

Proverbs 6:1-19

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[0 : 00] Proverbs chapter 6, this morning, we are looking, we're doing our series this summer in the book of Proverbs about wisdom, and today we get some very practical instructions and guidance for our lives.

So, let's read. We are reading chapter 6, verses 1 to 19. Page 530 in the Pew Bible, if you're looking at one of those, let's read together.

My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor.

Go. Go. Hasten. Plead urgently with your neighbor. Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber. Save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Go to the ant, O sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.

[1 : 26] How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber and want like an armed man.

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. Therefore, calamity will come upon him suddenly. In a moment, he will be broken beyond healing. There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him.

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.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. We pray that you would speak to us through it this morning. Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

[2 : 38] We pray that you would shape us with your fatherly instruction to us as your children this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, so far in the book of Proverbs, we've heard some several general exhortations to pursue wisdom.

Chapter 1, we've seen a warning against following the crowd into foolishness. Chapter 2, an invitation to seek after wisdom as a good gift from God that will come into our heart and deliver us from evil.

Chapter 3 pointed us to some benefits of wisdom, that it tends to lead to success and long life. And chapter 4, we had an exhortation to pursue wisdom as a treasured tradition handed down from the past, as an ever-brightening path leading into the future, and as a worthy object of our heart's desire.

But if you've been here these last few weeks or reading these chapters, you might be wondering, okay, so Proverbs is saying, wisdom is worth pursuing. Pursue wisdom. Pursue it with all your heart.

It comes from God. Well, what is it exactly, you might be asking? What does it actually look like practically, concretely, to live a life pursuing wisdom?

[3 : 47] And this morning's text begins to answer that question. It speaks to three very practical areas of our lives. Our money, our time, and our relationships.

Now, you might have noticed we skipped chapter 5. That's not because we're avoiding the passage that talks about sex and marriage and adultery. We're going to address it next week, along with chapter 7, which also addresses the same topic.

Pastor Nick's going to preach on that. Then we'll go on to chapters 8 and 9, which look again at wisdom and folly more broadly. And after that, we're going to look into more specific topics in the rest of Proverbs. So, that's where we're going in the rest of our series in Proverbs this summer. But today, we're looking at money, time, and relationships. And in particular, this passage warns us against three foolish and dangerous paths.

Being irresponsible with our money. Being sluggish with our time and opportunities. And being divisive in our relationships. And there's a progression in this passage.

[4 : 49] In these three sections, verses 1 to 5, verses 6 to 11, and verses 12 to 19, it goes from bad to worse. Starts with a well-intentioned form of foolishness.

And then there's a passive form of foolishness with really no intention at all. And then there's a malicious form of foolishness. Actively trying to harm others.

It goes from someone who might potentially fall into danger. The father speaking to his son and says, if you find yourself in this situation. To someone who is in actual danger.

Speaking to the sluggard saying, you're already in danger. To someone who is actively endangering others. The malicious troublemaker. Fear. So, that's what we're looking at this morning.

But God wants to use these negative examples, these warnings, to point us to the way of positive wisdom. And to point us to Jesus Christ, who is the source and the one through whom we can live wisely.

[5 : 49] In our money, in our time, and in our relationships. So, let's jump in. One section after another. That's a big picture. First danger. Verses 1 to 5. Well-intentioned but irresponsible financial commitments.

Now, you might say, well, what does this mean in verse 1 where it talks about putting up security for your neighbor or giving your pledge for a stranger? Basically, that means to guarantee someone else's debts.

So, in the ancient world, if you ask someone for a loan, they would often say, okay, I'm willing to loan you some money, but give me some collateral. Give me a pledge. Give me something that will serve as a promise that you'll pay me back.

But what if you really want or need the loan, but you don't have any collateral? Well, you might go to a friend and say, can you put up collateral for me?

Can you co-sign on the dotted line? Same thing can happen in the modern world. Perhaps you've been in a situation where you've wanted to apply for a mortgage on a house or a loan on a car and your income wasn't enough.

[6 : 59] And so, the bank told you you need a co-signer. Maybe someone has approached you and said, will you co-sign on my loan? You're not going to have to pay it.

