

Mind Your Own Business

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[0 : 00] God, it's so easy to get lost in the delusions of our own grandeur.

To think that we must be involved in everything. We must have an opinion about everything. That we must control everything. But Lord, you alone are sovereign.

You alone are king. And you have assigned to us our particular set of responsibilities, roles, relationships to be faithful in.

And you call us to childlike faith to entrust the rest to you. Teach us that humility.

Give us that faith this morning as we hear from you and from your word in Proverbs 6, verses 1 to 19. In Jesus' holy name we pray.

[1 : 17] Amen. We're in Proverbs 6, verses 1 to 19. I will read it out loud for us. 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 hasten and 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.

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.

[3 : 19] 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 makes haste to run to evil. A false witness who breathes out lies and one who sows discord among brothers.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. This is an unusual passage because it's sandwiched between two long sections that are both warnings against adultery.

So Proverbs 5, that Ray preached on last week, and Proverbs 6, 20 to 7, 27. And you wonder what it's doing here between these two passages. But there is a thematic connection.

[4 : 33] Proverbs 5 warned in verse 3 and verse 20 of a forbidden woman, which means literally a strange woman, as Ray pointed out last week.

A woman that is strange rather than known or familiar to you because she is another man's wife.

And to bolster this argument, Proverbs 5, verse 10, once again used the word stranger and said this to paraphrase, you wouldn't labor long and hard only to see all the fruit and income of your labor go to the strangers, would you?

And Proverbs 5, 17 added, should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you. So it's a recurring theme, a running theme that unites these passages, the thing of the identity of a stranger.

That's in fact the main argument of chapter 5, that to commit adultery is to transgress your own boundary, that to move beyond what is rightfully yours, to infringe upon what is rightfully another's. Because as 1 Corinthians 7, verse 4 teaches us, when you get married, the husband's body does not belong to him anymore, it belongs to his wife. And the wife's body does not belong to her

anyway, it belongs to her husband.

[5 : 52] And so when you get married, you belong to one another and there's this mutuality and interdependence. And when you tamper with another man's wife or another woman's husband, you violate that sacred mutuality and interdependence.

And so I don't know if you've ever gotten into a wrong car in the parking lot because it looked exactly like yours or tried to get in.

I mean, one time a car with the exact same make and model and color as mine was for some reason parked right next to mine at Market Basket. And as I came out of Market Basket, this was at the time my key fob battery was dead.

So I was using a manual key to open it. And here I might try to open this car and it wouldn't turn, the key wouldn't turn. And so I looked more closely at the car and recognized a scratch I'd never seen before.

And now I'm getting frustrated. Did someone just scratch my car and leave? And then, of course, to my relief, I realized it's actually not my car at all. And my car was right next to it. And, of course, as soon as I realized that I was kind of looking around because I'm a little embarrassed, you know, you don't want to be seen trying to get into someone else's car.

[7 : 01] And the reason for that is because you have no business trying to get into someone else's car. It's not your car, right? And that's, but that's exactly what we do when we commit adultery.

You have no business being in that relationship. It's not, that is not the relationship that God has put you in.

You are transgressing the boundaries God's given you. We wouldn't ever think after a long day of work to go home to someone else's house to sleep. Not only would they call the police for intruding, but it's just not our place.

It's not homey. We wouldn't rest it. We wouldn't think of it. But yet we often, in other areas of our life, think about things that way. We transgress the boundaries that God has given us.

And so that was the main argument with chapter 5. Really, the main argument against adultery in Proverbs chapter 5 was mind your own business. Spouses have a mutual obligation to one another, and whether you have consent or not with a married woman or married man does not justify it because there's a sanctity of marriage that has been established.

[8 : 14] You have no business meddling in that relationship. And chapter 6 is actually continuing that same theme. So in verses 1 to 5, it tells us to mind our own business, to not become a surety to a stranger's debt.

Don't co-sign a stranger's loan. Verses 6 to 11 tell us to mind our own business, to put our heads down and go to work, to make provisions for our own life instead of being a slugger that does not work unless someone forces him to.

Verses 12 to 19 tell us also to mind our own business, to not be an instigator that sows discord among brothers. So to summarize, the main point of this passage is mind your own business and attend to the responsibilities and relations God has given to you specifically.

