

Dangerous Words and Sinful Actions

Proverbs 6:1-19

Proverbs 6:1-5 - *“My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth. You are taken by the words of your mouth.*

So do this, my son, and deliver yourself, for you have come into the hand of your friend. Go and humble yourself. Plead with your friend. Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.”

Background Notes

The overall outline of Proverbs is “Precepts of Wisdom” in chapters 1-9, and “Proverbs of Wisdom” in chapters 10-31. In Proverbs 6, we continue with the Precepts of Wisdom. Do you remember the three precepts of wisdom?

- 1 - Revere God,
- 2 - Respect authority
- 3 - Resist temptation.

In reference to #3, Resist temptation, we usually tend to think that the precept refers to sexual temptation - and that certainly is one big area (as we’ve seen already). But there are other areas of life where we are vulnerable to temptation, and we need to be warned, lest we be deceived and ensnared before we realize our mistake.

Three of those danger areas are discussed in the first half of Proverbs 6. All of them are potential danger areas for the believer - the danger area of “surety,” the danger area of laziness, and the danger area of deception.

Doctrinal Points

1. A wise believer avoids “surety.”

What is “surety” (v1-5)? It’s not “security.” “Surety” is a formal pledge or guarantee that one makes to secure a lender against financial loss (as when you co-sign for a loan). Be warned! This is a dangerous area that can lead to big problems in your life. Suppose you co-sign a loan for a good friend, but then he or she defaults and can’t pay back the loan. You’re left with the responsibility to pay off your friend’s debt. In fact, by co-signing, you may have encouraged the borrower to buy what he or she would be better off without! And it’s very likely your friendship will end in frustration and anger.

Does this mean you should you never co-sign for a loan? What about co-signing for a son or a daughter, or a close relative, or a trusted fellow believer? Think it over carefully. What if that trusted friend loses his job, becomes too ill to work – or even dies? In most cases it would be better to counsel the person to save up for the purchase. Perhaps you could give your son or daughter a financial gift rather than getting involved in a (potentially) problem loan.

Some Christians believe that the example of Paul and Onesimus sanctions a loan, but that's not what the Scripture says. In his generosity, Paul told Philemon that he would pay Onesimus's past debts - but Paul did not co-sign for a loan, or give a pledge to Philemon that he would pay for any of Onesimus's possible future debts.

Remember, in the book of Proverbs is giving us **wise counsel**. Avoiding surety is not one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shall not co-sign for a loan"! No, but **it's wise counsel!** The way of wisdom would be to avoid co-signing onto anything that puts you at high financial risk. (We're not talking about \$20 loans where little risk is involved!)

Notice the context of this warning (v1-5). The counsel includes advice about what to do if you have foolishly co-signed for someone, but now you realize it was a mistake. You realize you are at considerable financial risk! What's the wise counsel? Do whatever it takes to get out of the binding contract, if at all possible - even if it means giving or loaning some upfront money to your friend. Get your name off the contract! Don't wait! Don't "sleep on it" (v4)! Get out of the potential trap before you are ensnared (v5). A wise believer avoids surety.

2. A wise believer avoids laziness.

Proverbs 6:6-11 - *"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise. The ant, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.*

How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep - so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man."

This section of Scripture is given as a warning, because most of us are vulnerable in the danger area of laziness. The Bible doesn't teach us to be workaholics - that's for sure. But for most of us, overwork is not a problem. A little coffee break stretches into an hour-long siesta! I used to tell my students to read these verses before they decided to sleep in and skip early classes. Some of them didn't take my advice, and sure enough - at exam time their "poverty" (lack of class time) came in like an armed thief, robbing them of a good grade.

We all need to observe the ant. Have you ever seen the see-through "ant farms" to observe the ants? Our grandchildren had a couple of them. It's totally fascinating to watch ants at work. There are no lazy ants. They work with purpose, and they work together for the good of the colony. It's a great object lesson for all of us – working together for the benefit of our local church or ministry! A wise believer avoids laziness.

