the maker of the loan fails to pay, you have made a pledge. Today, we call it co-signing. Solomon is warning his son to never co-sign a note for a neighbor or stranger.

In this passage, it seems that Rehoboam may have already co-signed a note for someone. Therefore, Solomon indicates that signing a loan for someone is tantamount to catching yourself in a trap simply by giving your word to guarantee the payment. The only option for Rehoboam is to go to the one he co-signed for and importune him to pay promptly. Importune means to ask someone pressingly and persistently to do something. In other words, Solomon is saying, never co-sign a note and if you do, contact the person immediately and do whatever it takes to pay the entire debt immediately. Deliver yourself from your mistake!

Do Your Business

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise,⁷ which, having no chief, officer or ruler,⁸ prepares her food in the summer, *and* gathers her provision in the harvest.⁹ How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?⁴⁷ **10** "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest"-- **11** and your poverty will come in like a vagabond, and your need like an armed man.⁴⁸

Solomon directs Rehoboam to learn a wise lesson from the ant. It is quite possible that Solomon learned this concept from the Book of Job which was available to him. Job says, "But now ask

⁴⁷ Proverbs 24:33 " A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest," ³⁴ Then your poverty will come as a robber, And your want like an armed man.

⁴⁸ Proverbs 10:4 Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

Proverbs 20:4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you.”⁴⁹ In other words, animals take care of their own daily business. The ant knows what needs to be done to survive every day. When he does his part, it helps the colony. In the ant world, no one co-signs for another ant to borrow anything. Every ant does his business without training, without instruction and without borrowing. The ant is a remarkable creature. It gathers its food in the proper season, at the proper time, in the proper amount for his own consumption. What a wonderful example for Rehoboam and the friend for whom he co-signed!

Solomon calls the borrower a sluggard which means a lazy, sluggish person. He sleeps instead of working for the things he needs. The ant works and stores up what he needs. The sluggard borrows what he needs and is sluggish to pay back. If Rehoboam allows the debt to remain unpaid, poverty will come to his door “like a vagabond” who wanders from place to place without a job or home. You will not be prepared to fend him off if you have co-signed a loan any more than you could fend off an armed man entering your house.

The oldest and most reliable manuscripts add another line before verse 12. It is a positive encouragement to Rehoboam if he will act quickly. It says, “But if you wilt be diligent, your harvest shall be as a fountain; and poverty will flee far away from you.”

Traits of a Worthless Wicked Man

Proverbs 6:12 A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a false mouth,¹³ who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers;¹⁴ who with perversity in his heart devises evil continually, who spreads strife.¹⁵ Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken, and there will be no healing.

In Hebrew, “a worthless person” should be translated “Adam (man), good for nothing.” In the Hebrew, the phrase carries the idea of a naughty man who has lost his innocence.

A naughty man turns into a wicked man, meaning he has abandoned God. He devises evil continually, meaning he is in the business of creating perverse trouble. His mouth, eyes, feet and fingers all act in unison with his heart. He makes plans to sow conflict. The fate of a man with these traits will come without warning and without any possibility of restoration.

Six Hates and One Abomination

Proverbs 6:16 There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,⁵⁰ ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil,¹⁹ a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.

Here are the six acts that the LORD abhors.

Haughty Eyes

What words can we use to express the meaning of haughty so everyone of every generation can understand? Snooty, arrogant, stuck-up, puffed-up, conceited, snobbish,

⁴⁹ Job 12:7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you.”

⁵⁰ Psalm 120:2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue. ³ What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue?

pompous, and condescending are all words that represent the intent of Solomon's thought in this passage. Eyes actually speak truth when the tongue is lying. The lips may flatter a person but the eyes tell the intent of the heart. The LORD hates the eyes of a person who looks down on another human. All are sinners and no one is better than anyone else except that some have entered into the grace of the Lord. However, that difference is not an excuse to look down on someone, it is an excuse to value and embrace someone who does not know the LORD.

Lying Tongue

Lying means not speaking the truth. People who lie are deceitful, dishonest, two-faced and corrupt. Obviously, speaking is not the only way lies spread in the world today; written lies must be considered lies of the tongue too. The LORD hates lies.

Hands that Shed Innocent Blood

The Lord hates hands used to shed innocent blood. Innocent is the important word here. What does innocent mean? It is a reference to the bystander (collateral damage) who is not involved but suffers a consequence; a person who is guiltless, blameless, unimpeachable, irreproachable, and faultless, but punished without cause. The LORD hates the hands of a person who sheds the blood of an innocent person.

