

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

06.23.2024 | Wisdom for Our Money | Proverbs 10:4; 11:4, 24-25; 13:23; 19:17; 30:8-9
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And if you have a Bible this morning, I want to invite you to turn with me to the book of Proverbs chapter 10. Whether you want to use a Bible that's in the pew or the chair in front of you, or use a Bible that you brought, or one that's on your phone, Proverbs chapter 10 is where we're going to be. We've been walking through the book of Proverbs for the last couple of months or so. This is actually our second to last week in the book of Proverbs. And we haven't studied the book exhaustively or covered everything that Proverbs has to teach us, but we have gotten a good understanding of the wisdom of God, about how we come to obtain wisdom from God, but also how his wisdom applies to different areas of our lives. We've been looking at different interpersonal relationships that God calls us to and the wisdom that Proverbs has for those areas of life. But we've also seen personally different areas of our lives where God's word has wisdom for us. And so today we're going to consider the wisdom that Proverbs has for our money.

The resources, the wealth, the finances, the possessions that God gives to us, how are we supposed to use them? What is the wise way to view and to use the money that we have in this world? And so we're going to read from a few different places in the book of Proverbs, kind of as we've done recently as we're covering a topic, we'll be moving around throughout the book, but they'll be up on the screen or you can also follow along as you read in the word. Starting in Proverbs chapter 10, in Proverbs 10 verse four, it says that a slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Now if you go to the next chapter, Proverbs chapter 11, verse four says, riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. And then just a little bit later in that chapter, chapter 11 verses 24 and 25, it says, one gives freely yet grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched and one who waters will himself be watered. To go a couple of chapters later in Proverbs chapter 13, verse 23 says, the fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice. Then to fast forward a few chapters into chapter 19, Proverbs chapter 19 verse 17 says, whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord and he will repay him for his deed. And then lastly, Proverbs chapter 30, which is the second to last chapter of the book, it's a prayer, or part of it is a prayer, and we read from a portion of the prayer in verses eight and nine, remove far from me, falsehood and lying. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me. Lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

So what I want to do this morning is I want to help us to consider these various Proverbs and see what they have to give us for wisdom, for our money. You know, we've been studying the book of Proverbs, which is largely written by Solomon, who was king of Israel. One of the reasons you go to the book of Proverbs is because there's a lot of wisdom there. In fact, Solomon is often considered to be one of the wisest people who has ever lived. I mean, I'll just say, if anyone in six, 7,000 years is getting together and studying the things that I wrote, I would say you could consider me a wise person, right? I mean, that's what we're doing with Solomon. We are taking the things that he wrote thousands of years ago and we're still considering them today. Even people who don't really believe the Bible, being the maybe word of God, will often see the book of Proverbs as very helpful, as very wise. So we see that Solomon is very wise and the Bible tells us that Solomon came into his wisdom right before he became king of Israel. That as he was going to take the throne from his father, David, God came to Solomon, basically said, you can ask me for anything. What would you ask me for? And I will bless you with it. And Solomon said that he wanted wisdom. What he said was he needed to know how to govern the people of God rightly, how to rightly lead them as their king. He wanted to be able to discern right from wrong so that he could lead the people well. And what God said is that he was pleased with this request and so he gave Solomon wisdom to be able to lead the people. But he also said, because you did not ask for so many other things that one might be tempted to ask for, I am going to bless you with those things. And one of the things was riches. He said, you could have asked me for riches, but you didn't. And so I am actually going to bless you with lots and lots of riches. The kingdom of Israel, as a small nation, it became very wealthy under Solomon's rule. It's really hard to kind of gauge how much wealth Solomon had, but people who studied it and have tried to kind of convert it to today's amounts say that Solomon's net worth at one point might have been over \$2 trillion. \$2 trillion. So Solomon knows a thing or two about money. I mean, he's a wise person, but he also knows something about having lots and lots of money. In Proverbs, I think, it's probably more than what we just read, but throughout Proverbs, there are a number of places where he speaks about money, where he speaks about wealth and riches and the desire for it. And I think it gives us some wisdom

for money that I want us to consider today. So what you'll find is the way we kind of walk through this is there's really, maybe you'd see four steps to living wisely with the money or the things God blesses us with. And the first two, I think, are really more of kind of a mindset or a way of thinking about the wealth and the money that God gives us. And the second part would be really more of a call to kind of action or to do something. So kind of a four steps to, I think, living according to God's plan for wisdom with our money, with the first two being a bit how we think, and the second two being a bit more on how we act.

