

PROVERBS

Chapter 6

Practical Warnings

My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, 2 if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, 3 then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor. 4 Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; 5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler. 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. 7 Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, 8 she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. 9 How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, 11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. 12 A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, 13 winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, 14 with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; 15 therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing. 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.

6:1–19 The eighth address to a son focuses on practices that threaten living by God’s wisdom: guaranteeing another’s loan, laziness, and lying. (TLSB)

6:1 *my son* – The eighth discourse to youth (6:1-19) furnishes a digression from the subject of sexual morality, before returning to it for the final two discourses. In this discourse, Solomon discusses situations into which the naïve commonly fall. (PBC)

put up security ... given your pledge. Refers to responsibility for someone else’s debt (cf. 22:26) or for some other obligation. It can end in abject poverty (cf. 22:27) or even slavery if you cannot pay. For example, Judah volunteered to personally guarantee the safe return of Benjamin to Jacob (Ge 43:9), and when this seemed impossible, he had to offer himself to Joseph as a slave (Ge 44:32–33). Such an arrangement was sealed by “striking hands,” equivalent to our handshake (see 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; cf. Job 17:3). (CSB)

Guaranteeing another’s loan in case of default is discouraged elsewhere in Pr (11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13). The practice may be motivated by the promise of an easy profit in return for risk. (TLSB)

Similar to our handshake, people would strike their hands to mark a binding agreement in front of witnesses. (TLSB)

6:2 *ensnared.* Entering into such an obligation is like an animal entering a trap. The trap here is not merely a potential liability but a desire for more and more easy money. Love of money, rather than wisdom, can take hold of a person’s heart (Heb 13:5). (TLSB)

6:3–5 The one held captive by the debts of another must do everything possible, and immediately, to urge the debtor to pay off the debts. (TLSB)

6:3 *save yourself*. To gain release from the obligation. (CSB)

come into the hands of your neighbor. Assumed responsibility for his obligation. (CSB)

plead urgently – In Hebrew it means to “trample upon yourself.” In other words, forget about your dignity; be prepared to humiliate yourself to be free from your pledge. (PBC)

Be as persistent as the man in Lk 11:8. (CSB)

This means to keep pestering your neighbor until he lets you off the hook. (PBC)

6:4 *no sleep ... no slumber*. Like David in Ps 132:4. (CSB)

Don't let another day go by until you have gotten out of this snare. (PBC)

6:5 *hand of the fowler*. See Ps 124:7. (CSB)

6:6–11 Solomon shows the dangers of laziness. (TLSB)

6:6 *go to the ant* – The Bible tells us that wise King Solomon was well-acquainted with the world of plants and animals: “He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish” (1 Kings 4:33). Ants receive mention only twice in the entire Bible. The other reference is in Proverbs 30:25. In both cases they are representatives of industriousness. (PBC)

The harvester ant, common in Israel, gathers grain to its nests for winter. Chemnitz: “Does God will that we seek and consider these marks of His divinity in our own minds and in the entire nature of things? The answer is yes.... Solomon in Prov. 6:6 directs the lazy man to the ant” (*LTh* 1:53–54) (TLSB)

sluggard. A lazy individual who refuses to work and whose desires are not met (see 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13–16). (CSB)

Hbr “idle,” “lazy.” We would say “lazybones.” (TLSB)

The sluggard can learn from these tiny creatures. They have initiative; they don't need a leader standing over them. They do not procrastinate. They plan ahead and store up for the winter. (PBC)

6:7 *without having any chief*. Cf. the locust in 30:27. (CSB)

The ant does not have to be ordered or motivated by authority as a parent must often motivate a lazy child. The ant is a picture of motivation from within—a picture of wisdom. (TLSB)

6:8 LXX includes additional verses after v 8 describing the hard work of the bee, considered by ancient Greek culture to be wise and productive, despite its small size. (TLSB)

6:9 *How long will you lie there, you sluggard?* His love for sleep is described also in 26:14. – One translation render “you sluggard” as “you lazy bum.” You can almost see the sluggard hearing about the ant, and then rolling over on his side for a bit more sleep. Or else, he folds his hands over his stomach – the common position when taking a nap – and mumbles, “I’ll be with you in a minute. Give me just a little more sleep.” (CSB)

Question catches the waiting mode of those who lie with the lazy. (TLSB)

6:10–11 Repeated in 24:33–34. (CSB)

6:10 *A little ... little ... little.* Laziness works in small increments, in lame excuses that value present comforts at the risk of future calamity. (TLSB)

6:11 *poverty.* Connected with too much sleep also in 10:5; 19:15; 20:13. Hard work is an antidote to poverty (see 12:11; 14:23; 28:19). (CSB)

Crucial to understanding sin is a look at its consequences. One consequence of laziness is finding oneself suddenly and unexpectedly poor, as if having been robbed. Cf 2Th 3:6–12, where Christ is the motivation to be productive. (TLSB)

The Bible doesn’t advocate workaholism. Jesus Himself took time for rest and relaxation. But God does not want us wasting away our time in laziness. (PBC)

like a robber... an armed man. Poverty will come when it is too late to do anything about it (cf. Mt 24:43). (CSB)

