

Proverbs 6 - Wisdom Admonitions, Danger of Adultery

I. Chapter Overview

A. 2 sections

1. v.1-19 - Wisdom Admonitions
 - a. General admonitions concerning loans, laziness, and lying
 - b. An insertion
 - 1) v.1-19 Seems out of place
 - 2) It interrupts the discourse about the danger of adultery
 - 3) Its place in the flow of the discourse serves to show that the adulterous is not the only danger in life
2. v.20-35 - The Danger of Adultery
 - a. Return to the discourse about adultery
 - b. A reflection of the outcome

B. The main thrust of this chapter is to stay away from being trapped

1. Trapped by debt (6:2)
2. Trapped by laziness (6:11)
3. Trapped by lying (6:15)
4. Trapped by adultery (6:35)

II. v.1-5 - Get out of debt quickly

A. Translation

1. My son, if you pledge to your fellow¹
(if) you become collateral² to the stranger³
2. (If) you have been baited⁴ in the utterances of your mouth,
(if) you have been caught in the utterances of your mouth
3. Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself
for you have come into the palm⁵ of your fellow
Go! Trample yourself down!⁶ And pressure⁷ your fellow

¹ רֵעַ *rēa*^c - Friend, companion, neighbor. In a weaker sense: Fellow, fellow-citizen, or even merely, another person

² תָּקַע *tāqa*^c - To thrust, strike, clap, give a blow, blast. The striking or clapping of hands was a gesture of ratifying a bargain or deal, specifically of pledging oneself to be collateral on a deal. The second phrase is literally, "If you clap to the stranger your hands." I have chose to interpret this as, "to become collateral" since "clap your hands" would not communicate the sense of the phrase.

³ זָר *zār* - strange, different, prohibited, alien. Same word used for the "alien" or "strange" woman

⁴ יָקַשׁ *yāqaš* (niphil) - To be caught by bait, ensnared

⁵ כַּף *kaḥ* - Palm of the hand. In Hebrew, this is often a symbol for power.

⁶ רָפַס *rāḥas* - (hiphil) - To stamp oneself down, figurative for humbling oneself.

⁷ רָהַב *rāhab* - To act stormily, boisterously, or arrogantly. In this case, the idea is to insistently and forcefully press, storm against, or ask the friend

4. Do not give sleep to your eyes and slumber to your eyelids
5. Deliver yourself like a gazelle⁸ from the hand
and like a bird from the hand of the trapper⁹

B. Images for the pledge or collateral

1. Baited and caught
 - a. Jas 4:2-3 - You desire¹⁰ and do not have...because it is with selfish motives
 - 1) Selfish desire will lead only to emptiness
 - 2) Greed is the bait which leads to enslavement to sin
 - b. 1 Tim 6:17-18
 - 1) The uncertainty of riches
 - 2) Be rich in good works
 - 3) Be ready to share
2. Caught by the utterances of your mouth
 - a. Prov 12:13 - The evil man is ensnared by his lips
 - b. Prov 18:7 - The fool is snared by his lips
 - c. Prov 20:25 - Speaking rashly causes one to get trapped
 - d. 1 Tim 6:9 - The desire for riches lead to a trap
3. In the palm of the hand of the creditor
 - a. Hand, palm, and arm are often symbols for strength in Hebrew
 - b. Idea is to be under the power or authority of the creditor

C. Image for the creditor - Trapper

1. The word for trapper is actually a "fowler," a hunter of birds
2. The idea is of one looking for someone to trap
3. This image has already been used in Proverbs 1:17-18
 - a. In 1:17-18 - It was used for the greedy wicked who robbed from others and got stuck in their own trap
 - b. Here it is used for those who offer themselves as collateral who get stuck in a trap
 - 1) The common theme beside the imagery of the trap between chapter one and this may be greed
 - 2) Greed can trap someone whether they try to fill it through wickedness or simply through foolishness

D. Exhortation

1. There is nothing about "avoiding" debt
2. This is about avoiding becoming collateral for someone, which can lead

⁸ Idea of swiftness

⁹ שׂוֹקֵץ *yāqūš* - bait layer, fowler, one who catches birds

¹⁰ ἐπιθυμία *epithumia* - Desire. Some translations render this "lust" which is unfortunate because this desire is not necessarily a sexual one. Some examples are Luke 22:15; 1 Thess 2:17; Phil 1:23; and 1 Tim 3:1.