Heart that Devises Wicked Plans

When Solomon speaks of the heart, he is not referring to the physical heart but the intent of the soul. The eyes, lips and hands accomplish what the intent of the soul fabricates. When those fabrications are ungodly, God calls it sin and he hates that kind of heart.

Feet that Run Rapidly to Evil

From the inner heart, Solomon returns to an outward part of the body, the feet. The LORD hates the feet of a person who runs swiftly to complete his evil plan. It is sin to the LORD.

False Witness *who* Utters Lies

The sixth act that the LORD hates returns to the mouth area and, again, it includes lies; however, this time it focuses on a false witness. It is one thing to lie to people about your wicked plans; it is even worse to endorse and lie about the plans of others, to speak good on behalf of others who are wretched. The LORD hates when we lie for someone else!

The LORD will easily forgive all of these acts in the presence of a changed and repentant heart. However, here is the one act that is a stench in the nostrils of the LORD.

One Who Spreads Strife among Brothers

This seventh act is an abomination to the LORD. The Hebrew actually uses a word that means it is an abomination to His soul. The LORD cannot stand the stench of discord in a family, a town, a state or a nation. Strife affects relationships; strife breaks

relationships; strife destroys the relationship with the Lord; therefore, strife is an abomination, a stench in His nostrils.

Power of the Commandment and Teaching

Proverbs 6:20 My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;⁵¹ ²¹ bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck.⁵² ²² When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you.

Solomon has already said in Proverbs 3:3, “Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,” and in Proverbs 7:3, “Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.” In the family unit of Solomon’s day, fathers commanded and mothers taught; it is still the same in most countries around the world today. Nevertheless, the commands of the father and the teachings of the mother guide, protect and watch over the children regardless of their ages, whether asleep or awake. Solomon’s words are so true; the commands and teachings do talk to us. Decades after parents have died, the adult children can still hear the voices of their parents in their minds and the words of instruction given to protect, guide and watch over them all the days of their lives.

Purpose of the Commandment

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life,⁵³ ²⁴ to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.

All of Solomon’s instruction to Rehoboam thus far is purposefully presented to illumine the correct path of life for the righteous. It is not a new thought with Solomon; he learned it from his father, David, in his song found in Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” For whatever reason, Solomon uses all he has said about the wicked man in contrast to the godly way of life to return to the topic of the evils of the adulterous woman.

Downfall in the Harlot and Adulteress

Proverbs 6:25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her catch you with her eyelids. ²⁶ For on account of a harlot *one is reduced* to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. ²⁷ Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸ Or can a man walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? ²⁹ So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished. ³⁰ Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; ³¹ but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house. ³² The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. ³³ Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.

⁵¹ **Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

⁵² **Proverbs 3:3** Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁵³ **Proverbs 7:3** Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁵³ **Psalm 19:8** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁵³ **Psalm 119:105** Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

We must not miss the fact that Solomon is calling this woman an adulteress which means that she is married! Even if Rehoboam went into the presence of the woman, he is not committing adultery unless he is also married. When she enters into a sexual relationship with Rehoboam, she is committing adultery against her husband while Rehoboam is committing adultery only if he is married. If he is not married, the sinful act is called fornication meaning a sexual relationship between people who are not married to each other.

Solomon mentions the word harlot. What is the difference between a harlot and an adulteress? A harlot uses sex as a business to pay her bills; her body is for sale. An adulteress is on the prowl for men; her sexual favor is free; however, it is free at a great cost. The man who deals with either a harlot or an adulteress is going to be burned and punished at some point after the event. In the case of the adulteress, Rehoboam is warned against taking that which does not belong to him and that which he does not need. Even when a person who steals to feed his family is caught, he must pay the penalty for that sin. An adulterous relationship will destroy a man's integrity and disgrace him for the rest of his life. Solomon says to the man, "Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her catch you with her eyelids." It does not matter how pretty she is and how hard she is chasing after you, she does not belong to you and it is a sin of theft to join her in a sinful relationship. She belongs to her husband!

Vengeance of the Enraged Husband

Proverbs 6:34 For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance.³⁵
He will not accept any ransom, nor will he be content though you give many gifts.

If the husband of the adulterous woman finds her with another man, he will not wait for the law to act nor will he hold his anger. If Rehoboam is caught in this situation, Solomon is warning his son that he does not have enough money in the world to calm the anger of the husband. Why should the husband not be angry? That which belongs to him has been stolen by a senseless thief!