I fully intend to pay the loan myself, but I need you to co-sign. Otherwise, I can't get the loan or I get a terrible interest rate. And you might think, well, I know this person.

They're well-intentioned. They wouldn't try to hurt me. I want to help them. But Proverbs warns us, don't do it.

Now, when we're applying the wisdom in Proverbs, we need to remember two things. Number one, we live in a different culture and economic system.

So, we need to think carefully about how the principles in Proverbs apply in our different cultural context. So, sometimes there's a straight line and sometimes we need to apply the principles in a different context.

[7 : 53] Second thing is Proverbs tends to give general principles, but implicitly acknowledges that the world is messy and sometimes there are exceptions. Having said that, in this case, the teaching of Proverbs is very consistent and strongly worded about putting up security for debts.

Proverbs 11.15, Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm. Now, chapter 17, verse 18, one who lacks sense gives a pledge and puts up security in the presence of his neighbor. Chapter 22, 26, and 27, be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?

Proverbs said the same thing, whether it's a stranger or a neighbor. Someone close by or far away, known or unknown. It says, don't put up security for someone else's debt.

Now, you might say, wow, that sounds a little harsh. I mean, is Proverbs saying everyone for himself? Don't help out your neighbor, just keep everything for yourself?

[9:07] No. Proverbs doesn't say that. There are many places where Proverbs encourages generous giving to people who have real needs. Proverbs 14.21 says, Blessed is the one who is generous to the poor.

Proverbs 19.17, Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done. So, if you want to help someone, you can always give them whatever they need. Or you can loan them the money yourself. Now, in the Old Testament, God's people were allowed to loan money to each other, but they couldn't charge interest, and every seven years they had to cancel all debts, whether they were paid or unpaid.

So, it prevented people from being enslaved perpetually and on the very long term in debt. And in the New Testament, we see an interesting example in the book of Philemon.

The Apostle Paul is writing to someone, and he says, If Onesimus owes you anything... Onesimus had become a Christian, was Paul's friend. He says, If Onesimus owes you anything, charge it to my account.

[10:17] In other words, Paul's saying, I'm willing to pay off all his past debts. Now, Paul doesn't say, Whatever debts Onesimus may incur in the future for any reason, I will pay for them.

Right? Paul doesn't make an open-ended financial commitment that he can't actually follow through on. But he's generous in his giving.

The Bible encourages generous giving, but it warns us against giving what we don't have. Or putting up security for someone's debt.

Right? So, don't put up collateral for a debt. Or co-sign someone else's loan, unless you are prepared to pay the whole thing yourself. That's the question you should ask yourself.

If someone ever comes to you and says, Will you co-sign on my loan? The question is, Are you willing to pay the whole thing yourself? And give it... And effectively give it as a gift to that other person.

[11:13] Right? So, when you're co-signing, the thing doesn't actually belong to you. You're helping someone else get something. So, that's a question you need to ask. You can't give what you don't have, so don't promise what you can't deliver.

So, that's the direct implication of this text. Right? It may be well-intentioned, but Proverbs is saying, It's not wise. Don't co-sign unless you are ready to pay the whole thing yourself, and unless you have the resources to do so.

And if you're married, you've talked to your spouse and agreed that it would be a wise thing to devote your resources in that way. Some other practical implications of this text. Three other practical implications.

Number one, more broadly, don't make financial commitments impulsively or under emotional pressure. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 says, Each one should give as he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

That applies to our offerings in church. That also applies to giving more broadly. So, practical examples. If you're walking downtown, and someone comes up to you and asks you for \$20 because I need to take the train to New York because I'm stranded and I have no way to get back there, don't just give them \$20 because you're in a rush and because you don't want to feel guilty for saying no.

[12:44] You're probably not helping them by doing that. I mean, everybody knows. It's the oldest trick in the book. Right? Or if you answer a phone call from some unknown number, and they ask you to make a donation on the spot for starving children halfway around the world in some orphanage, don't do it.