Now please don't misunderstand me. Sometimes we use that phrase, you know, mind your own business, to rebuff people who do rightfully have an interest in our lives. Like our own parents, our own spouses, our own bosses, our own brothers and sisters in Christ.

If we tell these people to mind their own business, that's just selfish irresponsibility and rebellion. To mind our own business in a biblical sense is the opposite of selfish irresponsibility.

[9 : 36] It means to be responsible citizens. It means to fulfill our own obligations. It's what 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 9 to 12 talk about. It says, Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you.

For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. For that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you brothers to do this more and more and to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs and to work with your hands as we instructed you so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

Notice that in that passage, this 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, that living quietly, minding our own affairs, working with our hands so that we may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one, that these things are not a sign of selfishness but rather an expression of brotherly love.

That's how that passage began. One of the important ways we love one another within the family of God is by faithfully fulfilling the responsibilities and roles God has given us particularly.

And that faithfulness is born of faith in God's sovereignty that He is the one that's ultimately in charge and oversees all that we do not have our business in.

[10:59] And when we faithfully do that, this passage teaches us that in verses 1 to 5, that we will not be a surety. Verses 6 to 11, that we will not be a sluggard. And verses 12 to 19, that we will not be a sower of discord.

So that's the way my outline as we go through this passage. So first, minding our own business and attending to the responsibilities and relations God has given us entails not becoming a surety. A surety is a person who makes him or herself a guarantor of another person's debt. A cosigner of a loan. It says in verses 1 to 3 of our passage, 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, hasten and plead urgently with your neighbor. Now this is not, I want to add this important qualification, this is not a prohibition of helping and being generous to our neighbors.

For example, Deuteronomy chapter 15, verses 7 to 11, it specifically commands that if among you, one of your brothers should become poor in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

[12:32] Take care, lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and say, the seventh ear, the ear of release is near, and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother and you give him nothing. And he cry to the Lord against you and you be guilty of sin.

You shall give to him freely and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him because for this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and all that you undertake.

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land. So on the sabbatical year, to give you some Old Testament background, the seventh year, God's people were commanded to cancel the debt of all of their fellow Israelites.

And God is saying in this passage that even when the sabbatical year is just around the corner, that his people should lend generously, knowing full well that they may never get the money back because of the sabbatical year.

God always explicitly prohibited his people, on top of that, from charging interest on loans. Exodus 22, 25 says, if you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a money lender to him and you shall not exact interest from him.

[13:45] And of course, the goal of that command is to prohibit exploitation since those who seek to borrow money are usually the neediest people. That's why they're coming to you, to borrow money.

And so it usually was considered unjust. It's an injustice, an exploitation of someone in their time of greatest need and that it actually worsened their financial condition instead of improving it.

So that was the logic behind that. In certain cases, Israelites were allowed to demand securities for a loan. The security was usually a garment which represented the borrower himself, meaning that should the borrower fail to repay his debt, he would be pressed into servitude in order to render a service equal to the amount of the debt he owed.

But even that practice was prohibited in scripture for certain more vulnerable populations. For example, Deuteronomy 24, verse 17 says, you shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner, a foreigner that doesn't have legal rights within the country, or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge.

The sojourners who lacked legal protection, orphans who lacked fatherly protection, widows who lacked their husband's provision and protection, were never in any circumstance to be taken advantage of.

[15:05] You are not allowed to take a security from them. And so, the Bible encourages love for neighbor and generosity toward the poor, and Proverbs chapter 6, verse 1, does not contradict that.

What's in view here is something different. It is warning against putting up security for your neighbor, on behalf of your neighbor. You're not lending here to a needy neighbor.

You're not giving to a poor neighbor. You're, in essence, assuming their debt and taking full responsibility for their financial situation.

And biblical wisdom literature consistently warns against that practice. And note the word at the end of verse 1 that's parallel to the word neighbor. My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger.

That should ring a bell because of all the connection to the theme of stranger we've seen in chapter 5. Stranger, that's the keyword that explains what he means by the word neighbor here because the word neighbor in Hebrew has a very wide semantic range.

[16:12] It can mean a lot of different things depending on its context. Similar to the English word friend, right? When you say a friend, you could mean an acquaintance, a Facebook friend that you have never seen before.

Or you could mean a friend, meaning your best friend that you grew up with and is, is, has been, was in your wedding or is going to be in your wedding, right? So friend can mean a number of different things.