So the first one that I want to draw your attention to in a kind of a mindset that we need to have if we're going to follow God's wisdom for our money is that we need to be honest about the power of possessions. If we're going to be wise about the money and the possessions and the things that we have, we have to be honest about how powerful money and possessions and riches are. Now, it might seem like a strange point to begin with as I feel like a lot of people probably recognize that money is really powerful or possessions are really powerful. We talk about the almighty dollar, right? We talk about how influential money is and how much it impacts one's life. But I want to point out for the Proverbs that Proverbs not only speaks about how powerful money and possessions is in our world, I think it does speak to that in some ways, but I think more importantly, Proverbs and the rest of the Bible really try to make clear how powerful money and possessions are in our own lives. How much power money and possessions have over us. One of the things that I think we're often maybe not honest about is how easy it is for money or for the riches of this world to grip our hearts, to control our lives. But Proverbs is trying to help us to see that, to be honest with ourselves, that money and possessions are really powerful and it has a great power over us. Let me think about what Jesus said when he was teaching a sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said that you can't worship both God and money. You're really going to have to choose one master. You're either going to really hate one and love the other or love one and hate the other. He said you can't worship God and money. Now what's interesting is Jesus didn't say that about lots of things. He didn't make that point about lots of different issues of life or areas of life. He specifically addressed money because I think he knew how much money and earthly riches draw at us, how easy it is for the things of this world, for the money of this world to become an idol in our lives.

Recently I had the chance to take a trip to another part of the world where we were working with some of our global partners and we were at one part of the trip in a really big city. And this city had lots of different mosques that had Buddhist temples, that had Hindu temples. But the partner that we were working with there, he made a point to me, he said you know what? I often tell people as much worship might happen in these kind of different religious buildings, I think maybe the most worship that happens in our city happens in the many malls that populate our city. You have to understand people actually still go to the mall in this place, unlike maybe here in the Bay Area where it seems like maybe nobody's going to the mall anymore. There people are all still going to the mall. And his point was as much as other religions might draw people's worship or much as you know, Christianity church buildings might be a place of worship. There is this kind of consumeristic mindset that invades our whole world. That so many people rather than worshiping maybe a religious deity, actually worship money and the things that it can buy. The reason is, is because it is very powerful.

And I love this prayer that we have towards the end of the book of Proverbs. So in Proverbs chapter 30, I mentioned that most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon. Not all of them were. You'll see certain headings at times that tell you when a proverb is written by someone else. And in Proverbs chapter 30, we find a prayer from a man named Agar. We don't really know much about Agar's life. We find out a little bit the beginning of Proverbs 30. But we do see this prayer of his. And so we see this heart that he has. And in Proverbs chapter 30, verses eight and nine, he says, "Remove from me falsehood and lying." But then he says, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." "Simply feed me with the food that is needful for me." "Lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord?" "Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." It seems to me that Agar really understood the power of possessions and money. Because he says, "God, don't give me poverty, and also don't give me riches. Give me just exactly what I need." And the reason is, is because he knew how powerful money was. He knew that if he had riches, he said that there would be this temptation that I would deny God, and I would really be dependent just upon myself and not see my dependence upon him. You see, one of the things the Bible says is that when you have lots of money or possessions, it can really blind you to your true reality. But so many times, one of the most dangerous parts about having riches or wealth is that it blinds you to your true state. So many people who have a lot in this world, they think that they are kind of independent, because they don't depend upon anyone else, and so they can sometimes forget their dependence upon God. In fact, if you go to the book of Revelation,