6:12–19 Lesson on the dangers of lies and deception. (TLSB)

6:12–14 A vivid description of one who uses mouth, eyes, feet and fingers (all a person’s means of communication) in devious ways to achieve the deceitful plots of his heart—here especially to spread slander about someone to destroy him. (CSB)

6:12 *worthless person.* Solomon labels the deceptive person as one who is good for nothing and whose mouth is corrupt. The corrupt speech here can include slander, gossip, misrepresentation, or schemes that call for fast talk with skilled deception. Cf Jas 4:11–12 for an understanding of speaking evil of another as playing judge, a role belonging only to God. (TLSB)

This literally means, the man of Belial. The term Belial means “worthlessness” and “wickedness,” and later to be applied to the devil himself (2 Corinthians 6:15), who is the epitome of wickedness. (PBC)

corrupt speech. First his mouth is corrupt. Lies, filthy talk, slander and a general disregard for God characterize his speech. (PBC)

6:13–14 Not only does the mouth participate in deceit but also the winking eye, pointing finger, scraping (shuffling) feet, and perverted heart. Hbr here points to continual, habitual body language. These could be signals to others who are scheming or to looks and gestures that give away the insincerity behind the words. (TLSB)

6:13 *winks with his eye.* Long before modern psychology took up the study of “body language,” the wise king of Israel had observed how even the slightest motions can tell volumes about a person. (PBC)

6:14 *devises evil.* Through slander he creates distrust that culminates in alienation and conflict. (CSB)

Ripping at people’s reputations, passing rumors, or scheming toward a hidden end can lead to conflict in any community. (TLSB)

Whether openly or more subtly, the scoundrel stirs up dissension. Friendships and marriages are broken. Business, trade, politics, and international affairs all suffer from his handiwork. (PBC)

6:15 *calamity will come upon him suddenly.* Usually a sign of God’s judgment (see 1:26; 24:22; Job 34:20). (CSB)

Emphasizing that, once found out, the deceiver is ruined. (TLSB)

Sooner or later his evil catches up with him. When disaster comes, it is sudden, complete, and irreversible. Over and over in Proverbs we see this truth repeated. Evildoers do not get away with it. God watches. There is judgment. (PBC)

broken beyond healing. He will suffer the same fate he thought to bring upon another—his punishment will fit his crime. (CSB)

6:16–19 A further elaboration on the theme of vv. 12–15, explaining why “disaster will overtake” (v. 15) the scoundrel described here. (CSB)

Solomon presents the first of the numerical sayings in Pr. The move from six to seven indicates comprehensiveness. The seventh abomination is the deceiving lies and resulting conflict discussed in vv 12–15, making it the most memorable. (TLSB)

This is one of the so-called numerical proverbs, in which the sage presents a listing. (We’ll see several of them in Proverbs 30.) In most numerical proverbs, the second line increases by one the number given in the first line. (Proverbs 30:7-9; 24-28 are exceptions.) We also find this form in the books of Job (5:19) and Amos (1:3-2.6). (PBC)

6:16 *six . . . seven.* A way of handling numbers in synonymous parallelism in Hebrew poetry. Such catalogues of items are frequent in the wisdom literature of the OT (see 30:15, 18, 21, 29; see also Job 5:19). (CSB)

Seven suggests completeness, and this list is not to be confused with the “seven deadly sins,” which, later in church history, some came to see as especially harmful (pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth). Each of the sins in Solomon’s list is important enough to come up several times throughout Proverbs. This list strikes us in how closely it resembles the description of the scoundrel we just studied. No doubt it follows immediately upon that passage as a summary. It also serves as a warning that God looks at every sin as an abomination – whether it be a sin of thought (in the heart), word or deed. (PBC)

abomination. Hbr is plural; it indicates religious or cultural taboos. Expression used 12 times in Pr to denote evil acts that will bring God’s wrath on those who do them. (TLSB)

to Him. Lit, “of His soul.” (TLSB)

6:17 *haughty eyes.* They reflect a proud heart, and God will judge them (see 21:4; 30:13; Ps 18:27; 101:5). (CSB)

lying tongue. Reflecting a deceitful heart (12:19; 17:17). (PBC)

hands that shed innocent blood. That the flagrant sin of murder is listed amid other sins more subtle and often hard to prove and punish seems surprising. All sins are hated by God, even the ones missed or camouflaged by humans. Solomon’s student will learn that God sees into the heart of the sinner. (TLSB)

Murder, not capital punishment (1:11). (PBC)

6:18 *heart that devises wicked plans.* See 1:31; 24:2; Ge 6:5. – The heart, at the center of human activity for good or ill (1:31; 24:2). (CSB)

feet that ...make haste to run to evil. Yet slow to do what God wills (1:16). (CSB)

6:1–19 God’s Law shows us not only our sins but also their motivations and consequences. Consider a thought, an action, or a word by asking, Why am I doing this? Where could it take me? Can I do this in the name of the Lord? God hates sin so deeply that He sent His Son to take away sin’s power—its curses and its eternal consequences. In Christ, we are forgiven and empowered to overcome sin. Good-for-nothings are made into God’s precious and valuable sons and daughters. • Lord, You know my heart. Forgive those times when sin, not Your grace and Spirit, has motivated me. Take my words, Lord, my hands, and my feet, and use them for Your good purposes. May all who follow You speak well of one another and know the peace that comes with wisdom rooted in Your Word. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)

Warnings Against Adultery

20 My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. 21 Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. 22 When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. 23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, 24 to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. 25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; 26 for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. 27 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? 28 Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? 29 So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished. 30 People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, 31 but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. 32 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. 33 He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. 34 For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. 35 He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.

