

PP Proverbs: Skillful Living for a Unified Church

Proverbs 6:16-18

March 15-16

Illus Churches split over just about anything...like the church that split over whether the pianist should sit to the right or left of the podium.
Or the one traced its split to a potluck where a lady brought a fruit salad she made with Cool Whip instead of real whipping cream.
Or whether Communion should be served from the front to the back or the back to the front
Another split deciding whether a kitchen should be a part of the church building or not
Another over whether there are times that not telling the truth might be morally justifiable.
Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a church that split over whether the coffee should be served by the back door or in the fellowship hall.

Wisdom offers skillful living for a unified church!

And this is the focus on our passage before us today, from Proverbs 6, which begins in verse 16,

“There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to Him”

Once again, we are allowed to eavesdrop on Solomon’s teaching to his son, and we hear him utilize a commonly used teaching device to help us memorize the lesson

PP One employed in many parts of the bible: ***“He will deliver you from six troubles; in seven no evil shall touch you.”*** Job 5:19

PP ***“Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand”*** Proverbs 30:18-19

When this teaching tool is used, the last item in the list is the focus of all the rest

God hates the first 6 six things listed, but there is a 7th that gathers up into itself all that is most hateful to Him

The 7th is the key to understanding the other 6 as the 6 all point to the 7th!

All six bring about the 7th...discord!

God hates discord with a passion, it utterly turns His stomach at the deepest level of His being! **‘hates’** and **‘abomination’** are incredibly strong words, and there are many who so elevate the

Scripture that **‘God is love’** that they cannot imagine that God has any hatred in Him

God’s hatred is not the vindictive, hate that we can identify with

He isn’t stomping around the throne room barking out kill order to Black Op kill teams of angels

It is a strong moral and emotional reaction against that which opposes His character

PP **‘hates’** includes the idea of ugliness, deformity and loathing

PP When God hates, it creates a repulsive reaction at His deepest level

In fact, notice verse 16 again: ***“seven that are an abomination to Him”*** Proverbs 6:16

The word **‘Him’** is the Hebrew word for soul, and it’s rarely used in connection with God His inner person, His soul, the deepest part of His being, where God finds these things an **‘abomination’**

Solomon wasn’t referring to the enemy of the Hulk, if you are a Marvel comic fan as I am

PP It’s a word that means *abhorrent*, *offensive* or *strong revulsion* or in other words, an abomination is something that turns God’s stomach metaphorically speaking

So the very deepest part of God is in revulsion at this list of 7 terrible evils

And what God hates, its opposite is what He loves...unity!

PP ***“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”*** Psalm 133:1

So as we are about to delve into these 7 deadly sins, remember that the chief concern on God's mind, the chief lesson in Solomon's teaching, is that discord is abominable to God. What God hates are, ***"haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers."*** Proverbs 6:17-19

PP 1- 'haughty eyes'

The root of all on this list is pride!

Friends, is there really any one of us who doesn't battle with this?

'haughty eyes' are eyes that are raised up in pride and self-exaltation, refusing to drop out of respect for others or God

PP Pride always seeks the upper position: ***"For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down."*** Psalm 18:27

God threw Satan down from the heights of his pride, and Satan in turn appealed to pride in Eve

PP Nebuchadnezzar had **'haughty eyes'**, ***"Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"*** Daniel 4:30

PP How interesting that all 7 of these find their opposite perfection in Christ, ***"Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*** Philippians 2:5-8

Haughty eyes' are connected to prideful hearts

They look at others as below them, see the sufferings of others as deserved and his own as undeserved and unjust

Those with haughty eyes are not servants of others, and only promote unity within the church when it is in their interests

And it is this arrogance that leads to all the other sins in this list

PP 2- 'a lying tongue'

Illus A boy in a Sunday School once said, ***"A lie is an abomination unto the Lord, but a very present help in time of trouble."***

This is someone who has no regard for truth, distorting reality for your own purposes

Why does God hate this so much?

Because He is, as Jesus claimed for Himself, the truth

PP ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** John 14:6

Lies are a deadly force that divides and destroys communities

Lying distorts reality for one's own purposes and refuses to submit to right and wrong

PP They pulse from pride and are motivated by Satan who is ***'the Father of lies.'*** John 8:44

PP 3- 'and hands that shed innocent blood'

Our church's leadership has been praying for months, discerning where God is directing our steps with International missions

We have all sensed God directing us toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The level of suffering in the lives of women and children staggers the imagination

Our denomination, the EFCA, has an incredible presence in the Congo, Biblical Seminary and American Bible Society have a growing presence there, all to bring the gospel of hope to a people torn apart by ***'hands that shed innocent blood'***

One of the ways we are already moving in that direction is through a ministry that was begun by people from our own church, called *'She's My Sister!'*

Each summer, those who participate ride along a pre-planned bicycle route, educating churches of the scope of suffering there, and standing for justice and riding for hope

God hates ***'hands that shed innocent blood'***

PP ***"For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life."Leviticus 17:14***