The reason why there are so many scams out there is some people actually get fooled by them. If nobody ever said yes to them, they would stop calling all of us. Psalm 41.1 says, Blessed is the one who considers the poor.

That word means who takes time to think about how best to help people who really have a need. Godly wisdom is not being naive and gullible.

It's not saying yes to every request that comes your way. It's being thoughtful and intentional in our generosity. Second, practical implication, think twice before you loan money to someone else.

Now, I'm not saying never do it, but ask this question, is there a good reason why I'm willing to agree to a loan, but I'm not willing to give the money to them outright? Sometimes there is.

[14:04] But sometimes I think we can agree to loaning money to someone because we don't want to say no to them, we're afraid of their disapproval, but our heart's not really in it.

We don't really want to just give them the money, and so a loan is sort of a half-hearted compromise. And then it gets more complicated if they can't pay you back the loan or disappear. So that's one reason why the deacons of this church are in charge of a benevolence fund to help people who have financial needs. And sometimes people come to me or one of the other pastors, one of the deacons, and say, I need some help to pay my bills or pay my rent this month, but I can pay the church back next month.

And what we always say is, we will certainly consider your request. The deacons will be happy to consider your request. We want to think carefully about how best we can help you.

But we won't give money on the basis that you promise to pay us back next month. Because what if something happens, you know, there's all kinds of things that can happen, and you can't pay the church back.

[15:17] You'll be tempted to lie or you'll be tempted to run away. And we don't want you to run away. You're a lot more valuable to us than whatever amount of money you are asking for. And so we are, we try to be careful as the deacons try to be careful and thoughtful and generous in our giving.

But we've decided not to go the lone route for that reason. Third implication. What verse three to five says, if you have made well-intentioned but foolish financial commitments that are hanging over your head, if you've made promises to other people that you really can't keep, if you've signed on the dotted line for a big loan that is bigger than the amount of money in your bank account, don't just close your eyes and hope it'll all work out for the best.

Proverbs says, go, quickly, humble yourself, plead, beg, say, I need to get out of this. I'm sorry. I spoke too quickly. Figure out some way that that won't be hanging over your head and it won't catch you in the trap.

Don't live by wishful thinking that everything's going to turn out okay and call it hope. Wishful thinking is not hope. Real hope is based in the promises of God and in reality.

It's not the same as wishful thinking. So, Proverbs says, if you've promised something you can't deliver, go now and be honest and say, I'm sorry, I promised something that I can't follow through on and I need to figure out how to get out of this.

[17:03] And also, don't ask somebody to do these, don't ask somebody to promise what they can't deliver. Right? Sometimes if you're in a hard situation, I understand, there's a lot of hard situations that come our way and it's fine to ask for help.

There's no wrong, there's no shame in asking for help. We all need help. I mean, goodness, why did Jesus come into the world? Because we needed a lot more than a little financial help.

We needed a Savior. Right? We all acknowledge that. So, whatever kind of help you need, it pales in comparison to the help we all need from Jesus. So, there's no shame in asking for help.

But don't put someone in a situation where you're asking them to promise what they can't deliver. Where you're asking them to co-sign or put up security for a debt that is putting them in an enslaving situation.

So, there's some practical implications, but let me go one step deeper. Why are we tempted to make well-intentioned but irresponsible financial commitments to other people?

[18:07] Now, I've done this a few times myself. And usually, it's one of two things. It's being afraid of someone's disapproval if I say no.

The Bible calls that the fear of man. Or being gratified because I feel like I'm rescuing someone and no one else can. That's called a Savior complex.

Now, sometimes we're called to spend and be spent for other people within the kingdom of God. To lay down our lives for each other.

And that certainly means sharing our material possessions when people have a real need. Opening your home. Right? Giving your money. The Apostle John says, how can you love your brother or sister in Christ who's really in need, who's without food and clothing if you don't give them some of your stuff?

If you're not willing to share. But there's a fine line between sacrificial giving and having a Savior complex.

[19 : 10] And if you cross that line, it feels pretty good for a while. It feels gratifying because you feel like you're really rescuing someone and you're doing what no one else can and no one else will. But in the long term, you will either become codependent and unhealthily enmeshed or you will become resentful and burned out.