6:20–35 Solomon returns to the topic of adultery as he begins a ninth address to his son. (TLSB)

6:20–24 Reflects God’s commands regarding His Law in Dt 6:4–9 and culminates in specific warnings against adultery. (TLSB)

6:20 In the ninth discourse to “my son” (6:20-35), Solomon returns to the topic of sexual morality. He spends several introductory verses (20-23) exhorting the young person to listen to his father and mother. With this introduction, he is saying something like: I’m repeating a topic I spoke of before. But it’s so important that you need to pay close attention once more. (PBC)

6:21 Keep the teachings of your parents in your heart and let them adorn your outward behavior. (PBC)

6:23 *lamp ... light.* Just as the word of God “is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Ps 119:105; cf. Ps 19:8). (CSB)

These metaphors reveal the use of God’s Commandments to teach us, to show us the good way to go. The Law shows us a way of life. Jesus, the Word and the Way (Jn 1:14; 14:6), takes us there. (TLSB)

way to life. See 3:22; 4:22. Contrast the way to death for the one who hates discipline (5:23). (CSB)

6:24 *evil woman ... adulteress.* Often in chs 1–9, wisdom is contrasted with adultery. Cf 7:4–5. When this topic is discussed, it is often a contrast involving two women (here, “your mother” [v 20] and the adulteress). (TLSB)

In this verse we come to the point of this discourse. Godly teaching keeps one from the immoral woman. (PBC)

6:25 *Do not desire.* Jesus shows the close connection between lust and adultery (Mt 5:28; cf. Ex 20:17). (CSB)

beauty ... eyelashes. A first caution: do not let her beauty take you in. Israelite women painted their eyelids to accent their beauty. (TLSB)

Sin begins in the heart. (PBC)

6:26 *a loaf of bread.* Both the prostitute (29:3) and the adulteress (5:10) reduce a man to poverty (see 1Sa 2:36). (CSB)

The loaf of bread is pictured as the bare minimum for life. (PBC)

loaf of bread. Another caution against the prostitute: her price may be as cheap as a loaf of bread because she may merely seek to survive on the street. (TLSB)

precious life. Adultery has a double threat: the husband’s revenge, and capital punishment under the Law (Dt 22:22). (TLSB)

6:27–29 Two fiery metaphors—carrying fire and walking on coals—point to the inevitability of getting “burned” by fornication. (TLSB)

6:29 *will go unpunished*. Since adultery involves taking another man's wife, the adulterer can expect the husband to seek revenge. Punishment is sure to come. If not from a vengeful husband, then in some other way. The OT called for the death penalty for adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22), the same as murder. In a way adultery was, and is a form of murder. It cuts at the heart of a marriage. (PBC)

6:30–31 Metaphor that likens fornication to theft. If a thief steals food out of hunger, people may sympathize with his situation, but if he is caught, he will have to make compensation anyway—far beyond the cost of the items (Ex 22:1–9). Again, fornication and adultery are costly sins, demanding consequences. (TLSB)

6:31 *sevenfold*. Hebrew law demanded no more than fivefold payment as a penalty for any theft (Ex 22:1–9). The number seven is here symbolic—he will pay in full. (CSB)

6:32–35 *lacks sense*. Physical harm (disease), disgrace, and the insatiable jealousy and revenge of the adulterer's spouse all make adultery not just unwise but downright stupid. (TLSB)

6:32 LACKS JUDGMENT – God says, “Call them simpletons. (PBC)

destroys himself. Even in our society, which is accepting of sexual immorality, the stigma of adultery is still strong enough to cost politicians their office and clergy their calling. If we ever reach complete indifference, there won't be much society left. There should always be a willingness to forgive, but never an excusing of the sin. (PBC)

6:33 *disgrace*. Disgrace followed Amnon's raping of Tamar (2Sa 13:13, 22). (CSB)

6:34 *jealousy*. Its strength is also illustrated in 27:4; SS 8:6. (CSB)

6:20–35 The Sixth Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” holds high God's institution of marriage and protects us from the deadly consequences of sexual immorality. Pr teaches us to weigh the heavy consequences of sexual immorality before we act. Personal health, reputation, family, and career are at stake—and our relationship with God. Wisdom weighs the consequences and counts the costs. Wisdom, who is Jesus Christ, brings us the power and motivation to live worthy of our holy calling, especially where sexual purity is concerned. • Father, in Your wisdom You call Your people to purity, reserving sexual intimacy for marriage. Give me the wisdom to walk away from temptation and to overcome it by Your Word and Spirit; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, my Lord. Amen. (TLSB)