

WHO IS A NAUGHTY PERSON? – Proverbs 6:12-19

INTRODUCTION – The word “naughty” could mean “disobedient”; “mischievous”; “improper”; “evil” or “wicked.” These definitions are taken from the English Dictionary. Based upon the Hebrew word, the best meaning for the word “naughty” as used by the KJV translators is “evil” or “wicked.” The Hebrew word for “naughty” is “beliya’al.” This is often translated as Belial when it is used as a noun in certain contexts. Literally, the word means “worthless” or “useless.” It is true that the wicked or evil person is also disobedient to God’s Word but the emphasis here is on the characteristics and results of his evil rather than the reason for his disobedience. The behaviour of the person is the focus in these verses of Proverbs. The word “Belial” became the name of Satan in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Our lives do impact the people around us or who come into contact with us through the internet or telephone. This is the way God has made mankind. Some impact more lives than others because of their positions and what they do in life. This conscious and at times unconscious impact can have tremendous results. Others can be hurt and destroyed or enhanced and blessed. This impact comes more so from believers than unbelievers. Believers are expected to live holy and godly lives and to be a blessing to others. This is what God saves them to do as His witnesses. They are to show the world what Christ has done in their lives by the way they live. However, when they live naughty lives, the negative impact is devastating. Not a few unbelievers who witnessed the naughty lives of believers, or rather professing believers, have declared that they would rather die in their sins than be like these so-called Christians. Unbelievers have been stumbled and many lives even ruined because professing believers in positions like pastors and elders lived naughty lives!

This life that God has given to all of us is meant to impact the lives of others for Christ. The life of every believer is to bring glory to God by the way he lives. The warning from Proverbs that a believer cannot be a naughty person is very clear as we shall discover.

I. His Naughtiness EXPOSED – 6:12-14

The naughty person is a worthless person. This must not refer to a true believer because with his new nature, the believer is a person full of worth. His life can impact a sinner for Christ unto eternity. His hands are spiritual because he is spiritual. He can simply give someone a cup of cold water and will receive his reward! However, this naughty person is a son of Belial. He is characterised by worthlessness. This “worthlessness” is not with reference to his IQ or ability to make a living or run a multi-million dollar company. He can be very smart in the ways of the world and might even have post-graduate degrees. This “worthlessness” is with reference to his character and spirituality. He is steeped in sin and his heart is characterized by sins. Hence, he is also described as a wicked man. The word “wicked” refers to one who exerts a great deal with empty results. He works hard in his evil and at the end of his labour the result is one of destruction and ruination. There are no fruits in what he does. He may write thousands of words but after reading his writings, the reader is left with confusion of heart and a bad taste in his mouth. The glory of God is alien to his deeds and words. His motives are evil and his deeds may have the appearance of goodness but the spiritually discerning will see through his wickedness and acts of Belial.

The deeds of the naughty person are described by way of his body language:

- a. **His mouth (v 12b).** The naughty “walketh with a forward mouth.” The Bible deliberately describes the mouth to be walking. This is a personification to highlight how rapidly the mouth of the naughty person can damage lives. The naughty person remains in one place.

However, his words continue on from one person to the next. It is as if he is still doing the talking even though others are doing the talking for him. If they were good words to encourage, it is a blessing and he would not be called a naughty person. But his words cannot be good because he is characterized by worthlessness. Every word he speaks has a hidden agenda to harm others and benefit self.

