

PROVERBS 6: 16-23

¹⁶ There are six things that the LORD hates,
seven that are an abomination to God:

¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that hurry to run to evil,

¹⁹ a lying witness who testifies falsely,
and one who sows discord in a family.

²⁰ My child, keep your father's commandment,
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

²¹ Bind them upon your heart always;
tie them around your neck.

²² When you walk, they will lead you;
when you lie down, they will watch over you;
and when you awake, they will talk with you.

²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light.

There are two parts to this passage:

Part 1 – 16-19. Once again, let us understand how words are used much more effectively not in their literalness, but in their metaphorical pointedness. God “hates” behaviours, not people, and behaviours that cause harm to oneself and others. This is because God is invested in us and our welfare. God is not aloof. To love others and oneself and to love deeply means we are affected deeply by all that harms life.

So what are those things that God especially “hates”? They all circle around each other and involve the heart, the mind and practical words and actions. And what is especially troubling to God (and should be to us) is not harmful things done by accident, unintentionally or out of ignorance. No. The worst things are those harms committed with intention. God is especially troubled by such. Why? Because it is much easier to bring someone to repentance and change when they have done something harmful because of ignorance or reactively by impulse, defensiveness or hurt. But once the hate and maliciousness wraps around the heart and one seeks to do harm to another with intention, it is very difficult to change. God will not give up, ever. But God is especially troubled by it as should we be.

Part 2 – 20-23. It is good fortune to have parental figures in our lives who teach us what integrity and good values rooted in love and respect are about. Like other passages we've already read, this passage pairs different words together conveying similar principles to emphasize the same message. A father's commandment and a mother's teaching are such a

pairing, as are how the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light. Together, they also form a solid foundation for us. They are constantly with us not just as words or ideas, but as living principles that continue to adapt their meaning and shape us in how they can apply to every specific situation in which we find ourselves. They “watch” over us, “talk” to us and “lead” us if we keep them “bound” to our heart and carry them with us always.

Of course, this is relevant to those of us who can be grateful for having such parental figures in our lives. For others of us this is not the case as either by absence, neglect or abuse, parental figures have not served us well. And so, we need to seek out others to take their place in providing good teaching and principles for our living based on love. Who are those teachers, mentors, elders and wise guides who have helped form you? May we all find such so that we have their teachings, commandments and wisdom living deep within us, especially as we seek out light to navigate our way in a world where there is much darkness.

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for those wise guides, mentors and teachers in our lives. And thank you if these include our parents. We recognize the gift we have in all this, and we recognize your hand in all this too. May we continue to lean into the teachings and rules we’ve been taught and may they help shine a light for us when the complexity, confusion and struggles of life make it hard for us to see a way through that is clear, just and loving. In Jesus’ name; Amen.