to loss of property, or of freedom due to being pressed into slavery

- a. 1 Cor 7:21-23 - Do not become the slaves of men
 - 1) If you can become free do it
 - 2) Coupled with this proverb, the message is to do it quickly
 - 3) Not being slaves to men, we are freed to serve and love
 - b. Rom 13:8 - The only ongoing debt we should have is to love
 - c. Luke 6:35 - Instruction against greed and selflessness
3. The idea, then, is to pay your debts in a timely manner, avoid greed

III. v.6-11 - Avoid being trapped by laziness

A. Translation

6. Go to (the) ant, O lazy¹¹ one,
see its ways and be wise!
7. It who has no chief¹² officer¹³, and governor¹⁴
8. It prepares¹⁵ in the summer its bread
It gathers at the harvest its food.
9. Until when O lazy one will you lay down?¹⁶
(until) when will you arise from your sleep?
10. A little sleep. A little slumber. A little clasp of the hands to lie down
11. And your poverty comes in like a traveler¹⁷
and your need like a man of a shield¹⁸

B. Lessons from the ant

1. Wisdom is not about raw intelligence
 - a. Can learn wisdom even from an ant
 - b. Contrast
 - 1) In the harvest, the ant has what it needs
 - 2) The lazy person has nothing
 - 3) Who is more wise, a dumb ant or the lazy person?
2. Wisdom characteristics of the ant
 - a. It is not lazy: It works hard in the summer
 - b. It is motivated: It doesn't need a supervisor watching over its shoulder to ensure it stays on task
3. Warnings
 - a. Sleep and rest have their place, but not when there is work to be

¹¹ עָשֵׁל *‘ašēl* - sluggish, lazy, as a substantive: sluggard, lazy person

¹² קָצִין *qāšīn* - Chief, commander (in war), ruler, dictator

¹³ שֹׁטֵר *šoṭēr* - Official, organizer (as in a scribe, or secretary), military subordinate officer

¹⁴ מַשָּׁל *māšal* - participle: Ruler, one who has dominion over

¹⁵ כּוּן *kūn* - Hiphil: To make firm, establish, make ready, prepare, arrange

¹⁶ שָׁכַב *šākab* - To lie down, or lodge (for the night), figurative: to rest

¹⁷ הָלַךְ *hālak* - To go, come, walk. Form: כְּמֹהֵלֵךְ - "Like a traveler/vagabond?"

¹⁸ כְּאִישׁ מִגֶּן *k’iš māgēn* - Lit: "Like a man of a shield" - An armed man

done

- b. Laziness will invite poverty to come and live with you
 - 1) Like a traveler
 - a) A stranger will come to stay when you don't want him to, and his name is poverty and want
 - b) You will think he came uninvited, but laziness is the welcome mat for him
 - 2) Like a shielded man
 - a) Most translation say "armed man"
 - b) Idea of not being able to fight off poverty
 - c) If you wait till then, it will be too late

C. Lessons

- 1. Laziness and Loans are related
 - a. Getting a loan can be the result of laziness
 - b. Better to work a little harder and buy what you need with cash
 - c. Many things you think you "need" you really don't, so wait
- 2. Laziness is contrary to God's wisdom: Mankind's purpose is to work
 - a. Gen 2:15 - Work was part of God's design from the beginning
 - 1) Man was created to be the "keeper" of the garden
 - 2) Man had a job even before sin corrupted the world
 - b. Rev 7:15; 22:3- Serve God in eternity
 - 1) After death, there is no just sitting around on a cloud
 - 2) Will serve God for all eternity
 - 3) This "work" will not seem like "work:"
 - c. The "curse" of work
 - 1) Gen 3:17-19 - Cursed is the ground
 - a) Not work itself, but the "type" of work
 - b) Curse involved hard labor
 - 2) Rev 14:13 - That they may rest from the "labors"¹⁹
 - a) This is not "work"²⁰ but "labor" we will rest from
 - b) Work is activity, labor is hardship type work
 - 3) Rev 22:3 - No longer any curse
 - a) Not only will there be no more death, but
 - b) The "curse" of labor will be gone
 - c) Work will no longer be by sweat, blood, and tears
 - d) Work will be very joyful, from which no "rest" will be needed
 - c. The "rest" promised is rest from "labor" not "work"
 - 1) Nothing is more fulfilling and exhilarating than fulfilling your purpose
 - 2) Our purpose from the beginning was to serve God
- 3. 2 Thess 3:10-12 - Laziness in the church

¹⁹ κόπος *kopos* - Hard work, labor, hardship, trouble.

