

Proverbs 6:16-19

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The practical ramifications of wickedness run counter to God, His design for the world, and what is best for each human life.

These four verses in the middle of Proverbs 6 may seem like a parenthetical statement to highlight Solomon's major point—that wickedness is not in alignment with God and that this fact is a very big deal. Solomon turns to God's perspective on wickedness.

There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him (vs 16). This literary device of setting up a list of things and then adding one to it for emphasis is called a "middah." It is a way of garnering attention and is used throughout wisdom literature.

It is not the numbers (*six to seven*) that are emphasized in this passage, but the progression from *hates* to *abomination*. This list is meant to show that not only is the way of the wicked not beneficial to us, it is contrary to God's nature and approval. It is not just that He doesn't like it (*hates*); it is that He hates it because it is completely incompatible with His being (an *abomination*).

Which is why it is not best for us. God designed us in His image (Genesis 1:26). When we operate in a manner that is inconsistent with God's character, we operate outside our design. This will, inevitably, lead to frustration and loss.

The word translated *to Him* at the end of verse 16 is the Hebrew word "nephesh" and most literally means "soul" or "life." So these *six to seven things* Solomon will list are an *abomination to life*, vehemently incompatible with who God is as the designer of life and who we are as the recipient of the gift of life. *The Lord* (Yehovah, literally "The Existing One") is the source and substance of reality. These wicked practices are incompatible with the very Life that created life. A true *abomination*.

All of the first five of these wicked *things* are described using the human body. It reads as a sort of antithesis to the armor of God Paul talks about in Ephesians 6 that protects us from evil. From head to toe, *eyes to feet*, this abomination of listed behaviors consumes a whole person.

The list of six to seven evil things starts with *haughty eyes* (vs 17). Pride is often used as the opposite of humility. Humility is seeing things as they are. Pride is bending reality/perspective so that we make ourselves as god, the center of all things. Pride is also spoken of as the opposite of faith (Habakkuk 2:4). Faith in God's word leads us to see reality as it is, and supports us to walk in righteousness (consistent with God's design) (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). Pride can be thought of as faith in ourselves.

A person with *haughty eyes* looks at the world through a self-serving lens—how do I magnify myself? All the *haughty* man sees is viewed through the perspective of self-aggrandizement. The

haughty eyes blind a person from reality—that God is God, the fundamental truth of reality. Trying to function independently of God, His ways, and His design is the great sin of pride that turned Satan away from Heaven and Adam/Eve out of the garden (Isaiah 14:12-13).

Next in the list of wicked behaviors is *a lying tongue* (vs 17). Speaking the truth, communicating reality as it is, is fundamental to wise and beneficial living. Falsity is a poison and communicating falsity poisons both the sender and receiver. Jesus stated that He is truth (John 14:3). To speak the truth is to reflect our creator. To have a *lying tongue* is to warp and pervert God's design. Jesus also said that the truth sets us free (John 8:32) but a *lying tongue* is an agent of untruth and a servant of the devil (John 8:44).

The third *thing* the *Lord hates* is *hands that shed innocent blood* (vs 17). An act of violence. Stealing life and truth from a place in which God has placed it. This is clearly a violation of God's intention. It is like sneaking into His house and stealing something that belongs to Him.

God's design is for humans to live in harmony with one another, with Him and with nature. Violence is the opposite of God's design. God destroyed the world with Noah's flood because the world filled with violence (Genesis 6:11). He *hates* violence—it leads to the shedding of *innocent blood*—and God will judge all such behavior.

The fourth thing God detests is *a heart that devises wicked plans* (vs 18). In Proverbs (and elsewhere in Wisdom Literature), the *heart* is talked about as the center, the very core, of a person's being. It is where we choose a perspective and form intent. It is where we make decisions that lead to actions.

When that core of our being, our *heart*, our mind and will, is committed to wickedness, it acts by devising *wicked plans*. This is an *abomination* to God's design for life because it perverts our call to steward life, resources, and opportunities for good and instead does so for evil.

The last of the body part analogies is *feet that run rapidly to evil* (vs 18). This is a sin of practicality. This person *runs*, or hurries, toward *evil* because of the wicked plans they have hatched. Their corrupt heart becomes committed to evil, and expends energy and enthusiasm to commit wickedness. The implication is that wickedness becomes a reflex. They have developed such a pattern and appetite for wickedness that they rush to every opportunity to display it.

These five body part illustrations cover the entire physical structure of a person, from *eyes* to *feet*. And they include all of the most practical/functional parts of the body when it comes to relating to others and to the outside world.

The spiritual formation of our hearts affects our physical being, and ultimately determines our actions. This is why it is so vital for us to take thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Solomon's wisdom principles are a means by which we can choose a true perspective, one that is consistent with God and His creative design.

After this list, Solomon dives into two more markers of the wicked. *A false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers* (vs 19). These two specifically deal with the

way a wicked person spreads wickedness—the way he influences others around him. A *false witness* interrupts the process of justice and social harmony—what the Bible often calls “righteousness.” Righteousness is when all things work in harmony according to God’s design. A *false witness* perverts the truth and creates disunity.

One who *spreads strife among brothers* with their distorted statements disrupts the unity and cohesiveness with which we are intended to work together, like the New Testament image of The Body of Christ. *Strife* pits one person against another. The result is to divert the purpose from a shared mission, and cause each person to focus upon the priority of the disrupter. Thus, the *false witness* now controls the attention of his *brothers*, and focuses their energies upon himself. Perhaps this feeds his pride, but it disrupts God’s creative design. A family of *brothers* should work in unity toward a shared purpose.

All of these things in the list of wicked behaviors are *things the Lord hates*. They are an *abomination* to His existence, His life/soul. They are zoomed-in, practical symptoms of someone who is on the path of wickedness, which is contrary to good, to reality, and to truth. All that God is and all that He desires for us is good. He desires us to work in harmony and mutual benefit. That is why the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). When we follow God’s commands, the result is benefit to all. When we follow our own ways, it inevitably leads to disruption and exploitation.

Biblical Text

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Yes, seven which 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 run rapidly to evil,**

**¹⁹ A false witness who utters lies,
And one who spreads strife among brothers.**