

**What God Hates, Christians Must Reject:
A Biblical Call to Guard the Unity of Christ's Church
Proverbs 6:16–19**

Olaf Standley

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“There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers” (Proverbs 6:16–19, ESV). These are strong words. Scripture does not merely say that God dislikes these things or considers them unwise. They are things that the Lord **hates**. The final sin named should especially arrest the attention of Christians everywhere: “one who sows discord among brothers.” God loves His people, and therefore He takes seriously anything that unnecessarily tears His people apart. Whether division appears within a local church, among Christian friends, between families, or among believers more broadly, Christians must never treat gossip, bitterness, slander, and factionalism as minor matters. What God hates, His people must learn to hate as well.

The language of “sowing” is significant. A farmer does not reap a harvest the moment the seed enters the ground. He plants something small, and over time it grows into something much larger. Discord often works the same way. Serious division rarely begins with someone publicly declaring an intention to divide Christians. It may begin with a complaint quietly repeated, an offense that is never addressed biblically, an assumption about another person's motives, or a conversation that should never have taken place. Someone says, “I probably shouldn't tell you this, but...” and another seed is planted. James warns us, *“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!”* (James 3:5, ESV). Small sparks can produce devastating fires, and small seeds of discord can eventually produce deep divisions among the people of God.

Every Christian must examine his or her own heart before examining everyone else's behavior. Proverbs 6 begins its list with “haughty eyes.” Pride and division frequently walk together because pride makes us more concerned with being proven right than with honoring Jesus. Pride whispers, “I deserve to be heard. I deserve to get my way. I cannot believe they treated me this way”. Scripture gives us another way: *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves”* (Philippians 2:3, ESV). Humility does not mean ignoring truth or pretending sin does not matter. It means that even when disagreements must be addressed, Christians approach one another as sinners saved by grace rather than as judges standing above their brothers and sisters.

Proverbs also warns against *“a lying tongue”* and *“a false witness who breathes out lies.”* Division grows quickly when truth is handled carelessly. We can bear false witness without inventing an entire story. We can repeat something we have not verified. We can leave out facts that would change another person's understanding of a situation. We can present assumptions as though they were established facts. We can confidently describe another person's motives even though only God knows the heart. Scripture commands, *“Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another”* (Ephesians 4:25, ESV). Because Christians belong to one another in Christ, truthfulness is essential to healthy Christian fellowship.

This means gossip must never become the normal way believers handle conflict. If a brother or sister has sinned against us, Jesus has given us instructions: *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone”* (Matthew 18:15, ESV). Notice the direction Jesus gives us. He does not say, “Go tell several other people what your brother did.” He says, **go to your brother**. Biblical love moves toward the person with whom we have a problem rather than gathering people to our side. Before speaking about another Christian, we should ask ourselves: Have I spoken to this person? Am I trying to restore a brother or sister, or am I trying to recruit others to my opinion?

There is an important difference between seeking biblical counsel and spreading discord. Christians sometimes need wise counsel from mature believers, and serious sin may need to be brought to appropriate church leadership. Scripture provides for such situations. But seeking help is different from campaigning for agreement. The person seeking biblical counsel wants to know, How can I honor Christ in this situation? The person sowing discord often wants to hear, You are right, and they are wrong. Proverbs warns, *“Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends”* (Proverbs 17:9, ESV). Repeating a matter unnecessarily can transform a private disagreement into a much larger conflict.

At the same time, Christian unity does not mean pretending that sin or false doctrine does not exist. Biblical unity is never purchased by sacrificing biblical truth. Paul commanded believers to be *“eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Ephesians 4:3, ESV), but the same apostle repeatedly confronted false doctrine and serious sin. Christian unity is, therefore, not peace at any price. Believers must stand firm where Scripture speaks clearly. We must also be careful not to elevate our preferences, personalities, traditions, political opinions, or personal judgments to the authority of Scripture. Some matters demand conviction; others demand patience and charity. Biblical wisdom knows the difference.