²⁰ ἔργον *ergon* - Work, deed, action

- a. Those who will not work do not get help
- b. Christians are to work and eat their own bread, and not mooch off of others when they have the ability to work

IV. v. 12-19 - Avoid Lying and sins of the tongue

A. Translation

12. A person of worthlessness,²¹ A man of iniquity,
He who walks with crookedness of mouth,
13. (he) who squints²² his eyes,
who scrapes²³ with his feet,
who rebels²⁴ with his forefinger
14. Perversity is in his heart,
(he) who devises evil at all times
He sends out strife²⁵
15. Therefore, calamity will come upon him suddenly
quickly he will be broken and without healing
16. Six things are they Yahweh hates,
and seven abominations²⁶ to his soul²⁷
17. Eyes that are high²⁸
A tongue of falsehood
And hands that pour out the blood of the innocent
18. A heart that devises a plan of iniquity
Feet that hurry to run to the evil
19. A witness of deception who blows out²⁹ lies
He who sends strife³⁰ between brothers

B. The anatomy of wickedness

1. The section begins and ends with sins of the tongue, sins of the tongue seem to be connected to other sins
 - a. The section includes several body parts
 - b. The net effect is the spreading of contention and strife
2. Things that Yahweh hates
 - a. Abomination to his soul

²¹ בְּלִיַּעַל *b^elīyā^cal* - Worthlessness, ruin, destruction man of ruin, destroyer

²² קָרַץ *qāraṣ* - To press together, to pinch, to bite (with the lips), to wink,

²³ מָלַל *mālal* - To speak, scrape, cut, cut off, circumcise. The interpretation of this phrase is difficult.

²⁴ מָרָה *mārāh* - To rebel, quarrel, dispute, despise

²⁵ מָדוֹן *mādôn* - strife, contention

²⁶ תּוֹעֵבָה *tô^cēbāh* - abomination, physically repugnant, objectionable, detestable

²⁷ נֶפֶשׁ *nepeš* - soul, person, self, desire, emotion

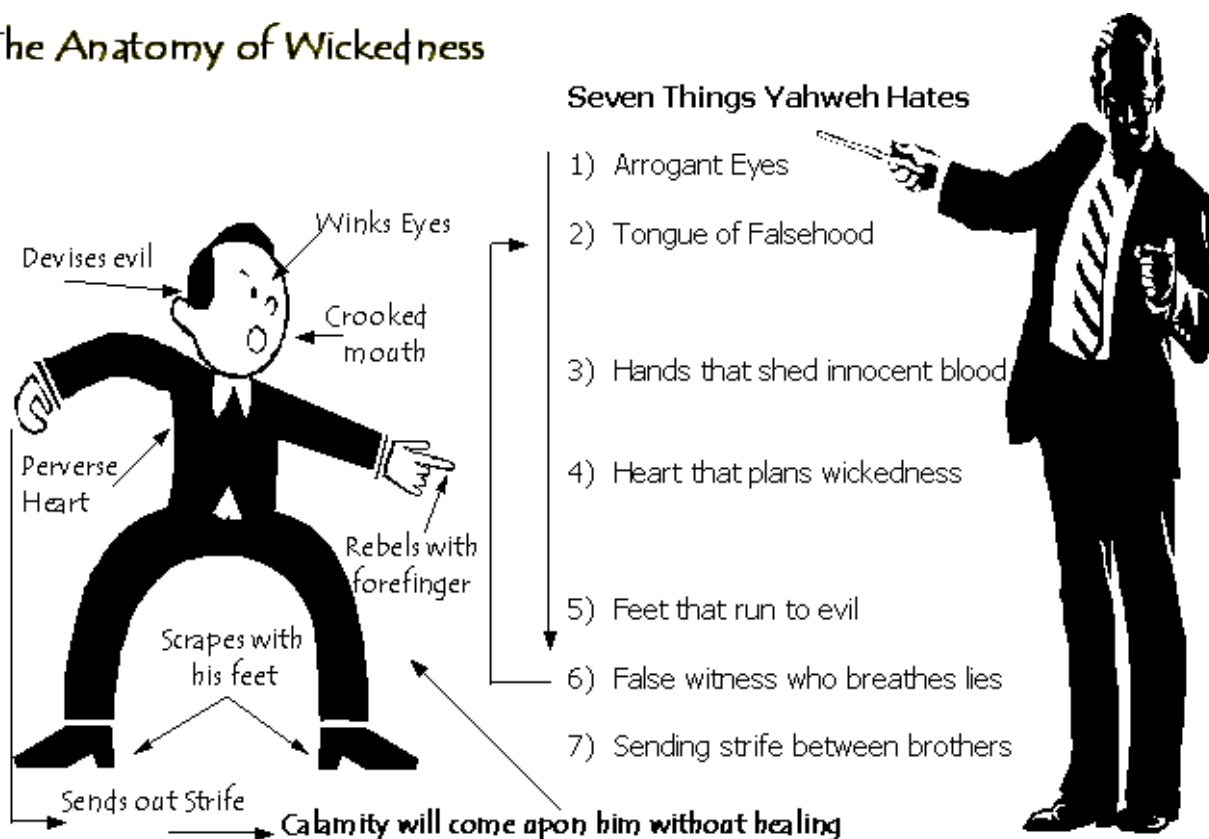
²⁸ רוּם *rûm* - To be high, exalted, lifted up

