Four Lessons For Life

(Proverbs 6:1-19)
9/6/17; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

From kindergarten to 3rd grade, I went to Park Street Elementary school in Whitmire…

And for each of those years, I had one teacher all day..

Mrs. Suber in kindergarten.

Mrs. Rayford in 1st grade.

Mrs. Lemmon in 2nd grade.

Mrs. Andrews in 3rd grade..

We would start at 8 am each day and end at 3:00 pm and it was all in the same classroom with the same teacher…

However, 4th grade brought something very new to my life…

First, I went to a different school…

Carver Middle School…

But 4th grade also brought the new idea of changing classes..

For the first time in my life, I wouldn't be with the same teacher all day..

We would actually change classes each day..

We would have to walk across the hall a couple of times each day as Mrs. Moss and Mrs. Baker shared teaching duties each day…

Then I made it to high school and I went from two teachers to 5 teachers..

And instead of walking across the hallway, I had to walk the entire hall to find my next class…

That changed to college where I had dozens of teachers and class and had to walk across the whole campus…

Well, today we come to Proverbs 6:1-19, and we are going to change classes 4 times in 19 verses…

As the Lord takes us to his schoolhouse to teach us about 4 different subjects in just a few verses..

For the first 5 chapters, we have pretty much stayed in the same schoolroom as we have watched Solomon teach his son…

But now, we we are going to change classes and learn wisdom from God in 4 different areas of life in half of a chapter…

So, let's get our notebooks ready and start our first class, which begins in verses 1-5 of Proverbs 6..

The subject as hand is becoming a co-signer on a loan for a neighbor or friend…

I have entitled class #1….

I. The Problem with Pledges (1-5)

Let's read verses 1-6…

1 My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor,
Have [a]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 [b]hand of your neighbor,
Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.
4 Give no 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.

In a fallen world, there will always be poverty and lack of money for all people..

Jesus said that the poor will never go away…

And because there are poor people, there will always be the need to borrow money and make loans…

And often times, poor people are unable to secure loans for themselves…

Sometimes because of their own poor choices and sometimes because they don't have any collateral to offer to secure the loan…

So, they are forced to turn to others to see if they will put up their collateral in their place….

Or put their name and reputation on the line to help them secure a loan…

This is common place today and has been common place all throughout human history…

There are even examples in the Bible of people pledging for other people, but the wisdom here in Proverbs 6 is to avoid such guarantees for others..

And so the teaching begins in verse 1…

Son, if you have made the mistake of being a co-signer for a loan…

Son, if you have shaken hands and made yourself part of such an arrangement,…

The best thing to do is to not sleep until you have gotten out of such a situation…

Verse 3 says that a person who has pledged such support for another should go humbly and aggressively beg to get out of the arrangement…

In other words, don't sleep until you pester your friend enough that you can be released from your role as co-signer…

The picture of the diligence of getting out of the agreement is seen in verse 5 as a gazelle tries to wiggle out of the hunter's trap…

Or better yet, a live bird trying to get out of the hands of someone who has caught it…

If you have ever held a live bird, they are hard to hold..

They will struggle to be released until you let them go…

This is the sense of urgency that someone should have to get out financial agreements where you are the guarantor for a loan…

You need to humbly wiggle your way out of them…

Now, why such strong words from God on avoiding these arrangements….

First, most people enter into them out of pride…

To have enough money to be in a place where you can co-sing for someone else often fills a person with pride…

And most arrangements are made based upon the arrogant words of the person offering to be a co-signer…

That is why verse 2 says that co-signers are often caught by the words of their mouths…

Rich people love to talk about what they have and they often love to demonstrate how well off they are…

And often their loud mouths pull them into relationships where they co-sign for others in order to save face and are forced to put their money where their mouth is..

Second, these type of financial agreements ruin relationships…

The love of the money is the root of all evil and people who sign often look down upon and even intimidate those that they sign for…

There is no room for inequality or the feeling of superiority in the people of God…

Third, these financial arrangements can harm your reputation as a believer…

If you dont know exactly how the loan will be used, you better be careful of putting your name on the line..