Same thing with the word neighbor in scripture. And so the word neighbor here is given context by the word stranger. So this stranger is not someone that is familiar to you.

This is not a brother that you are responsible for. This is someone that is not within your circle of relationships and responsibilities. Remember that in chapter five, the adulterous woman, another man's wife, was described as a strange woman.

And Proverbs chapter 27, verse 13 makes a very interesting suggestive connection. It says, take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress.

[17:25] So what might, what might be in view here is that a seductive adulteress can lure a foolish man into putting up security for her debt. So if you're putting up security for your wife or sister, that's one thing.

But for a stranger, for an adulteress, don't ever do that. That's what the problem, what this problem is saying. Let me ask you, have you ever rashly taken responsibility for something that is not your responsibility?

Have you ever tried to play the hero in something that really is none of your business? Have you been out of your depths because you have been meddling in trying to control things that are outside of your control?

The exhortation in this proverb is mind your own business and attend to the responsibilities and relations God has given you. And putting up security for a stranger is not one of those responsibilities.

But if you've already done that, there's advice for you here too. If you have already done that, as verse 2 says, you've given your pledge for a stranger. If you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, verse 3 says, then do this, my son, and save yourself.

[18:50] For you have come into the hand of your neighbor. Go hasten and plead urgently with your neighbor. The phrase, give your pledge, in verse 2, is literally, you know, clap your hand, you know, clap your hand in Hebrew.

It's a gesture that people back then used to seal an agreement, much like nowadays we shake hands, right? And so, there's a word play then in verse 3, you have come into the hand of your neighbor.

In other words, if you clap your hand to make yourself a surety for a stranger, you come into the hand under the power of that stranger. You have been snared or caught in the words of your mouth by what you said with your very own mouth.

You have entrapped yourself. This is self-inflicted predicament. In order to save yourself from this unfortunate situation, you should go hasten and plead urgently with your neighbor.

Now, you may have a footnote in your Bible next to the word hasten. The English standard version that I'm using as a footnote there, that the word can also be translated humble yourself.

[19:58] I think that's a better translation. The word that is translated as plead urgently and literally means to bother. So, if you take those things, the New American Standard Bible translates the end of verse 3 this way, I think is very helpful, accurate.

It says, Go, humble yourself and importune your brother. Importune your brother. It means to humble yourself and plead urgently and persistently even to the point of embarrassment.

Like the importunate widow in Luke 18 verses 1-8 who persistently pleads for justice to a wicked judge so that the judge, even though he has no regard for God or humanity, he says, because this

widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

So, that's what Proverbs chapter 6 verse 3 is telling us to do. The stranger that you put up security for is obviously not going to be eager to release you so plead urgently and persistently and shamelessly so that he or she might release you from the legal obligation before the payment is due.

Now, the father continues his admonition in verses 4-5. Give your eyes no slumber, 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.

[21 : 22] Once again, the word hand is repeated. You see it four times in these first five verses. At first, the son foolishly clapped his hand in pledge so that he came into the hand of his neighbor.

Now, he must free himself from this trap like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler. It's the stranger's hand that's in view here that he must escape like a gazelle or the bird from.

And this extended metaphor of hunting and being hunted and caught and ensnared is really helpful because it inverts the assumed power dynamic.

Right? When you put up security for a stranger, when you co-sign a loan, it makes you feel like you are in charge. Right? It makes you feel like you are the benefactor and that this debtor is subject to your goodwill.

But in reality, what this passage is teaching us is when you put up security for a stranger, you become the subject to his goodwill. You are now his beneficiary.

[22 : 23] He has successfully ensnared you and you will be impoverished if he refuses to repay his own debt. So moments ago, he was begging you to put up security for him, but now you must beg him to release you.

That's the folly of becoming a surety. Instead, it says, we should mind our own business and attend to the responsibilities and relations God has given to us. Right?

I mean, think about how urgent this is. A bird caught by the fowler is not going to say, well, let me take a nap first and finish eating this food and then try to flee. Right?

I mean, that's not how you think when you're trapped. Similarly, you should think about it that way. If you have come under, pledge, if you become a surety, give your eyes no sleep, your eyes no slumber, you have been trapped.