²⁹ פִּוּחַ *pûah* - (Hiphil) To breathe out, blow out (as in blowing a horn), speak harshly

³⁰ מָדוֹן *mādôn* - strife, contention

- 1) Abomination means he detests it
- 2) Abomination to his soul means that he detests them to the core of his being
- b. Progression, starts from the top and goes down
 - 1) Begins with the eyes
 - 2) Goes to the feet
 - 3) Returns to the mouth again
3. The result - Calamity will come upon him suddenly

The Anatomy of Wickedness



C. What is involved in wickedness:

1. Eyes
 - a. Squint eyes, or wink at sin - Overlooks sin in his life
 - b. Arrogant - Thinking nothing will happen, he won't get caught
2. Mouth
 - a. Crooked mouth - Not consistent with lying or truthfulness
 - b. Tongue of falsehood, lies
 - c. False witness, likely for his own benefit, whether to get out of trouble or for gain of some sort
3. Hands
 - a. Rebels with his forefinger
 - 1) He is contentious

- 2) Always ready to point the finger at others, but not himself, whom he "winks" at when it come to wrong
 - b. Hands that shed innocent blood
 - 1) Out of the many sins in the Bible, this is the one that God often responds most violently to
 - 2) Dt 19:10-13 - Innocent blood was to be avenged
 - 3) Ps 106:38-42 - Innocent blood caused exile & oppression
 - 4) Matt 24:7 - Judas' remorse over innocent blood
 - 4. Heart
 - a. Perverse heart, perverted, crooked heart
 - b. Devises plans that are evil
 - c. In Hebrew thought, the heart was the seat of the intellect, not the seat of emotion as we think of it³¹
 - 1) His mind is always on making wicked plans
 - 2) He is about making plans that will benefit him at the expense of righteousness
 - 5. Feet
 - a. Scrapes with his feet
 - 1) Alternate translations
 - a) Speaks with his feet
 - b) Cuts off with his feet
 - 2) The interpretation is difficult
 - 3) Feet are at times a euphemism for genitalia, so this could have something to do with sexual sin or with pride
 - b. Run to the evil
 - 1) The person is drawn and attracted to evil things
 - 2) However, according to 1:17-18, it is a trap
 - 6. Over all - He sends out strife
- D. Response to the wicked anatomy - Surgery or "wickedotomy" It is good yo reflect on the following passages in relation to the list above
- 1. For the eye - Matt 5:28; Mark 9:47
 - 2. For the mouth - Jas 3:2-12
 - 3. For the hands - Eph 4:28
 - 4. For the heart - Matt 15:17-20; Jas 4:8
 - 5. For the feet - Heb 12:13; Eph 6:15
 - 6. For sending strife
 - a. Matt 5:9
 - b. Rom 14:17
 - c. Eph 4:1-3

³¹ Robert North, "Medical Discoveries of Biblical Times," In *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, edited by Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stager, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 311-332. In his research, North points out that none of the 850 occurrences of heart in the Hebrew Bible refers to the organ that pumps blood. References to the heart "are clearly identified as the organs of cognition and control. Biblical Hebrew had no word for 'brain,' and the functions of knowledge and will were linked with what we call 'emotions,' the heightening of which is observable in the increase not only of the heart-beat but also of breathing ('lungs' is likewise a word absent in biblical Hebrew)..."