in Revelation chapter two and three, there's these letters to these different churches. And the very last letter is written to a church in Laodicea. And Jesus says to this church that this was a church that seemed to be quite wealthy. They had plenty of clothing and food, and they had all their needs met. And he says the problem is, because they had all this material wealth, they were actually blind to their spiritual state. They didn't realize how poor they were. They didn't realize how broke they were. They didn't realize how destitute they were because they did not see themselves as dependent upon God. Edgar recognizes this, and he says, "If I have riches, I am going to be tempted "to forget my need for God." He recognized the power that possessions and money have. But he also recognized it on the other hand. He says, "If I was impoverished, "I know that I would be tempted to steal "and profane the name of my God."

You see, not having money and not having the things that you need in this world is a really tough place to be. The reason that I think money and possessions are so powerful is because we do need them in this world. You need money in order to survive. You need the things in this world in order to have what you need, to have the provisions that God has for you. And so he says, "I recognize that if I don't have "the money that I need, I'm going to be tempted "to go out and do things that would dishonor God." Now, notice that he's not excusing those actions. He says it would profane the name of God, but he is saying that there's a reason behind it, because I don't have what I need. Sometimes in this world, we see people who might be in poverty. They don't have the money or the things that they need, and sometimes they don't make good decisions. And the Bible doesn't say that those bad decisions are excused or that they're not sinful, but it does give context to it. That because money and possessions are so powerful, if you have a lot of them, they can cause you to forget about God, but if you don't have what you need, it would actually cause you to forsake God and his teachings.

See, we have to be honest about how powerful money and possessions are in our world, but we also have to be honest about how powerful they can be in our lives. Do we see that the way that the trappings and the riches of this world so often influence us and grip us? Do we see how often we make decisions based on our financial state? Now, the question I think a lot of people often come to is, well, how do I know what is poverty and what is riches? Like, how do I know I'm not just being maybe comfortable or let's just say middle class? How do I know I have too much? How do I know I don't have enough? Well, I think it's a really important question. One that's really difficult to answer probably depends on people's context, but I think maybe a more important question that I think Proverbs answers is to how do people come to the state of what they have? Rather than how much is too much or how little is too little, but rather how do people come to a place of having either a lot of wealth or maybe not enough wealth? Which is the second part that I think we have to kind of get in our mindset when we have wisdom for our money, is that we need to understand how powerful it is, but we also have to understand how complex it is. And so I would encourage you to consider the complexity of wealth. I think one of the things that Proverbs wants us to do, one of the things Solomon wants us to consider is to consider how complex it is that some people have lots of wealth and some people don't have much wealth at all or are in poverty.

You know, I've mentioned before that as we study the book of Proverbs, I think it's really important to not just have your view shaped by one proverb, but to see them as a whole. I think together as a collection, they are seeking to shape our view. And I think it's really important when you think about wealth and money and how people come to have the possessions that they have. But think about this, Proverbs chapter 10, verse four, is the first one that we read. It's one that we actually read last week and it says this, "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." A slack hand causes poverty. And in other words, people who don't work or might say are lazy, it will often lead to not having what you need, but the one who works hard, that is how they will have what they need. That's how they become rich. Now in general, this is probably pretty good advice. And when we talked about last week, the goodness of work, how God has called us to work, we see that there is a design that God has in the world that it is good for us to work for our provision. And so in general, I think this is good advice to not just not work and the problems that it can lead to and to be diligent in your work and the ways that God might bless you through it. But if you were to take this one proverb and you were to build your whole idea of how people come to have wealth, you'd probably just say, well, people who don't have a lot of money, it's because they don't work hard enough. And anybody who is rich is because they work really hard. But actually the Bible and Proverbs says more than just that. So go to Proverbs 13, verse 23 that we also read. Proverbs 13, 23 says this, "The fallow ground of the poor would yield much fruit, "but it is swept away through injustice." In other words, what that proverb is saying is that the poor have this ground that's not producing, it is fallow. And it says it would actually produce food or fruit, but the problem is it is swept away through injustice. So here the

person is not poor because of their own lack of effort, because they are lazy. They are poor, they are impoverished because of external circumstances.