Extricate yourself as soon as you possibly can. It's the first order of business. And he says, untimely sleep and dilly-dallying and procrastination and laziness can ruin you.

[23 : 22] And that thought of untimely sleep and laziness and procrastination, it prompts the father to warn the son against being a sluggard in verses 6 to 11.

That's my second point. He says in verses 6 to 8, Go to the aunt, 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.

Now, he uses a form of direct address. He says, O sluggard, in order to dramatize and emphasize this warning. But the implied audience is still the son.

He doesn't want the son to become like the sluggard. So he says, Go to the aunt, you know, waking him up from his slumber. Go. Consider her ways and be wise. The father points out that an aunt gathers and stores grain during the summer so that he can survive the winter when there is little food to gather.

Not only is this relatively insignificant creature more forward-thinking and industrious than the sluggard, it's also more responsible and self-starting.

[24 : 35] Right? Look at it again. It says, Without having any chief officer or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. Nobody orders the aunt to do that.

Go grab the breadcrumb at this time from this place and bring it and store it here. Nobody decides her duties for her but the aunt does it anyway. She knows from her God-given insect instinct what her responsibilities and relations are and she fulfills them admirably.

The aunt knows to mind her own business and attend to her God-given responsibilities and relations. The sluggard, on the other hand, does not. So the aunt's industry and independence put the sluggard to shame.

Verses 9-11 describe the sluggard this way, 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.

The interrogative words emphasize time, right? How long will you lie there? When will you arise from your sleep? So there's an implied rebuke in those words.

[25 : 52] The sluggard has already been lying there and sleeping for far too long. From the perspective of the father, the sluggard's slumber is endless. When? How long?

It seems endless. But from the perspective of the sluggard, note the contrast that the father gives voice to in verse 10, it's just a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest.

Notice how vague and incremental that is, right? I mean, it seems harmless. Oh, a little sleep. Oh, I'll just snooze just for a little while. Oh, I'll get that done just a little later.

Right? Bible scholar Derek Kittner puts it insightfully. He says, he does not, the sluggard, he does not commit himself to a refusal but deceives himself by the smallness of his surrenders.

So by inches and minutes, his opportunity slips away. The sluggard is reluctant to make a firm time commitment. So he delays incrementally and indefinitely.

[26 : 57] He hates deadlines. He shirks responsibilities. He flees pressure. Sleep is like a drug for the sluggard. It's the means by which he escapes the painful realities of life, the difficulties of life.

And we can be tempted to think in the same way, can't we? What are some urgent and important things in your life that you keep pushing back little by little?

Perhaps it requires discipline. Perhaps it's unpleasant. Perhaps it's seeking reconciliation with the Christian brother or sister that you have sinned against. perhaps it's calling your parents.

Perhaps it's getting a laborious work project done. Perhaps it's applying for jobs. Perhaps it's studying for exams. Perhaps it's getting up early in the morning to read your Bible and pray.

Maybe it's exercising. Maybe it's finding and committing to a local church. What have you been delaying unnecessarily to your own peril?

[28 : 06] You might think it's just a little folding of the hands to rest, but the Father warns, and poverty will come upon you like a robber and want like an armed man.

The Father warns of poverty and want. He doesn't merely say that you won't be rich. He doesn't merely say that you will be middle class. No, he says that you will be impoverished and lack the basic necessities of life.

The Hebrew word that is translated poverty here in verse 11 only occurs in the book of Proverbs. It always has a negative connotation. It doesn't refer to just not having enough disposable income and living from paycheck to paycheck.

No, it refers to destitution, not having enough food to eat. And it's not a coincidence that the Bible never uses the adjective poor to describe the condition of a sluggard that becomes destitute.

The word poor in contrast to the word poverty is used in the Bible primarily to refer to those who are poor because of circumstances that are outside of their control. And almost uniformly they are the object of God's special compassion and care in Scripture.

[29 : 20] So Proverbs 19.17 says, whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord and he meaning God will repay him for his deed. God cares for the poor but the impoverished sluggard is another story altogether.

This is not the case for charity. Poverty and want in wisdom literature are result of divine judgment for sins such as slothfulness, stinginess, love of luxury, carelessness, and idle talk which we'll all see throughout the book of Proverbs as we go through.

And poverty is not deferential toward its victims. Verse 11 says that it comes like a robber which conveys the sudden, stealthy way in which poverty comes and like an armed man which conveys the violent, forcible way in which poverty comes.