- E. This person is perverse in heart, he is rotten to the core
1. What is the solution? Is it the law?
 2. Rom 7:8-12 - The law can't free you from sin
 - a. Sin uses the law to kill you
 - b. Law merely names the sin, it doesn't prevent sin
 3. Titus 3:5 - Washing of rebirth, and renewal by the Spirit
 - a. Rom 6:1-6 - Old man is laid to death
 - b. Become a new, renewed person
 - c. Rom 6:7 - Become "free" from sin

V. v.20-35 - The Danger of Adultery

A. Translation

20. Guard, my son, the commandment of your father
And do not forsake the instruction of your mother
21. Bind them upon your heart continually
Tie them upon your neck
22. In your traversing, it will guide you
In your lying down, it will keep watch over you
And when you awake it itself will talk³² to you
23. For a lamp is the commandment
and instruction³³ is light
and the way of life are the reproofs of discipline
24. To guard you from the wife of a neighbor³⁴
From the smoothness of the tongue of the strange woman³⁵
25. Do not desire her beauty in your heart
And do not let her capture you with her eyelids
26. For the price of a woman of harlotry is just a round loaf of bread
But the wife of a husband hunts a precious soul
27. Can a man snatch up fire in his bosom and his garments
without being burned?
28. If a man walks about upon coals of fire
would his feet not be scorched?
29. Thus is he who goes in to the wife of his neighbor
He shall not be free from punishment for all the touching of her
30. They do not despise the thief when he steals to fill his soul
because he is hungry

³² שִׁיחַ *šīah* - To muse, meditate, mumble, murmur, talk

³³ תּוֹרָה *tôrāh* - Instruction, law

³⁴ The phrase, מֵאִשָּׁת רֵעִי "from the evil woman" without the Masoretic pointing - מֵאִשָּׁת רֵעִי could be rendered, from the wife of a friend" taking רֵעִי *rē'î* to be רֵעִי *rē'î* "friend, fellow, neighbor, another person" rather than רָע *rā'î* "evil, bad." Apparently the NRSV has done exactly this, "from the wife of another." Friend, neighbor, or another person seems to fit the context better.

³⁵ נֹכְרִי *noḵrî* - Alien, foreign, unfamiliar

31. And he is found, he will recompense seven fold
all the wealth of his house he will give
32. He who commits adultery with a wife lacks heart
Destroying his soul is he who does it
33. A striking³⁶ and dishonor will he find
And his disgrace will not be wiped out
34. For jealousy is the rage of a man³⁷
And he will not have compassion in the day of vengeance
35. He will not take the presence of any ransom
and he will not consent though it is a large bribe

B. Introductory phrase

1. Begins with "guard!" rather than "my son" to emphasize its importance
2. They are to be in the heart, or mind, continually
3. It will guide and guard at all times in every situation
4. It is light and life, it will help you to recognize and avoid danger

C. The parent's instruction will protect from the wife of a neighbor

1. v.24 There are two possible renderings of verse 24
 - a. The wife of a neighbor (NRSV, RSV)
 - b. The wife/woman of evil (ASV, NASB, KJV)
 - c. Wife of a neighbor seems to fit the context better
2. The danger of a neighbor's wife is more subtle
 - a. It may go unnoticed by all around you
 - b. She may not seem "evil" in the sense of a prostitute
 - c. If it is the wife of a friend, she would be around a lot, and adultery can happen under everyone's nose
3. v.24 Parallel phrase to "wife of a neighbor" is "strange woman"
 - a. Probably not a foreigner or alien
 - b. She is strange in the sense that she belongs elsewhere, and not with you
 - c. The word, "stranger" or "alien" is instructive, since God instructed Israel to avoid foreigners, and foreigners eventually became a snare for the people, especially in the book of Judges
4. v.25 Description of this woman
 - a. Smooth tongue - When she speaks, it is soothing, attractive
 - b. Beautiful
 - c. Attractive eyelids - Beautiful eyes that can captivate
 - d. Problem: She belongs elsewhere
 - e. Do not desire her in your "heart." In other words, do not think about her all the time

³⁶ נָגַע *neḡā*^c - Stroke, plague, mark, plague-spot, wound.

³⁷ גִּבּוֹר *geber* - Man as in a strong man or warrior. Not אָדָם *'ādām* man/human, or זָכָר *zākār* man/male, or אִישׁ *'iš* man/husband.