The Bible describes his words as “froward.” The meaning of “froward” is “perverse” or “crooked.” It comes from the verb that means “to distort”. The truth is distorted to suit his own ends. Truths become lies and lies become truths. Facts are doctored and distorted. Lies are spun in order to deceive and to lead others astray. The naughty person uses his silky smooth tongue to sweet talk the gullible and undiscerning. He may appear to be a Christian and can talk like a Christian, but he is not. Jesus warned His disciples and He is warning us today that he is a ravening wolf inwardly. **Matthew 7:15** (KJV) says, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*

- b. His eyes (v 13a).** The naughty person “winketh with his eyes.” The word for “winketh” means “to blink the eyes as a gesture of malice.” The eyes are the windows to our souls. They can reveal the person's soul, whether he is telling the truth or a lie. It is done in stealth because the wink of his eyes is a silent motion. This phrase reveals that a naughty person is insincere and full of deceit. He cannot be trusted. He breaks covenant and does not intend to keep his word. A cheeky person winks his eye at another person instead of talking. He seems to send a message of mischief; usually, there is nothing good in such an action. The hidden message is in his wink.

It is a coded secret between two persons with the intention to hurt, cheat or even kill. For example, persons A and B are talking to each other. After speaking with person B innocuously, person A conspicuously winks at person C, signalling to him that it is but a ruse to deceive and cheat.

- c. His feet (v 13b).** The naughty person “speaketh with his feet.” How does a person speak with his feet? This seems to be an impossible action, as the Bible describes it! Yet the phrase very aptly describes the naughty person. The feet have a language unique to themselves. They do not speak but the message is loud. The mouth may say certain things but the feet speak another voice that contradicts. The feet possess a quality that is unique. They can be used to be seductive as well as to inflict pain.

In movies, we often see someone kicking another person when they are seated at a table to stop the person from saying certain things? We also watch the feet being used to seduce, under the table, even as everything above the table seems to be calm and normal. The deception or seduction by the feet sends a carnal message of lust and sin by a simple caress, nudge or kick. A kick is more potent than a punch with the hand. A caress has the aim to seduce. Both the hard and the soft language of the feet are deadly!

- d. His fingers (v 13c).** The naughty person “teacheth with his fingers.” This has nothing to do with a person reading Braille or doing sign language with his fingers. The context is one of sin and deceit. The word “teach” refers to “one who points out by aiming his finger.” The naughty person uses his fingers to send messages that would contradict what he says with his lips. The artful ways of communication with the fingers are more potent and sophisticated

than the feet. Secret codes and signals are transmitted with the fingers. The baseball team's coach uses finger signs throughout the game to communicate with the players on the field! As does the catcher with the pitcher. Strategies are sent by way of pre-coded signs that the players alone understand.

The naughty person uses his fingers to maximum effect. Pre-coded signs are made with his co-conspirators to cheat and deceive the innocent and unsuspecting. His victims gullibly succumb to his ploy and are snared in his web of deceit. A person who speaks with his fingers crossed is an example of a naughty person. He has no intention of keeping any promise he makes! The word of the naughty person is never his bond. Magicians are prime examples of a naughty person. Their sleight of hand is to distract in order to perform the "magic". Attention is drawn away from the actual direction where the trick is done. The fingers are trained to distract. They are nimble and constantly moving throughout the performance. The naughty person has such hands.

- e. **His heart (v 14a).** Frowardness is in the heart of the naughty person. The literal meaning of the word "frowardness" is "perversity." The naughty person has a perverse heart. His heart is corrupt and has no power or ability to do what is good and pure and right. This is why the true believer cannot be a naughty person! The true believer has a heart of flesh filled with goodness and purity, for he loves things of this nature. But the naughty person has a perverse heart that seeks to do only perverse deeds to ruin and destroy lives. The heart is like the bottom of a well. If it is poisonous, the water drawn up will also be poisonous. The actions and words of the naughty person are poisonous because his heart is full of poison. He cannot tell the truth even if he wants to because he is incapable of it! He cannot love that which is pure because he loves all that is crooked, evil, and perverse, like his heart! The condition of the heart controls everyone. The naughty person uses the five bodily parts to devise mischief (i.e. evil). The word "devise" means "to engrave or plough." The naughty person deliberately engraves evil everywhere he goes. He does this continually. He is bent on ploughing out evil to ruin lives and destroy relationships. He works hard at this all his waking moments. One of his mischiefs is to sow discord. The word "discord" means "to create strife." The true believer's salvation begins with the heart. It is ALWAYS from inside out. A person cannot sow something without thinking and without intention. Sowing is an act of the will and wisely devised. There is a purpose and plan behind every sowing. The sower desires to receive a bumper harvest when his sowing has borne fruits. But the naughty person sows discord. His desire is to reap ruined lives and relationships.