So you can't always indulge in a little more sleep and expect to arouse yourself for work just in time to avoid poverty. It doesn't work like that. Poverty comes unannounced, unexpectedly, unavoidably. It's similar to why so many drivers I think fall asleep on the road. They think that they could arouse themselves when they start to feel themselves falling asleep. They don't realize that even though that pre-sleep stages are gradual, when they actually fall asleep, it's almost instantaneous.

[30 : 43] There's no way to pull yourself out of that once it's too late. And so they don't pull over at the first indication that they are sleepy or falling asleep.

Instead, they say a little longer, a few more miles, and then bam, car wreck. Poverty is similar. It will come upon you like a robber, like an armed man.

You thought you were getting away with the little shortcuts here and there, a few wasted hours here and there, and then bam, you lose your job. You thought you could skim the books and pull an all-nighter the day before your exam, relying on your own intelligence to bail you out as it has done before.

A little more video games, a few more episodes, and then bam, you fail the exam. You thought you could miss church just a few times, well, that wasn't so bad, and then a few more times, a little more spiritual neglect, and then bam, unbelief and spiritual hardness have sunk into your heart.

By the time you realize that you're in trouble, it's already too late. So the passage exhorts us, mind your own business and attend to the responsibilities and relations God has given you.

[31 : 59] The third category of person that the father warns the son against becoming is a worthless person, or more literally, a man of worthlessness. He is twice described in verses 14 and 19 as a sower of discord.

This is an agitator, a rabble rouser, a troublemaker, a person who incites discord and disunity against God and against humanity.

The term worthlessness is almost a catch-all term for all kinds of rebellious wickedness, so much so that the Hebrew word behind that, belial, is used as a name for the devil in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 15.

And the kind of things that he does, this worthless man does, is described colorfully in verses 12 to 14. He goes out with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart, devises evil, continually sowing discord.

Many body parts are used to describe this worthless man's behavior. He is described as having a crooked speech. It's literally crooked mouth, which refers to his slanderous and false speech.

[33 : 17] His winking eyes betray deception. I think people in various cultures still do that. It's like, you say one thing, but when you're meaning another thing, you wink, right? You're deceiving people.

He signals his feet, or more literally, he shuffles with his feet. The parallel in verse 18 describes feet that make haste to run to evil. So the shuffling feet is likely a reference to a busy body just restlessly nosing about plotting evil and stirring up the pot and meddling in other people's business.

Shuffling feet. He points with his finger, right? Mocking, ridiculing, caricaturing, and accusing, blaming all of the stems ultimately from the perverted heart, which devises evil, continually sowing discord.

And all of these body parts are used to show that this sower of discord instigates conflict and agitates crowd with his whole self.

He leverages everything he has to do this. He is a deceptive and destructive force in society, sowing misunderstanding, suspicion, hatred, and violence.

[34 : 29] He is the polar opposite of the wise man who minds his own business and attends to his God-given responsibilities and relations. The worthless man minds others' business, meddles in their affairs, their responsibilities, their relations, and the prevalence of such worthless men explain why our society is so fractured.

And we have to be careful not to follow in the path of the sower of discord, right? It's so easy nowadays when everything from law to even health seems partisan and politicized.

It's so easy to represent unfairly and uncharitably those whom we disagree with. It's so easy to wink with our eyes at our followers or friends, to point with our fingers, to pass blame, mock, even demonize the other.

It's so easy to devise evil in our hearts, seeking the ill or downfall of another person instead of seeking their good and speaking well of them.

Have you made a caustic or snarky comment that sows discord rather than peace? Have you shared an article or meme that is misleading because it contains only half the truth?

[35 : 55] We should always strive to represent those who disagree with us in the most honest and compelling way possible. That's what it means to follow Matthew chapter 7 verse 12.

Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. I think the vast influx of available knowledge to us through the internet seems to have made many of us, our knowledge, a mile wide but an inch deep.

We live in the shallows, as the Pulitzer Prize nominated author Nicholas Carr puts it. we have much knowledge but little wisdom. And as a result we have become slow to hear and quick to speak, quick to anger, rather than as James 1.19 says, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. If that's the case, brother and sister, we are in danger of becoming sowers of discord, men and women of worthlessness. So let's not get sucked into this and instead heed the warning of the father in verse 15.