See Proverbs is saying that there's sometimes people might be in a state of not having much in this world, not having a lot of wealth, not because of their own lack of efforts, but because of some injustice in the world. You see, this is a really important perspective to have the complexity of this, because I think a lot of times our world, our culture, will try to paint it much more simply. You'll find certain people in the world who are drawn more to a verse like Proverbs 10, four. And they'll say, you know, really, people have what they have because of the choices they make. People, they're either, they have lots or they don't have a lot because of right or wrong, wise or unwise choices, because they're either work hard or they're lazy. They'll use examples of someone who started without a dollar to their name and they were able to build a great business or empire and work their way up and they say, see, it's really up to the individual. But then you'll find other people in our culture that say, you know, it's really actually all about society and systems. People aren't in their state because of their own choices. It's systems of oppression. It's injustices. It's the way that certain people keep other certain people down. Proverbs actually says it's really more complex than that. That it's actually an individual responsibility, but it's also the responsibility of society. That yes, there are choices that each person has to make and each person's choices might lead to certain results in their own life, but there are also systems at work. There are cultures at work that is much more complex than we would often think about.

So what does all this complexity actually mean? Why would it be important to consider how complex it is, why certain people have wealth and other people don't have as much? Well, I think it's important for at least two reasons. What I think it's really important that you consider the complexity of wealth because at least in some way it tells you that what you have, you can't just take all the credit for. What I think considering the complexity of all this means is that what you have in terms of your possessions and your wealth and your finances, you can't simply take all the credit for. It'd be tempting to take the credit for the things that you have, wouldn't it? I mean, how many of you have worked really hard to maybe have what you have? How many of you started early on when you were maybe in high school to get good grades so you could get into a good college? How many of you worked hard at college and maybe even were willing to take on some student debt to get on the best career path? Maybe you've worked really hard as you've gotten into your career. You're willing to sacrifice certain things. You're willing to work long hours and to do without so that you could make advancements. It'd be tempting to look at your life and to say, you know what, I've earned what I have. I've worked hard at it. But the Bible would say it's actually more complex than that. I mean, the Bible's not saying that you haven't worked hard. That's what Proverbs is saying, that it is good to work, that God will often provide for us and bless us through our efforts and our work. The Bible's also saying that there's more to it than just that.

You didn't decide where you were born or when you were born. If you were born in another century, there's a good chance you wouldn't have had the opportunities that you had to kind of move up in the world. If you were born in a different part of the world to a different family, who knows how it would have changed your life? The more I travel, the more I get to see different things in the world, the more I recognize how different my life would be. If I would have just been born into a different family, to a different part of the world, you didn't choose what you're good at, what your giftings are, what your personality is. And the Bible's saying that all of this is more complex than just your good and hard efforts. Therefore, you can't look at the things that you have and say, well, I get all the credit for it. In fact, I know I called this wisdom for our money, but that's just kind of to fit the other titles that we've had to think about our work and our emotions. But really, I think the wisdom is that it's not our money. The wisdom comes when we realize that this is all of the providence of God. Anything that we have is given to us by God. That when we think about our money, we should really think about as his money that he has blessed us with, his resources that he has entrusted to us as stewards. And all this begins, I think, to take shape when we realize how complex all this is, and it's not just up to us.

I think the other thing that is really important when you consider how complex all this is, is that you recognize that you can't just say another person not having what they need, well, that's just their problem, and it has nothing to do with me. When you consider how complex wealth and money and all that is, you could not just say, well, somebody, they don't have enough, and so that's their fault. That's their problem. That has nothing to do with me. Now, listen, I don't think the Bible teaches that everybody needs to be exactly equal in terms of their earthly state or their finances. The Bible actually says that Jesus says himself, you'll always have the poor with you, people in need that you should care for. I don't think the Bible is saying that in this world, the goal is necessarily for everyone to have the same amount, but the