If the person continues to need more and more. And either way, you'll only hurt yourself and the other person in the end. The Bible says there's only one Savior.

There's only one Messiah. It's not me. It's not you. And that's good news. In Job chapter 17, verse 3, Job speaks to God using some of the language in this passage.

He says, give me the pledge you demand. Who is there who will put up security for me? What Job's saying is, Job goes to God and says, God, I need you to help me because I've got nobody.

I've got nobody who can cover my back. I'm in a bad situation and I'm a bad risk. I've got a bad history. No one else will promise themselves for me.

[20 : 17] I need you to pledge yourself for me because nobody else can. And the message of the Bible is that's the situation we're all in, spiritually speaking, and Jesus Christ has paid our greatest debt in full.

Jesus didn't just say, I'll co-sign with you. You try to pay it off yourself and if you can't, well then, I guess I'll be there for you. He said, no, I'm going to pay it in full, up front, for all your sins.

He has paid for all your sins by His most precious blood that He shed on the cross. That's the most precious gift that we have that can never be taken away. So treasure Jesus.

And then He will lead you to use your money generously and wisely. That's the first point about money. The second point concerns our time. And the warning here is against passive sluggishness.

Now this section begins with a positive portrayal of wisdom in verses 6 to 8. Go to the ant, O sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise.

[21 : 23] Do you notice Proverbs is not above using some sarcasm and ironic humor to provoke, especially in regards to the sluggard. Here's some other Proverbs about the sluggard.

Chapter 26, verse 14 and 15. As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish.

It wears him out to bring it back to his mouth. Proverbs is not above using irony and sarcasm.

Sometimes we think sarcasm is always a sin.

I don't think it's always a sin. It's right here in the Bible. Now you've got to be careful with sarcasm.

You can use it to cut people down. But Proverbs use it to provoke people who need a little provoking.

But he goes on to point out two positive aspects of wisdom that the ant exemplifies. Self-discipline and diligence or foresight.

[22 : 27] Now ants are very interesting. I learned something about ants this week. Modern scientists have discovered that ant colonies, while they do have some structure and leadership, they don't operate through a top-down chain of command.

ant. There's no one ant, even the queen, who is sort of directing everything and supervising everyone. So one scientist wrote this. An ant is a very simple animal.

It can perform 10 to 40 elementary behaviors. But ant hills are very complex. One can find nursery, warehouses, or kitchen gardens. Some individuals forage, others take care of the eggs, repair the nest, or protect the ant hill against miscellaneous threats.

What is the secret? How can such mindless animals achieve such complex organization? In economics, division of labor leads to efficiency, but some sort of supervision is necessary.

The different tasks have to be coordinated. But no such supervisors exist in ant hills. No ants, particularly not the queen, are able to manage this exploit. The coordination results from some sort of self-organization process.

[23 : 41] Now, Proverbs isn't precisely anticipating modern scientific insights. It's simply making a point based on general observation. Ants display a kind of self-discipline and internal motivation.

And it says some of us would do well to learn from them. Even though that sounds humbling when you think about that. Self-discipline and diligent foresight.

Ants are mentioned in Proverbs 30, 25, one other time in the book, the same point is made. They are small, but wise. They are not strong, but they provide their food in the summer. In other words, they see an opportunity and they take it.

They see danger ahead and they prepare for it. God provides food for them in season, but they go and get it. If we forget to sweep under our kitchen table after dinner, you can see that right in our house.

Right? The ants, they're coming, taking those little crumbs of bread and taking them over to their little corner. All right.

[24 : 44] So, the ants are a picture of self-discipline and foresight or diligence. But then in verse 9, Proverbs turns away from the ant and turns back to the sluggard. How long will you lie there, O sluggard?

When will you arise from your sleep? And in verse 10, we sort of hear the sluggard's response. Just a little longer. A little more sleep.

Just a little snooze. Just a little rest. Derek Kidner wrote, He deceives himself by the smallness of his surrenders.