Therefore, calamity will come upon him suddenly. In a moment, he will be broken beyond healing. The judgment predicted here is very similar to the sudden and violent poverty that comes upon the sluggard in verse 11.

[37 : 12] The sore of discord too will be overcome by calamity suddenly and he will be broken beyond healing. So causing trouble spells trouble for the troublemaker.

The sore of discord will himself be broken. And to reinforce this teaching, the father reiterates the offenses of the sore of discord in verses 16 to 19 using many parallel body parts going from head to toe.

It says, 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.

And then he adds two more, a false witness who breathes out lies and one who sows discord among brothers. The use of ascending numbers going from six things that the Lord hates to seven that are an abomination to him is a poetic device, it's a rhetorical device that serves to escalate and emphasize what he's trying to say, that the Lord despises these things.

So they are an abomination to him. And the haughty eyes, a lying tongue and blood shedding hands, plotting heart, evil chasing feet, a lying witness and one who sows discord among brothers, they all have this in common, that they are all disruptive, that they are all anti-social behaviors.

[38 : 39] They claw out the thread of trust from the fabric of society so that it unravels into ugly chaos. they disrupt and destroy family relations that are precious to God.

And by bringing in the Lord in verse 16, in climactic fashion, the father gets to the heart of the matter in all of his advice. The reason why he warns us against being a surety, a sluggard, and a sore discord is not merely because it's harmful to ourselves, but even more importantly because these things are offensive to God.

they are sins against God and the order he has instituted in our world and the roles that he has assigned in particular to us. And so he's telling us that we are to mind our own business and attempt to responsibilities and relations God has given us.

Unfortunately, apart from Christ, we all have the perverted hearts that devise evil that this passage speaks of. Twice in verse 14 and verse 18, this passage describes the perverted heart that is at the root of wickedness.

Verse 14 says that the worthless man with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord. So people argue whether the adverb continually goes with sowing discord or devising evil, but if you follow the punctuation that was provided by the Jewish scribes and scholars in the 10th century, the adverb actually goes with devising evil.

[40 : 10] So it's saying that our perverted hearts are continually devising evil. That's what our perverted hearts are doing all the time. So it's actually corroborated by Genesis 6-5 when it says, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Our wicked hearts, perverted hearts are continually manufacturing evil. That's why the theologian and reformer John Calvin put it this way, man's nature is a perpetual factory of idols.

And what are we to do about this? I mean, this passage emphasizes taking responsibility for ourselves, right? Verse 3, verse 5 tells us, save yourself, save yourself from legal trouble, save yourself from economic ruin, save yourself, but there's one thing that we cannot save ourselves from and that is our own sinful hearts.

For that, we need a savior. Jesus, whose name means to save, to deliver, is described in scripture as the savior of the world, John 4, 42.

He is the one who fulfills the prophecy of Ezekiel 36, verse 25-26, when God promised to give us new hearts, because there's no hope for us with the perverted hearts.

[41 : 36] Only way that we can be saved, only way we can obey God and believe in him and be faithful to the responsibilities and relations he has given us is by receiving this new heart that God

promises on and that comes to us only through Jesus Christ, because Jesus cleanses us by dying for our sins on the cross, he's victorious in being raised from the dead and he fills us with his Holy Spirit by whom we are born again to new creation, with new hearts.

God does this for us while we are his enemies, as Romans 5 talks about it.

Look at the words that I use, he says, these are things, these things that we have all done are an abomination to God. That's a word that we don't use very often, is it?

I don't think I ever say that I abominate something. I mean, that's a pretty strong word, abominate something. Maybe the only thing I can think of abominating is maybe like a cockroach or something. It's just revolting. And that's what we were in our sins to God. This disgusting cockroach should have just squashed to death instead.

[42 : 55] That's what we deserved. We should have been punished. We should have been consigned to eternal damnation. We should have died. And yet God is merciful to us because He, at the same time, He has this wrath towards sinners.

He has this unparalleled love. So He makes a way for us to be saved from the wrath of God, from the sins that He abominates.

And that is through Jesus. And it's only through faith in Jesus that we learn truly to live with the wisdom of God that is taught in this book of Proverbs.

He has to live with the wisdom of God that is taught in this book of Proverbs.