When disagreements arise over matters where Scripture allows Christian liberty, Romans 14 gives believers crucial instruction: *“As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions”* (Romans 14:1, ESV). Later Paul says, *“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding”* (Romans 14:19, ESV). Christians can inflict tremendous damage upon one another when personal preferences become tests of faithfulness. We should always ask whether the issue troubling us is truly a matter of biblical obedience or simply something about which faithful Christians may disagree. Where God has spoken, we must obey. Where God has allowed liberty, we must be very cautious about binding another Christian's conscience.

Protecting Christian unity is the responsibility of every believer. It is not enough to simply refuse to start gossip; Christians should refuse to provide fertile soil for it. When someone begins speaking destructively about another believer, a loving response may simply be, Have you spoken with that person about this? If not, we should encourage them to do so. Proverbs says, *“For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases”* (Proverbs 26:20, ESV). Gossip cannot travel far if Christians lovingly refuse to carry it. Imagine what would happen in churches, families, friendships, ministries, and Christian communities if every believer determined before God: Division will stop with me.

Christians must also learn to forgive. The church is made up of redeemed sinners, which means that even sincere believers will sometimes disappoint, misunderstand, offend, and sin against one another. Our model is the forgiveness we have received from Jesus: *“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive”* (Colossians 3:13, ESV). The gospel leaves no room for cherished bitterness. A Christian standing at the foot of the cross cannot consistently say, Jesus may forgive me, but I refuse to forgive you. Forgiveness does not declare sin insignificant; it declares the grace of Jesus greater.

Our unity is ultimately rooted not in our personalities, ages, cultures, backgrounds, preferences, or traditions, but in Jesus. Paul writes, *“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13, ESV). Jesus did not merely save isolated individuals; He gathered a people for Himself. Every true believer belongs to Jesus and therefore belongs to His people. Before we tear down another Christian with our words, we should remember that we are speaking about someone for whom Jesus died. The believer whom we are tempted to criticize, slander, or treat as an enemy may be a brother or sister with whom we will worship Jesus for all eternity.

This is why Christian division is also a gospel issue. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for His people *“that they may all be one,”* and He connected that unity to the world's recognition of His mission (John 17:21, ESV). Earlier He told His disciples, *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35, ESV). Christians who profess the gospel while devouring one another through gossip, bitterness, suspicion, and factions contradict with their behavior the reconciliation they proclaim with their mouths. But when believers disagree and still love one another, forgive one another, speak truthfully to one another, and remain committed to one another, the transforming power of the gospel becomes visible.

Perhaps, then, Proverbs 6:16–19 should lead every Christian to personal examination rather than suspicion of others. Instead of asking first, Who is causing division? we should ask, Lord, am I contributing to it? Have my words produced peace or suspicion? Have I repeated things that I should have kept private? Have I assumed motives that I cannot know? Have I refused to forgive? Have I spoken about someone when I should have spoken to them? Scripture commands, *“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice”* (Ephesians 4:31, ESV). Repentance may sometimes require more than silently asking God for forgiveness. It may require going to someone we have wounded, confessing our sin, asking forgiveness, correcting something false that we have said, and seeking reconciliation.

Ultimately, the answer to Christian division is not simply trying harder to get along. Our hope is the gospel of Jesus. At the cross, Jesus reconciles sinners to God the Father and creates a reconciled people. Paul writes that Jesus *“is our peace”* (Ephesians 2:14, ESV). Therefore, Christians must continually return to Him. When pride rises, remember Jesus' humility. When bitterness rises, remember Jesus' forgiveness. When we are tempted to gossip, remember the gracious words Jesus has prayed over guilty sinners like us. When disagreements come,

remember that the love of Jesus is more important than winning an argument. And when genuine sin occurs, pursue truth, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration according to God's Word.

We must not wait until small disagreements become deep divisions. Proverbs 6 warns us while the seeds are still small. Let us uproot pride, refuse gossip, reject slander, speak truth, forgive offenses, address problems biblically, and “*pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding*” (Romans 14:19, ESV). Let us refuse to participate in what God says He hates: “*one who sows discord among brothers.*” Instead, by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, may we guard the unity Jesus purchased with His own blood and show a divided world that there is a people whose allegiance to Jesus Christ is greater than the differences that might otherwise tear them apart.