Bible is really clear that God cares for the poor and for the oppressed. In fact, in the Old Testament, when the book of Proverbs was written, as God set up the nation of Israel, he made certain laws in the nation that said this is the way you are to care for those who are sojourners or the orphan and the widow. This is the way that you are to provide for those who don't have what they need. See, to talk about injustice here in this verse in Proverbs, back in those days, injustice didn't just mean taking away from someone what didn't belong to you. It also meant not giving to someone what you were supposed to. See, the book of Proverbs is helping us to see that we as people together, we are to care for each other, that the wealth that people have or the money that people have, it's not that we are always guilty or that we should always feel bad about what people don't have, but there is a responsibility that we have to work together in terms of caring for those who are in need. So you see, there's this mindset that we have to have as we approach finances and money, earthly possessions. We have to see that they are really powerful, that they so often grip our lives, they also so often influence the way that we live our lives. We also must see that there's really complex as to why certain people have money and why certain people don't. That's more than just a simple view about either systems of oppression or individual responsibility, but it's really complex.

So what does all this lead us to? I think there's two kind of action steps that Proverbs would have us take when it comes to our money. And we'll see that these aren't just limited to Proverbs, but to the Bible as a whole. So one, I think is that we must trust in what is truly valuable. One of the things I think Solomon is trying to help us to see as someone who was ridiculously wealthy, someone who had way more money than any of us would ever even dream of having, he wants us to be able to trust in what actually matters and what's truly valuable. Because money is so powerful in our world, because it becomes so powerful so often in our lives, there is this draw that we have to trust in our financial state, to trust in what is in our bank account or what kind of possessions we have. The Proverbs is helping us to see that's not actually what really matters. That's not what is truly valuable. So Proverbs 11, verse four, Solomon reminds us, "Riches do not profit "in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." Solomon says, "As someone who has a lot of money, "I could tell you that there's going to come a day "when you stand before God and the riches that you have "don't actually matter. "The riches don't matter, what counts is the righteousness." See, the Bible never says I think that is really wrong to have money. In fact, the Bible would say that a lot of times God might bless us with material possessions. Sometimes it can be okay for us to have money. I mean, we live in a really expensive city. One of the hardest things about our family moving to San Francisco was just how expensive everything is. I mean, for people to live in this city, to be in this city, as I think God calls us to be, it will cost money. It will mean that we often have to pursue money in terms of where we work. There's nothing wrong, I think, with earning a good salary. There's nothing wrong with taking a raise or having money. I think what Proverbs and the rest of the Bible is trying to help us to see is don't place your faith in that. Guard yourself from trusting in the riches of this world, in the money in your bank account. Trust in what truly matters. Proverbs says here, "What truly matters "is righteousness before God."

Some people at times people will ask, "Well, how do I know if I'm trusting in my money?" It does cost a lot to live in this city. It does, I do have to spend money to just be here or do things that I want to do in life. How do I know if I'm trusting in my money? Well, I think there's a couple of diagnostics we could look at to say, how do we know whether or not we are placing our trust in what's truly valuable or in earthly treasures? One of the things that I think would point out if we are trusting in our money is, if whether or not our worries or our stress or our anxiety really rise and falls with our money. Does your stress level, does your anxiety rise and fall with the amount of money that you have? I think that is probably one sign that you might be trusting in the things of this world. In the New Testament, as Jesus is teaching, he often warns about being anxious about the things that you are aware, the things that you will eat. He is talking about being worried about the things of this world. And he says, do not seek the treasures of this earth, seek God in his kingdom and trust that all these things will be added to you. Some people, I think, maybe live with a great deal of anxiety about how much they have in their savings or in retirement or how their investments are doing. And it's a sign that they might be putting their trust in the wrong place. But don't you know, in Luke chapter 12, just before Jesus talks about not being anxious about the things of this world, he actually tells a parable about a rich man. And when he tells this parable about this rich man, he says that this man has this great crop and he has lots of basically money, if you will. And he says that the man then begins to relax. He begins to take it easy.