How dare your money or your reputation allow someone to borrow money that can be used for sinful purposes..

Though you may think you know a person, you may not and your financial backing of them can ruin your name, the name of the church and the name of Christ…

Ok, that's wisdom class #1…

Let's change class in verse 6 and get our second lesson of the night…

I call this class,….

II. The Path to Poverty (6-11)

As we leave a class on the dangers of helping the poor, we come into a class on how to avoid poverty…

So, let's read about this beginning in verse 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?
10 "A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to [c]rest"—
11 Your poverty will come in like a [d]vagabond
And your need like [e]an armed man.

Though animals have no eternal souls, that does not mean we can't learn from them..

God created them and though they are not made in His image, they can even demonstrate his wisdom at times..

So in verse 6, Solomon uses the ant as an example…

Now, the picture of this is meant to impress us…

Here you have the tiny ant who man kills regular by just walking through the yard…

Yet, the tiny ant is a great example of an impressive work ethic…

And so, God instructs all lazy people, - referred to as the sluggard in verse 6, to take note of the ant…

The first thing to note is the internal motivation of the ant…

Ants have no chiefs to direct them what to do each day..

Ants have no officers to inspect their work..

Ants have no rulers to make them get up each day…

Yet every day the ant works to eat each day but also to store up food for the winter…

And the clear example is that the ant needs no external motivation to work…

If they dont work, they dont eat and eventually die…

Lazy people often struggle and complain about lack of motivation to work…

How about this for motivation?

You don't work, you dont eat…

Yet, governments have stepped in as safety nets for people who are capable of working but simply too lazy to get up…

Look, there are legitimate reasons that people can't work but laziness is not one of them..

The little ant gets up and goes to work because he doesn't want to starve today or in the winter…

The same should be true of those people in the world who prefer laying in bed to getting up and going to work…

Churches also need to be wise here as well…

We are called to care for the poor, the sick, the widow, the orphan, but we are not called to care for the sluggard and the lazy…

Yet, there are churches that hand out money left and right and say that it is their biblical duty to do it…

That is certainly not the case, especially in regards to lazy people…

That is why you must trust the men who lead the church when it comes to decisions about helping people in need…

Some may have a real need due to circumstances beyond their control and the church should do what it can to meet their needs…

Some simply have need because they are living in sin and wont get out bed…

In those cases, the church better be careful that we aren't supporting habits of laziness and even contributing to people sinning all the more…

This is sometimes difficult to determine for churches and mistakes can be made, but we need to realize that laziness should never be rewarded….

People who are lazy will will eventually end up in the same shape as a person who is robbed…

They will end up in poverty…

So, class #2 for tonight is on the need to be diligent like the ant and not lazy like the sluggard…

Wisdom class 3 begins in verse 12…

III. The Person of Perversity (12-15)

Verses 12-15 would not go over well with most people in the world today…

Because verses 12-15 amount to what the world knows as profiling or making judgments on people based upon what they say and do..

Yet, God's wisdom calls us to evaluate people with whom we come in contact…

In this case, we are taken to class and learn how to spot the evil man…

Just like the lazy person who wants to avoid hard work because he is lazy….

The evil man also wants to avoid work so he steals and cheats others…

Let's read verses 12-15…

12 A worthless person, a wicked man,
Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth,
13 Who winks with his eyes, who [f]signals with his feet,
Who [g]points with his fingers;
14 Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil,
Who [h]spreads strife.

15 Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.