So, by inches and minutes, his opportunity slips away. By inches and minutes, his opportunity gradually slips away.

A little nap becomes a long sleep. And finally, verse 11, danger strikes. Poverty will come upon you like a robber and want like an armed man. Now, this word translated poverty, it doesn't just mean having limited means or living a simple lifestyle.

[25 : 50] It's not the same word that's usually translated, the poor, in the rest of Proverbs or the Bible. This word translated poverty means ruin, destruction, destitution.

And here, it's self, and pretty much everywhere it appears, it's self-inflicted. That's the warning. Ruin will come upon you if you continue in this passive path.

Now, what exactly is the problem with the sluggard, we might ask? It's not that he wants to get a good night's sleep. Psalm 127, verse 2 says, the Lord grants to his beloved sleep.

It's a gift sleep. A good night's sleep is a gift from God. Ecclesiastes 5 says, the sleep of a labor is sweet. Think of the last time you got a really good workout during the day and you slept well at night.

Man, it feels good. You might wake up a little sore, but you sleep well after you work hard when your body's working right. The problem is not that he wants a good night's sleep.

[26 : 58] The problem is not that he wants a simple and quiet life. That's also a biblical virtue, generally speaking. The problem with the sluggard is that he's full of desires and cravings, full of hopes and expectations, mostly unrealistic ones, full of opinions and ideas, but unwilling to do the important and necessary work to make step-by-step progress.

He doesn't follow through. He perpetually procrastinates. He indulges in various kinds of escapism. Proverbs talks a lot about this.

21-26, the desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. All day long, he craves and craves. It's not that the sluggard doesn't care about anything and doesn't want anything.

He wants lots of things, but he just doesn't follow through and do what he needs to get what he needs. 13-4, the soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing.

26-13, the sluggard says, there's a lion in the road, there's a lion in the streets. In other words, he makes excuses. He attaches himself to excessive and irrational fears and lets himself be driven by those fears instead of fighting against those fears.

[28 : 16] Maybe you feel those fears. Crushing anxiety. Are you fighting against it or are you just letting yourself be driven and blown along by them? Fight against them. It's hard.

But God will give you strength and other people can encourage you. The sluggard is a perfectionist, criticizing much and accomplishing little.

But there's hope for the sluggard. Proverbs doesn't abandon the sluggard to his passivity. He exhorts him firmly because there's hope for him to listen and change and become wise.

And so Proverbs exhorts us who may have become sluggish. Don't live your life hesitating, making excuses, waiting for someone else to take the lead when decisive and courageous action is called for.

Isn't it true that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing? Spiritually speaking, don't be a slugger in the fight against sin for righteousness.

[29 : 31] Don't ignore a besetting sin, a habitual sin, just hoping it'll go away if you don't think about it and ignore it and pretend it's not there. No, confess it to a brother or sister in Christ and face it head on.

Maybe you've had a major spiritual failure with lasting effects on yourself and others. I want you to know there is a path to healing and restoration for you, but it is a painful path and there are no shortcuts.

You have to dig deep to pull out the roots of the poisonous weed from the soil of your heart. Otherwise, it's just going to stay under the surface and be liable to grow back in a different form. You have to expose the shame, the self-pity and self-justification, the lies you've let yourself believe. Bring all that out into the light with the help of mature brothers and sisters in Christ. That's part of the road to restoration and healing and wholeness and opportunity. Don't just lie down by the side of the road in the slough of despond and stay there.

[30 : 47] It's miserable. You're just trying to blind yourself and not deal with life. Don't deceive yourself into thinking that your sin will just magically go away without actually dealing with it.

You can deal with your sin in light of the cross. Bring it before the cross where Jesus died and paid for it all and before the empty tomb, the empty grave that shows that He has risen from the dead and triumphed over sin and death and in the power of the Spirit of holiness who lives in you. You are not your own. You belong to Christ. So rise up, spiritually speaking. Rise up from your spiritual slumber. The Apostle Paul says this in Romans 13, 11, the hour has come for you to wake up from your sleep.

The night is far gone. The day is at hand. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Hebrews 6 says, we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises of God.