With a new heart from the LORD, the believer's actions, words, conduct, even his whole lifestyle, are completely transformed into holiness and goodness. His outside reflects what he is inside, the new man in Christ Jesus! But the naughty person is not so. He schemes and works very hard to destroy lives by sowing discord. He is like a farmer who wakes labours from before the rising sun to the setting sun in order to reap what he sows. He knows that the more he sows, the more he will reap. So does the naughty person, who labours like the farmer. The more discord he sows, the more ruined lives he reaps!

II. His Naughtiness PUNISHED – 6:15

What awaits him is his just reward from the LORD. There is no escape for all naughty persons. God says that their calamity or ruin will come. The ruin here would be measured in terms of the present and the future life. In some instances, if the LORD shows mercy to them, He will punish

them while they are still alive. Then they might wake up to their grievous sins, repent, and turn to Christ and receive Him as their LORD and Saviour. The ruination would include loss of property, loved ones, health and other painful adversities that ought to shake them out of their drunken stupor of sinful deeds. They can still believe in Christ as long as life remains in their mortal bodies. However, if God does not show mercy to them and allows them to die in their sins, then the end is the depths of Hell where they will remain till the day of God's White Throne Judgement. Then they will be released from Hell and sentenced to the Lake of Fire where they will spend eternity in the greatest of torment. They may think that they have won and gotten the victory because they escaped the justice of man and the long arm of the law. But they are foolish to be so myopic in their perspective of life and not to see the present in view of eternity.

The calamity will come suddenly and swiftly. When the naughty person least expects it, it happens and it is in the sovereign hand of God almighty. God asks and seeks permission from no man or any creature. He does what He pleases and when He pleases! He is sovereign over these naughty persons and there is absolutely nothing they can do about it. They might not acknowledge God's sovereignty and continue to reject His omnipresence, and try their best to "will" Him into extinction, but they have as much chance as an ant desiring to reach the moon by climbing Mount Everest! God uses synonymous parallelism to declare that "suddenly shall he be broken without remedy." The word "broken" means "to be broken into pieces or thoroughly destroyed." The naughty person can never win! He will always and surely lose everything, including his own soul! There is no help for him when that day comes. He has no one to blame but himself, for he alone did everything wilfully. The word "remedy" means "cure or deliverance or reprieve." The certainty of his sad end is emphasized here!

III. His Naughtiness HATED – 6:16-19

This section does not seem to refer to the naughty person but when we study the list mentioned in these verses (vv 16-19), we will see that it does. The contrast between the previous section and here is that the former describes the naughty person's deeds and this section describes the LORD's hatred of these deeds. The word "hate" is a strong word, with the emphasis on the person who is expressing the hatred. In other words, it is a personal hatred. God personally hates these six things, with the seventh thing being the emphasis! When the seventh is added, the word "abomination" is used. The focus is significantly shifted to the things in verses 17-19, which exactly represent the deeds of the naughty person. The word "abomination" has the idea of something that God "abhors and finds extremely disgusting." How can the LORD allow the deeds that He hates so much and considers as extremely disgusting to go unpunished? The word "abomination" is often used in the Bible to describe idolatry. This means that God ranks and classifies these seven sins with the sin of idolatry.