As a kid, I would overhear my dad's conversations, and there were a few people in Whitmire that he simply referred to as crooks…

I remember asking my dad what a crook was one time, and he simply said that a crook was like someone who cheats at a boardgames in order to win…

Since I played a lot of board games as a kid and often was cheated and tried to cheat myself, that definition made perfect sense to me…

What you see described in verses 12-16 is the equivalent as a crook…

Crooks in Whitmire were men who bought old cars, fixed them up enough to get them running and then sold them for large profits though they knew the cars were not that good…

Crooks in Whitmire were men who never worked but made money selling drugs or other illegal items…

The crook in Proverbs 6 is much the same…

The first perverse thing about him is his mouth…

This means he is either filled dirty talk or he could be a smooth talker who talks a person out of a product or talks someone into buying a product…

Whatever his method, his mouth is his greatest weapon but it is also his greatest evidence of his sin…

Loud, boisterous, flattering, sinful talking men should put you on alert or be avoided all together…

The Bible always values humility but never values arrogance…

The second thing to notice about these evil men are their gestures…

They wink their eyes, signal with their feet, point with their fingers…

Now, the issue is not that they use their hands and feet particularly but they are sneaky in their dealings…

Sneaky people should put you on the alert…

If you can't understand what someone is saying and he can't explain it to you, don't buy it…

This is the idea of shadiness and deceit…

Everyone wants a good deal and wants to save money, but it if sounds suspicious, it probably is…

Evil men are suspicious in their behavior and action…

Trustworthy men don't wink, shuffle their feet and distract with their hands…

They get up, look you in the eye, and stand behind their words…

Gestures are important clues when dealign with people..

And then verse 14 goes on to describe the hearts of these evil men..

They are constantly devising evil in their hearts and spreading strife to their neighbors…

But the end of these men is also clear in verse 15…

Their end will come suddenly and there will be no offer or chance to repent…

This is the final verdict on the evil man…

He lived in sin and sin will eventually overtake him…

This leads to our final wisdom class of the night beginning in verse 16…

We have learned to avoid the problems that come from pledging our name and money for others…

We have seen that the path to poverty begins with laziness..

We have discovered the characteristics of the perverse person, so let's end with…

IV. The Pet Peeves of the Prince of Peace (16-19)

As we leave verses 1-15, we step out of the problems of this world, - being a co-signer, being lazy, being an evil person, and we step into heaven…

Instead of seeing some sins that bother man, we now discover sins that bother God…

And so in verse 16, we are given a list of 7 sins that bother God…

Now, a few things before we read these verses…

First , all sins bother God…

There are no sins that God overlooks or forgets about…

God is perfectly holy so any sin deserves his judgment, yet we get a list here of some detestable sins…

Second, this is not what many people call the 7 deadly sins…

The seven deadly sins was a creation of the Roman Catholic Church for their own purposes and to serve their own twisted view of God…

The list in verses 16-19 is simply a list of sins that are especially hated by God and therefore especially destructive to man..

So, let's read this list and then make a few notes about it..

Verse 16…

16
There are six things which the Lord hates,
Yes, seven which are an abomination [i]to Him:

Let me stop right here for one minute to explain this…

This isn't an error in the Bible where God inspired the writer to Solomon to say here are 6 things and when it was all done, Solomon realized he had 7 things, so he went back and added 7 after the 6..

The meaning is this…

This is not a complete list of things that God hates in regard to sin…

It is an indefinite number….

For instance, someone may ask you how much money you have in your wallet and you respond with "6 or 7 dollars".

And the meaning is this…

I got some money but I am not real sure of how much I have…

When Solomon wrote, “here are 6 things, yes, 7 things, the idea is not that God is unsure but that here are simply some sins that God really hates…

And so the list begins in verse 17..

17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood,
18 A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that run rapidly to evil,
19 A false witness who utters lies,
And one who [j]spreads strife among brothers.

There seems to be no order here…

It may have simply been most poetic to put the list in this order…

One commentator suggested that the first 5 on the list moves from the the top of the body down to the feet..

Eyes down to tongue down to hands, down to heart, which for the Jews was a reference to the bowels of a person, to the feet..

I don't think there is some hidden meaning in the order, so let's just take a minute to consider these 7 sins that the Lord hates..

First is haughty eyes…

The Hebrew simply translates into high eyes..