D. You will suffer if you go in to the wife of a neighbor

1. v.26 - Contrast between a neighbor's wife and a harlot
 - a. A harlot's price is bread, but a neighbor's wife's price is your soul
 - 1) In Hebrew, soul simply means, "self"³⁸
 - 2) The possibilities of how this could play out are endless
 - a) The neighbor's wife can start controlling you
 - b) She can blackmail you
 - c) She can make you do something you wouldn't normally do
 - d) She may want to be more than the "other woman" and demand you leave your wife
 - 3) The ultimate loss for a Christian is eternal damnation
 - b. This is not meant to condone harlotry, but merely to serve as a lesson in great consequence of adultery
2. v.27 Image of being burned
 - a. Another person's wife is like fire
 - b. If you touch fire, you will be burned
3. v.30 Comparison of the one who steals a wife and one who steals food
 - a. One does not despise the thief who steals to stay alive
 - 1) He still has to pay back seven fold if caught
 - 2) He will have to pay back with all he has
 - b. The same logic does not hold for one who steals for love
 - 1) No mercy to the one starving for another man's wife
 - 2) "I was hungry for her" will not illicit compassion
4. v.32 One who commits adultery with another man's wife is stupid
 - a. He destroys his "soul," he ruins his life
 - b. v.33 He will find blows and fists, he will get beat up
 - c. v.33 He will be disgraced, and it will not go away
 - 1) Will lose honor of Family, friends, and children
 - 2) A black eye from a cheated husband is disgraceful
 - 3) He has demonstrated he is not trustworthy

E. Description of the cheated husband

1. v. 34 - He will be enraged by jealousy
 - a. There will be a day of "vengeance"
 - b. When he catches up with you, there will be no compassion
 - c. v.35 You will not be able to appease him or buy him off
2. v.34 - Does not use the normal word for "man" or "husband,"
 - a. The word here means "strong man" or even "warrior"
 - b. Idea is that he has risen up and will pursue you in his fury

³⁸ נַפְשׁוֹ *nepeš* - soul, person, self, or nearly, "inner self," in the sense of emotions, but not in the dualistic Greek sense. Hebrews did not conceive of man being made up of two distinct parts, soul and body, as Greeks did.

F. Some further warnings

1. Matt 5:27-30
 - a. If you look and desire in your heart, adultery has already happened
 - b. This hyperbole demonstrates that adultery is not just a matter of fornication, but a matter of the heart

2. James 1:14-16
 - a. Death begins with desire that captivates you
 - b. The warning is "Do not be deceived"
 - 1) There are many traps that do not look like traps
 - 2) Stay away from the traps

3. Sin begins with just a look
 - a. Sometimes the trap is nothing more than a look
 - b. Be vigilant and aware of where the fire is and don't play with it

4. Some possible ways to inoculate
 - a. Warnings and instructions
 - b. Going through hypothetical scenarios
 - This will help to decide ahead of time how to react when tempted so you are not caught of guard trying to decide what to do because you have already decided what to do.
 - c. Having rules, boundaries and limits
 - d. Having an accountability partner
 - e. Most importantly - A healthy prayer life
 - 1) Be aware that God is a constant presence in your life
 - 2) Be sensitive to his lead and guiding in all areas of life at all times
 - 3) Commune with, or be in a posture of prayer always, he is right there with you

Discussion Questions for Proverbs 6

(v.1-19)

1. Verse 1-19 seem to interrupt the flow of the discourse that comes before and after it. What, if anything, do these verse have to do with the instructions before and after it?
2. Is this a prohibition against all loans? What is the underlying problem(s) with the kind of loan this passage is talking about?
3. What does the ant have to do with instructions about loans and collateral? What can you learn for yourself in your present situation from the ant?
4. Reflect on the anatomy of the wicked. How many of these characteristics may not seem "all that bad" or even "mundane" by our culture's standards? By way of contrast, what is God's view of them?
5. If a man is perverse in heart, what is the solution for him? How can he be any different if he is rotten to the core?
6. What changes do you need to make in your life right now?

(v.20-35)

7. What is the instruction of the parent designed to do?
8. What does the image of the neighbor's spouse as "fire" communicate to you?
9. Why would someone have more compassion for one who steals food than for one who steals a spouse?
10. In what ways will you suffer if you commit adultery with another person's spouse?
11. What is the best way to guard against being captivated and committing adultery?
12. Where does prayer fit into this?