- a. **The first is the eyes (v 17a).** "A proud look" is the first of the seven things that God hates. The word "proud" has the root meaning of "being high." He is haughty and thinks very highly of himself. He is arrogant and very conceited. His looks reveal his pride and haughtiness. He thinks that he is above or cleverer than everyone around him. He does not have to say a word because his looks tell it all. He struts like a peacock with his feathers spread, and without speaking a word, he tells the world that there is no one better than him! He sits like a king. He walks like a conqueror.
- b. **The second is the tongue (vv 17b, 19a).** The LORD hates a lying tongue. Satan is called the father of lies (John 8:44). Lying is what the naughty person does with every part of his body. There is absolutely no truth in him like his father the devil. To be characterised as a liar is no

small sin. The Bible does not refer to a true believer who sometimes lies and repents sincerely from his heart after his sin is pointed out to him. The naughty person makes lying part of his way of life and he feels no real or genuine repentance. He makes up stories at will and with great sincerity. He is definitely not a believer. The closing chapters of the Book of Revelation list the people who will have no part in the kingdom of God in the new heaven and earth. Instead, their part is in the Lake of Fire! Every professing believer must take note of this. **Revelation 21:8 (KJV)**, *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

The sixth thing is similar to the second as it pertains to the tongue. The difference is that the sixth thing describes the person, “a false witness that speaketh lies.”

- c. **The third is the hands (v 17c).** The LORD hates bloody hands. The Bible is not against capital punishment. The Bible is also not against killing in battle. King David killed many, and Abraham did, too, when he rescued Lot in Genesis 14. But the bloody hands refer to those who kill innocent blood. The word “innocent” means “blameless.” The victims may be guiltless against the naughty person but he kills them anyway. They may have obstructed his way of success. He removes them by force, including murder. These naughty persons kill to gain either properties, countries, gold, silver, precious metals, jewels and wealth. They do not limit themselves to the tangibles. They will also kill to gain the intangibles such as positions of power and influence. Character assassination is also part of “bloody hands.” Killing the soul and reputation of the innocent might even be worse than killing the body, like a living hell.
- d. **The fourth is the heart (v 18a).** The LORD hates a wicked heart. “An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations” (**machashabah**). The exact same word “deviseth” also appears in verse 14. It is to engrave something with care and deliberation. In this instance, the heart carefully carves wicked imaginations, i.e. inventions or contrivance. Mischievous iniquities characterise these mental inventions. The mind is a reservoir of ideas that has no bottom. It allows for all sorts of imaginations. But when it is used for wicked imaginations, it is deadly because of its bottomless nature. There is no limit to the kinds of imagination these naughty persons can devise. A perfect example to describe this would be the LORD’s description of the people in the days of Noah before the Flood. **Genesis 6:5 (KJV)**, *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts (**machashabah**) of his heart was only evil continually.”* The thoughts of the heart are not known to man until these thoughts turn into actions. However, the LORD knows the heart of the naughty person and His sovereign warning is that He hates such a heart!
- e. **The fifth is the feet (v 18b).** The LORD hates mischievous feet. The feet of the naughty person are swift in running to mischief. The word “swift” means to hurry or run. To add the word “running” to it emphasizes the swiftness and urgency of the naughty person to do evil. He cannot wait and is impatient when the evil is not done fast enough. The word “mischief” is the same word used in verse 14 which means evil. Just as bees are attracted to honey, the naughty person is attracted to evil. He stops all that he is doing and rushes like a man on fire to evil things and to do more evil.

The LORD hates the naughty person who does these things which are abomination to him. He hates the deeds of the naughty person as well as the naughty person. Verse 19 (the sixth and seventh things) is about the people, not the deeds.

IV. His Naughty LIPS – 16:27

Proverbs 16:27 describes another aspect of the naughty person. Here, the KJV translators translated the same word “belial” as ungodly. **Proverbs 16:27 (KJV)**, *“An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.”* This is a synthetic parallelism. The naughty man does not have any evil things to speak of so he digs them up. The word “dig” is “to bore or to open.” The naughty person deliberately and goes out of his way to dig up the dirt of others in order to ruin their lives. The Bible describes his lips as a burning fire, which is not a small little flame but a strong burning flame that cannot be put out. His intent is that the lives of his victims are burnt and reduced to ashes!