3. A wise believer avoids deception.

Proverbs 6:12-15 - *"A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a corrupt mouth. He winks maliciously with his eyes; he shuffles his feet; he motions with his fingers. Perversity is in his heart; he plots evil continually. He sows discord and stirs up conflict. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly. Suddenly he shall be broken without remedy."*

Be warned! Don't be deceived by "con artists," such as false teachers in the church or on "Christian" TV. They wear righteous "masks," but they're "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Acts 20:28-31). Their smiles, words and gestures are a clever deception. They easily convince you of new and progressive teaching for the church, but their heart is not right. Their evil agendas can spread strife and division in the church – and ruin in your life.

God calls these deceivers "wicked" and "worthless." The word "worthless" or "scoundrel" (v12) is literally "man of *belial*" in Hebrew. Eventually the word "*belial*" came to be used as a name for the devil. So be careful! We may think that we're immune to deception, but con artists are very shrewd. The best way to avoid the deception of false teachers in the church is to **know the Word of God!**

There is a prophetic implication in these verses about the false "messiah" who will come in the last days. The anti-Christ of the end times will deceive many unsuspecting people.

The good news is in verse 15: *"Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly. Suddenly he shall be broken without remedy."* God has ways of suddenly breaking these wicked people and removing them for good. This is true now, and it will be true of God's dealing with the anti-Christ of the end times. *"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"* (Revelation 19:20).

So we have the good news that the wicked and worthless scoundrel will be cut down - but they can cause a lot of havoc and sorrow before their time is up. Be warned! Don't be taken in by smooth-talking deceivers. And gain discernment by knowing the Word! A wise believer avoids deception.

Practical Applications

1. Keep the balance of Scripture in mind.

In the first half of Proverbs 6 we've seen the three potential danger areas for the believer - areas where we're vulnerable that we should be careful to avoid: the danger area of surety, the danger area of laziness, and the danger area of deception.

However, in avoiding these danger areas, we could make the mistake of going too far in the other direction, and that would be unbiblical. Keep the balance of Scripture in mind. In avoiding the danger area of surety, we could go to the extreme of becoming stingy hoarders. That would be wrong. The Bible encourages us to be generous and help those who are truly in need. So we must keep the balance of Scripture in mind, and properly balance between generosity and good stewardship.

In avoiding the danger area of laziness, to keep the balance of Scripture in mind we should remember that we need rest. We can't burn the candle at both ends. God gave mankind the Sabbath as a weekly day of rest - but the other six days are not days of rest! We must balance properly between work and rest. We are not to be lazy, but we must get the rest we need.

In avoiding the danger area of deception, we must be careful that we don't go to the extreme of being overly critical, and not trusting anyone. We need to trust our fellow believers, but we also need to be aware that even Christians can be deceptive. So what's the answer? Keep the balance of scripture in mind!

2. Don't be a strife spreader!

Proverbs 6:16-19 – *“These six things the LORD hates. Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”*

In Proverbs 6 we see that God **hates** the spreading conflict and strife. A “strife-spreader” is the opposite of a peacemaker. In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.”*

The phrase, “Six things the Lord hates, yes, seven” is not an exhaustive list, but the final item is stressed as the culmination of the previous items. In other words, God not only hates pride and the other first six items that are mentioned, but He really hates the stirring up of discord, strife, and dissension among brethren. (I bet you never thought this sin would be on the same category as murder – *“the hands that shed innocent blood”!*)

Many examples could be given of believers who spread strife and stir up dissension in the local church. For example, a believer who always complains and has a bad attitude creates constant conflict. The believer who is never satisfied with church services and programs, but wants things to be run only in his or her way – this causes dissension. And a believer who isn't willing to help out with a positive attitude could certainly cause friction among fellow-believers in a local church.

The Lord is very displeased with a person and an attitude that causes strife and conflict. He detests it. In fact, He **hates** it (v16). So don't be a strife-spreader!