I think he's showing us that a lot of times when we get to a certain place, we might lose our worries. We might lose some of our stress, but it's not because we're trusting in God, but it's because we've reached a comfortable place in our bank account or our savings account. Many of you, you might say, well, I don't worry about money. Maybe it's because you

have a lot of it. I mean, maybe we can kind of deceive ourselves into thinking we don't really place our trust there, but it's really just because we're comfortable with where we are. So does your stress level, does your anxiety kind of move with your bank account, with your financial state, with your possessions? That might be a sign that you are trusting the things of this world rather than God. The other one I think that we see in that parable of the rich man is that one sign that we're trusting in our wealth rather than in God is that we tend to store up for ourselves rather than giving to those who are around us. We tend to store up for ourselves our wealth and our possessions rather than being generous. So in that parable in Luke chapter 12 about this rich man who gets this great crop, it says that he decides in his heart, I'm going to build a bigger barn. Now back then they didn't have banks and savings accounts. And so really I think building a bigger barn is like building a big savings account, building a big retirement plan. He says, I'm going to just be get to be comfortable for the rest of my life. Of course, God confronts him that night. And he calls him that word that we so often see in the book of Proverbs. He calls him a fool. He says, don't you know that all that you've accumulated will not help you on this day? That all these things that you've built up, you can't take them with you.

What I think Jesus is trying to teach us in that parable is that so often a sign of us trusting in our wealth is that we're storing it up for ourselves rather than giving it away. And Jesus sends that parable and says, this is true. You are foolish in the same way as this rich man. If you place your faith or your trust in earthly treasures rather than being rich before God, he says this is true of everyone who is trusting or is living for earthly treasures but is not rich towards God. The question is, how do you become rich towards God? Or as Proverbs says, what really matters in that day is if you're a righteous before God. The Bible actually says, you cannot become rich towards God on your own. Bible says you can't be righteous before God on your own. It's not about having a lot of money that would cause God to love you or to be righteous before him. And it's also not about as much as you can give away. How generous can I be? And that will cause God to love me. That will cause me to be rich before God. Bible says that actually each one of us are impoverished before God. But Jesus Christ, the Bible says, though he was rich, he became poor for our sake. Bible says that Jesus, being God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But he humbled himself and took the form of a servant. And he was obedient even to the point of death on a cross. As we talked about last week, took the curse on our behalf. He was made completely poor. He laid down everything, including his life. The Bible says that by his poverty, you might become rich.

You do not become rich before God by saving up or by giving away. You become rich before God by confessing your poverty before him. By not being blinded by the riches of this world, but by realizing how impoverished you are before him and trusting in the generosity of Jesus. You become righteous before God when the righteousness of Jesus is credited to your account. Have you done this? Have you trusted in what Jesus has done? You see, we could come to Proverbs and we could come to our Christian faith and so many times think, well, what I got to do is I've got to get rid of all my money and give it all away. And that will cause God to love me more and to bless me more. But no, we first must realize the way we become rich before God, the way we become righteous before God is by trusting in the generosity of God, trusting in the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Confessing our need for him and trusting in that. The Bible says that as we trust in Jesus, we will be transformed. We will be shaped into his image. We will begin to follow his example in his life.

And Jesus being generous leads us in that example and the Bible does call us to be generous in our giving. It's just the last step I think of being wise with the things that we have. We must be generous in our giving. Not because our generosity is what makes us righteous or rich towards God, but because we have been partakers of his generosity. Because we are benefit, benefiter of his grace, we are now able to be gracious and generous to others. This is a call no matter how little or how much you have. The Bible gives us examples all the time of those who had very little but gave what they had and God being pleased with it. That whatever God has given us, he has blessed us with that we might be a blessing to others. I believe the Bible teaches that God gives us what we need and anything more than what we need, I think he really gives us to bless others. And when we bless others, we're actually being blessed ourselves. So there's this verse in Proverbs 11, verses 24 and 25 that we read earlier. They give us an interesting kind of paradigm. It says, one gives freely, yet grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched and one who waters will himself be watered. This is kind of opposite way of looking at the world. There's actually one who gives away and that person will actually receive. And there's person who holds on to it and that person's actually going to suffer want.