[32 : 19] God has given us the Holy Spirit to live within us, to give us that internal motivation, the spirit of power and love and self-discipline.

So, let's make the most of the opportunities God has given us, even in these days. So, that's the second point about our time. We've dealt with money, we've dealt with time and opportunity, and finally, we come to our relationships, the last point.

The last warning is against malicious troublemaking in our relationships. verse 12 to 19. Verse 12 begins with the phrase, a worthless person.

Literally, the phrase is a son of Belial, which is a Hebrew word used to describe a person who is useless for any good purpose because he is bent on destruction and rebellion.

And later, that word Belial becomes a name that's used for the devil himself. The father of lies, destruction, and rebellion against God appears in 2 Corinthians 6.15.

[33 : 34] Proverbs go on to describe this person who is bent on, not just in danger of harming himself, but actively seeking to undermine and bring other people down.

Verse 12 to 15 and verse 16 to 19, both of these sections, we see five bodily expressions of wickedness. Look down at verse 12.

Crooked speech. Verse 17, a lying tongue. That's the first one, the tongue. Second, verse 13, winks with his eyes.

Verse 17 talks about haughty eyes. Third one, verse 13 again, signals with his feet. Verse 18, talk about feet that make haste to run to evil.

Number four, points with his finger. Verse 13. Verse 17 talks about hands that shed innocent blood. So we have mouth, eyes, feet, hands, our words, attitudes, and actions.

[34 : 37] Every part of this person's life has been corrupted by sin and oriented toward destruction. and then we come to verse 14, the fifth and final member of the series.

The heart with perverted heart devises evil. In the Bible, the heart is the center of our thinking and feeling and decision making.

And it says, this person's heart is perverted, it's twisted, it's constantly devising evil plans. You might say, what exactly do these bodily actions in verse 12 and 13 indicate?

Maybe some people have suggested possibly they refer to engaging in sorcery, casting spells, or putting curses on people. More likely, they're simply secretive signals intended to deceive or cause harm.

Maybe it's also a picture of restless shifting and shuffling, a sign of inner unrest. But in verse 14 and 19, we see the effect of this person on others around him, continually sowing discord.

[35 : 47] Verse 14, verse 19, sowing discord among brothers. The effect of this person is he provokes bitter conflict, strife, and dissension, breaking apart families, churches, neighborhoods, nations, driving a wedge between husbands and wives, parents and children, fellow church leaders, brothers and sisters and friends.

This is a dangerous man. But verse 15 and 16 also tell us that he is destined for final and irreversible judgment. He seeks to ruin his victims, but ultimately he will ruin himself. He overthrows God's order so he will one day be overthrown. He sheds innocent blood so one day he will be broken beyond healing. He will get exactly what he deserves.

Verse 16 says the first time, verse 16 is the first time that the Lord's name is mentioned in this chapter and it says the Lord hates the thoughts, the attitudes, the words, the actions, the influence of such a person.

They are an abomination to him. This is very strong language. Now what's the point of this vivid description of a malicious troublemaker and his inevitable demise?

[37 : 05] Well, one, I think there's a warning against associating too closely with a person like this. We saw that back in chapter 1 with a warning against following the crowd into wickedness.

It's also a warning against becoming like this man in part even if not in whole. One commentator put it this way, the reader of this section can almost catch the superior look and the shifty talk and may wonder when his own hands were last employed to an innocent person's detriment.

When was the last time you were ruminating in your heart about someone who has wronged you or who has done wrong to others?

What were you ruminating about? Were you praying that God would bring them to repentance? Were you praying for their ultimate good?

Or were you plotting ways that you could undermine them in return? When was the last time you participated in gossip?

[38 : 28] We could define gossip as talking with someone who is neither part of the problem nor part of the solution. Proverbs 16, 28 says, a whisperer, that is, someone who gossips, separates close friends.

So there's a warning in this picture of becoming like this person. There's also a comfort if you're on the receiving end of someone who sows discord and tears relationships apart and bears false witness.