God puts a supreme value on human life

To shed blood, which means to kill a person, is to despise life

Whether that is the murder of an adult, or an unborn child, it is repulsive to God and against His character

Friends, wisdom would have us live skillfully, to preserve and promote human life, working for justice to be delivered

Get involved in CareNet Pregnancy center, or She's My Sister bike tour, and get ready to partner with us as we move more and more to the DRC to stand with our Christian brothers and sisters in that part of the suffering world

PP 4-***"a heart that devises wicked plans"***

It is interesting that the list moves from the top of the body to the bottom, and at the exact center of the list is the heart

PP ***"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"***
Jeremiah 17:9

Look back a few verses and you will understand what Solomon is teaching us

"A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord" **Proverbs 6:12-14**

Do you see the connection between discord, disunity and this list?

A heart that devises wicked plans is one who is bent on planting seeds of disunity, that when grown, will accomplish the plan of the one sowing

In fact, the word ***'devises'*** is a verb, an action word for plowing or turning the soil, something you do just before you plant the seed

PP ***"You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors"*****Hosea 10:13**

Maybe it's that hushed comment at the water cooler at work, *'Did you know...'*?

This person is always looking for a way to gain the advantage, ready to drop that seed that will eventually cause division

Though the person is innocent

PP 5-“feet that make haste to run to evil”

‘The heart blazes the trail that the feet will follow’ J. Vernon McGee

PP ‘Feet’ throughout the bible are a metaphor for the direction in life we choose

PP “*Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol*” **Proverbs 5:5**

God hates the urgency of the wicked to choose a path in life that harms others

PP Wisdom teaches us to learn the better path, for “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!*” **Romans 10:15**

PP 6-“a false witness who breathes out lies”

PP This was direct disobedience to the 9th Commandment that God gave: “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*” **Exodus 20:16**

Climb inside the ancient world for a moment, a world before forensics labs, where there were no security tapes, fingerprint tech or DNA labs

The accused weren’t presumed innocent until proven guilty, they were presumed guilty until proven innocent

People could be convicted on the strength of a single witness

PP Brings new meaning to “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*” **Proverbs 18:21**

But in Israel, God safeguarded justice as someone was judged by a jury of Elders and there had to be more than one witness

PP “*Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.*” **Deuteronomy 19:15**

The witness had to be examined independently, hearsay was absolutely excluded

Any contradiction between witnesses rendered the whole evidence invalid

In case of the death penalty, the witness was to be solemnly warned that he was responsible for the life of the man on trial and for his unborn children

A person who was convicted of being a false witness had to pay the same penalty as the man on trial would have paid if the charge had been true, execution if it was a capital trial

If the wrongly accused would have suffered 40 lashes, it would be 80 for the false witness

In a capital trial where the penalty was stoning to death, the leading witness had to push the victim down the precipice and roll the first great stone upon him

God was very concerned with justice, and He hated a lying witness!

God hates a false witness, and He despises lying in all its forms

PP Slander is a false witness that springs from the desire to have power over others

It reduces another person’s name and reputation, which is motivated deeper still, by a desire to increase our own

There is an old sailing story where one day, a mate who seldom got drunk was inebriated

The captain wrote in the log book, “The mate is drunk today.”

He begged the captain to erase the condemning line, but he refused to

The next day the mate kept the books, and wrote, “The captain is sober today.”

Gossip is another lie of malice, even if it contains some truth among its misinformation

PP It is secret slander, which is why the Greek word for gossiping means ‘*whispering*’

Friends, it is as wrong to listen to gossip as it is to actually speak it

If you want to learn to stop gossiping and slandering, ask forgiveness of the one you sin against

We lie to try and escape the consequences of something we've done

We let slip inaccuracies slip into what we say and become indifferent to it

We flatter others to get what we want, which is a false witness

PP *"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!" Psalm 141:3*

PP 7-*"one who sows discord among brothers."*

Illus A church in 1890 in Mayfield KY had two deacons who argued with each other about everything. One Sunday, one of the two put a nail up in the back of the church so the pastor would have a place to hang his hat. The other deacon saw it and was outraged. "How dare someone put a peg in the wall without first consulting me!" The congregation eventually split and over a hundred years later, people there still refer to the two churches as Peg Baptist and Anti-Peg Baptist.

Friends, all the other 6 have been pointing to this one, and it is in a class by itself

Discord among God's people affects Him in the very core of His being

Wisdom would have us learn the skill of *humility* with one other, seeking to elevate those around us rather than ourselves

It would teach us to possess a *tongue of truth*, which refuses to speak to tear down others

Wisdom would have us give our lives for the oppressed, exercising God's justice

And it would purify our hearts so that we would refuse to be part of any plan that would harm God's people

Moving our feet to flee evil, rather than toward it

And bridling the gossiping, slandering tongue while exercising the tongue of a faithful testimony

And all the while, promoting unity in our relationships, unity in the church

Wisdom brings a church together!

Amen?

Pray