That seems backwards to us. We would think the person who holds on to it is going to have more. But there's this idea I think here of really kind of scattering. In fact, the old translation used to say, one who kind of scatters. The idea I think is really an agricultural idea. You know, when it says in verse 25, the one who waters will himself be watered. It's an agricultural idea. I think the idea here is the one who scatters is like one who scatters seed. As long as they hold on to the seed, they can say, well, this is what I have in my possession, but that's all that they will have. You see, it's the one who's willing to scatter their seed, that there will be a greater growth. Proverbs is saying it is the one who is willing to give generously what God has given to them that they will see a blessing in return. It's the one who's willing to scatter who will really gather. Now some people I think take this and they apply this mostly in a materialistic way. They'll say, what you need to do is you need to tithe to the church and you need to give to those in need and watch God give you more in return. There might be some truth to that, that it happens at times. There are times when you might be faithful with what God has given you and he might give you more monetarily. He might give you more materialistically. But I don't think that's what Proverbs is teaching us here. The way that God is enriching someone, the way that God is watering them, is not necessarily for more money in their account. If that's the way we approach it, we're simply just trusting in money again. You see, what I think he is calling us to do is to scatter for a greater purpose, to give to those in need, recognizing that we are entrusting it to the Lord. That's what it says in Proverbs chapter 19, verse 17. "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord "and he will repay him for his deed."

Question is, how will God repay him for his deed? Will it be with money in your account? Will it be with more material possessions? Maybe at times. But I think Jesus said, don't make that your aim. Because when you make earthly treasures your aim, you might get that aim, but that's all you're going to get. He said, "Isn't it better if you aimed "for heavenly treasures that never go away, "that are never destroyed, that never break down? "Shouldn't you scatter, not with the hope "of receiving from God more material things, "but spiritual, eternal rewards?" So I want to encourage you to scatter, to be generous, but with a thoughtful approach. Give generously to those in need, give generously to organizations who help those in need, give generously to the church. I think you should give generously to the church because the church seeks to do those exact things that the Bible is calling us to. We seek to be generous with what God has given us, to be good stewards with what God has given us. And in fact, one of our core values is strategic generosity. That we would be generous in strategic ways, not hoping to see a great return financially on our investment, but eternally. That we would give our resources in such a way that God would make an eternal impact with them. When we are scattering that seed, I think God is giving eternal growth as he brings people to salvation, as he meets their physical needs and also their spiritual needs. When you see the things that God has given you as something to be scattered, if you will, as a seed to be scattered, see it as a way to invest in eternity, to a way to invest in the kingdom of God. That you're being generous, again, not to become righteous before God, not to only make an immediate impact in someone's life, although that could be the case. Might be that you're meeting a very present and immediate need, but also see it, that God is using it for something far greater. That God is investing it in eternity.

So have this mindset as you come to the things of this world. Have this mindset maybe similar to Agers, in that prayer that we read in Proverbs chapter 30. As he has this mindset to pray to God, God give me neither poverty nor riches. Now I don't know if we should all pray those exact words, but I think we should all have the same heart. The reality is God might bring you to poverty. God at times brings Christians, believers, to a place of not having much in this world. The apostle Paul said, I've learned to have a lot and I've learned to have almost nothing. And then what it's taught me is that I can be content in Christ. There are many times in this world that God calls Christians into a state of not having much so that they might just learn to be content in Christ. Maybe that will be what God calls for you. God might call you to have riches. God might have blessed you already with a good savings account, with lots of money and possessions.

The call I think is to be generous, to always just raise our standard of living, but also our standard of giving. To be generous to those in need, to recognize that as we give to those in need, we are ultimately giving to the Lord. But to have the heart that says, God, I don't want to be trusting in money. I don't want to be dictated by how much is in my account, but I want to trust in you. I want to trust in what is truly valuable and I want to give it back to you so that you might make an eternal impact with it. This is the way that we can live with wisdom for our money. I pray that God would direct you as you seek to honor him with what he's given to you.