The KJV translators translated the word “belial” here as “ungodly” because it captures the nuance of the context in which the word is used in this verse. The fact is that his act is most ungodly. A godly person will never do something so hateful and evil like this naughty person. No truly born-again Christian would think to dig up the dirt in people’s lives and use it against them. Only the followers of Satan would do such an evil and wicked deed.

V. His Naughty ARROGANCE – 19:28

Proverbs 19:28 describes the naughty person as a man who is a law unto himself. He scorns judgement and eats up sin like someone consuming his food. **Proverbs 19:28 (KJV)**, *“An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.”* This is also a synthetic parallelism. The word “ungodly” means “belial.” It is translated as ungodly as in Proverbs 16:27 because of the context of the verse. To commit a sin is one thing, but when judgement is scorned it is another thing altogether. The naughty person is unrepentant and refuses to change his evil ways. He refuses to acknowledge that what he is doing is evil and sinful, therefore, he refuses to repent. To make matters even worse for himself, he scorns the judgement. The word “scorn” means “to make mouths at or to scoff.” It is as if he speaks an unintelligible language at the person who points his sin out to him. This attitude eventually condemns the naughty person to Hell because his scoffing hardens his heart. He enters into a state of judicial hardening where he is beyond redemption. This happened to Pharaoh in Moses’ time when the ten plagues of God did not penetrate into his hardened heart. He perished in his own pride and folly. This will also be the sad end of the naughty person.

We know this because of the second line of this parallelism. The Bible says that his mouth devours iniquity. The word “devours” means “to swallow.” He opens his mouth wide and, without chewing, just swallows what is put into his mouth; in this instance, it is iniquity. The meaning is that the naughty person devours iniquity like a man devours his food. He sins more and more with a ravenous appetite. He cannot be stopped and no judgement will slow him down. The only time he stops is when he dies! His total disregard for judgement against his sin condemns him to a life of bondage in sin and death and ultimately Hell and then the Lake of Fire. This will be his lot in life unless he humbles himself and turns to Christ!

He cannot be a true believer because the Bible describes him as ungodly and wicked!

APPLICATION

The seventh thing is the main thrust of this list of seven things that the LORD hates and considers an abomination. The worst is the last on the list which is the one who sows discord! This is God’s charge against the naughty person in verse 14. The exact same words are used in these two verses! God hates such a person who sows discord because it destroys lives and relationships. The naughty person is not just a disobedient person but a destructive person. His heart is thoroughly evil and haughty. He scoffs at the judgements of God and digs up evil even when evil is not found. He is bent

on evil to destroy lives. The naughty person cannot be a true believer of Jesus Christ even if he says that he is one. Beware of the naughty person and make sure that we are not such a person! Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you a person more inclined to giving praise or criticism? Is it true that most Singaporeans are stingy with their praises and liberal with their fault-finding? Which category do you belong to? Are all unbelievers naughty persons? Are all true believers godly persons?
2. Have you ever winked with your eye or eyes before? Have you ever “talked” with your feet or “taught” with your fingers? Do you mean what you say and say what you mean all the time? Please explain your answers.
3. Do you always want the best for your family? Do you know what is best for your family? Do you want the best for your schoolmates or your colleagues in the office? Do you know what is best for your friend?
4. Is it enough for a believer to not do evil but, at the same time, not do what is right and good? What if doing what is right, such as sharing the gospel, means making your friend angry? Would you still do it? Would you lie in school or work because your friend or colleague asked you to protect him from being punished? If you witness your friend in school or colleague in the office doing something wrong, would you tell your boss?
5. If someone shared with you a certain true sin that an elder has committed, would you keep quiet or confront the elder? Has the person who shared with you just sown discord between you and the elder? If the thing shared is truthful, would it be considered sowing discord? Is it just telling lies that is considered sowing discord?