What are "high eyes"?

They are proud eyes…

Arrogant eyes…

We say that arrogant people have their noses in the air…

Where the eyes go, the nose follows…

The arrogant person holds his head high so that everyone takes notice of him…

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble…

Refuse the temptation to be proud…

The second sin hated by God is a lying tongue..

Not much to add here..

Deceitfulness and lying is to avoided by all as it destroys trust but it also opposes God..

Because according to the Bible, God is truth and Satan is a liar and the father of all lies..

The 3rd sin hated by God are hands that shed innocent blood…

And though you may breath a sign of relief here, dont be so quick to do that…

You may consider yourself a violent person, but the root of violent hands is a angry heart..

God hates the sin of anger…

The fourth sin seen here is the heart that devises evil..

God hates those who plan to sin and do evil in their heart..

This would include the serial criminal but also the person who looks for ways to hurt other people…

The fifth sin that God hates are feet that rush to evil…

This describes the person who seeks out opportunities to sin…

They go to hang out with evil people in evil places…

They seek out sin..

This is the idea of a person who rush to get you alone so they can share some juicy gossip with you…

Their feet run to evil and sin…

And then in verse 18, we finish off of our list of 7 sins that God hates…

The first five have been personal but these are now public sins…

The first is the false witness, which would be someone who lives for another person…

The sin has now begun to destroy others…

And then the final sin that God hates is the sin of a person who stirs up strife…

This is the drama seeker…

This is the person who can't sleep unless they are the middle of what is going on…

In their mind they are sinning, they aren't sinning…

They are just enjoying watching others sin and simply making other people aware of it…

This the gossip and the busybody of the Scriptures…

They love good drama and they love to talk about it with others…

This is the slanderer…

This is the pot-stirrer…

And the sad reality is that they dont ever see their sin…

They use phrases like, "I want to make you aware of something we need to pray about…"

Or "I think you need to know this…"

But they have no real concern other than spreading strife in their actions…

Well, God hates that sin along with the other 6 listed here…

And we would do well to avoid all 7 and many others..

Conclusion

As we finish up the first part of chapter 6, let me just give you some practical help from these 4 wisdom lessons…

#1- It is not necessarily sinful to say "no."

So many times, Christians are pushed into a corner to help those in need even though they may feel uncomfortable doing it…

Often times, the Bible is played against the Christian especially in terms of helping people financially..

Phrases like, "Well, I thought Christians and churches helped people" are often used to lay guilt on you and cause you to give to others in every circumstance…

Look, when people who "can work but dont work" come to the church asking for money and say things like…

Don't the Bible say you are supposed to help the poor…

I often reply with…

It sure does but it also says, "If you dont work, you dont eat."

So, we will be glad to help you find a job so that you can start eating…

They often leave as quick as they came…

Along those lines, it is fine to say no to people especially if you dont the details of what is going on in a person's life…

Now, this is not a lesson on how to be selfish, but it is a lesson on being wise…

#2 - It is not necessarily sinful to make judgments about people.

God has given us His Word and blessed us with the Holy Spirit to help us live wisely in the world…

In Proverbs 6 and other places in the Bible, God has described the evil man to us…

And the expectation is that we will take these words and use them when live in this world…

To do that, we have to make judgments about people..

Though we can't know their heart, we certainly can take their outwards actions into account as we interact with them…

It would be unwise not to do that…

So judgments are fine as long as they are based on the words of Scripture…

A final thought is this…

#3 - It is necessarily sinful to do the things that God hates.

Pride and arrogance,….

Deceitfulness and lying….

Anger and running to do evil…

False witnesses and strife spreaders…

Are things we should avoid in our life…

One pastor said this in regards to Proverbs 6:16-19…

If God hates it, I cannot love it..

If God forbids it, I cannot do it…

If God detests it, I must reject it…

If God prohibits it, I must stay far from it…

If God doesn't allow it, how dare I try to sneak it into my life…

Let us pray…