Maybe you've been on the receiving end of a person like this. And the comfort here is that those who continually and unrepentantly sow discord will not escape God's judgment.

encouragement. So it's an encouragement. Don't repay evil for evil but to overcome evil with good. To love even your enemies and to do good to those who hate you because vengeance is mine says the Lord.

This passage warns against the divisive person but we also see in the Scriptures encouragements to pursue unity and humility. This person is characterized by pride and divisiveness.

[39 : 50] The opposite is humility and unity. Psalm 133 says, how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity for there the Lord has commanded His blessing even life forevermore.

Or consider the Beatitudes that we read earlier in the service. Jesus' words in Matthew 5 what do they start with? Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Do you notice the list in verse 17 begins with haughty eyes pride. Jesus begins with humility. That's where it all starts.

You have to enter the kingdom of God with humility like a child acknowledging your total dependence on the unmerited grace of God humbling yourself admitting I'm a sinner and crying out to God like the tax collector in the temple saying Lord have mercy on me Lord make atonement for me cover me I'm a sinner and I don't deserve your righteousness I need you.

That's where it all starts. And then verse 18 in the middle talks about a heart that devises wicked plans but the Beatitudes in the middle speak about those who are pure in heart who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness and that's what happens when we become born again when we get regenerated and come alive in Christ God gives us a new heart if you look to if you have looked to Christ and put your faith in Him it means He has already put that new heart in you that's why you're

looking to Christ if you're being drawn toward Christ maybe God's in the process of doing that He is implanting His Word in you giving you a heart that hungers and thirsts for God for His presence for His glory and we can pray Lord renew my heart you've given me a new heart in Christ by your grace fill me in a fresh way with your spirit renew me we start with humility and the new heart that comes from the new covenant in Christ the result is peacemaking right number seven in the list in Proverbs chapter 7 verse 19 is sowing discord among brothers number seven in the Beatitudes blessed are the peacemakers humility and a renewed heart that's changed by God's grace leads to making peace peace and Ephesians 2 says Christ

[42 : 31] Himself is our peace He suffered and died to make us one in Him to reconcile us to God in one body through His cross and that's why Ephesians 4 says make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace peacemaking is not easy it's not just being always having a smile on your face and being nice and pretending nothing ever goes wrong that's not biblical peacemaking it's not pretending nothing ever went wrong what does it mean to be a peacemaker well sometimes it means to forbear patiently and prayerfully that means you tolerate others weaknesses because you value them and what the Lord is doing in them sometimes it means to confront lovingly and truthfully and speak the truth because you care about the person's growth in the

Lord sometimes it means to acknowledge our own faults even if we think I was only 5% of the problem and they were 95% well have you acknowledged your 5% because that's the only that's the part you will be responsible before God for not what they did to you but you will be responsible before God for your part to be willing to extend forgiveness as Christ has forgiven us right we can only do this we can only be a peacemaker through the power of Christ through the new heart he's given us through the power of his cross through the Holy Spirit this passage is full of warnings we've seen these warnings against well-intentioned irresponsible financial decisions against passive sluggishness with our time against active malice in our relationships but it's an invitation in each of these areas to look to our all-sufficient God Father

Son and Holy Spirit to look to our Heavenly Father who sovereignly provides for the needs of each of his children who has been so generous in welcoming us into his family to look to our Savior Jesus Christ who is our peace who reconciles us to God and makes us peacemakers by his Spirit living in us and to live in the power of the Holy Spirit our Comforter who equips and empowers us to not be sluggish but to do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do we have an all sufficient God so may we glorify him in our money in our time in our relationships let's pray Father in heaven we thank you for speaking to us through your word we thank you even for these warnings that you give us through the book of Proverbs against potential and actual dangers that we can fall into we thank you Lord that you are an all sufficient

Savior we thank you that we can look to you and be renewed in our heart Lord we pray that you would take these words and apply them to each of our hearts by the power of your Holy Spirit and help us to look to you this week and in the days ahead that we may bring glory to you in our money in our time in our relationships because you have called us to be your very own love and have loved us with an everlasting love we pray this in Christ's name amen we be see you I you you