

WisDUMB – Honoring God w/ Wealth

6/1/25

Proverbs 3:9-10

Sunday AM

Good morning. As we continue our series this AM in the book of Proverbs, today we are going to be talking about a topic near and dear to all of our hearts. It is the topic of money and stewardship.

If you've been here over the past 14 yrs, you know that while I believe this is an essential teaching in the Christian life, I don't speak about it very often and have only taught (1) sermon series about money in my tenure as pastor. And the reason is simple.

Giving is an issue of the heart. Like sharing your faith, if your heart is right w/ God, then giving and telling are seldom a problem – but if not, then they're a mountain of a problem turning your heart inward on yourself, instead of outward on God.

So, as we begin this AM, know this... I'm not sharing this message to convince you to give anything, b/c I know, after nearly 30 yrs of pastoring, I can't guilt anyone into anything as it pertains to God. I'm sharing this truth b/c I want you to be blessed and I'm certain that the heart of the issue for all of us is an issue of the heart. So, if our hearts are right w/ God, then things will be alright w/in our spiritual lives. It's that simple.

WTM – I want to share a video I've showed before that makes a great point about stewardship. **God Pie**

I've always appreciated this video b/c it gets right to the point offering a unique perspective on stewardship.

I'm reminded of the 15th century Flemish painting hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art entitled, The Merode Altarpiece. The painting offers a unique perspective of the annunciation when the angel Gabriel shared w/ Mary that she'd been chosen to give birth to the Savior. Apparently, after the piece was finished, an art critic reviewed the piece only to be confounded b/c the attention to detail/stroke patterns that bore evidence the creating artist was a master – yet b/c the dimensions/proportions were awkwardly out of alignment, he was left befuddled – that is, until he learned that the piece was intended to be hung over an altar and viewed from the kneeling position. So, taking his position below the painting, the critic was able to see the piece as the artist had intended.

In so many ways – as it pertains to stewarding money, **perspective** is essential as it is so very easy to allow the love of money to be the driving force of your life.

Which brings us to our Proverb of the day. Shared w/in the same text as – *Trust in the Lord w/ all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your steps* – is a statement of trusting God w/ your wealth.

This isn't by accident as God knows the greatest threat to our relationship w/ Him is our need/love of money.

Jesus explained it well in Matthew 6 – *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths/rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths/rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... **WHY?** B/c – no man can serve (2) masters: either he'll hate the one and love the other; or hold to the one and despise the other. You can't serve God and money.*

Money. We can live w/out it, but neither can we live for it. It is the one element of life we must make sure we master or it'll become our master.

DYK as of 2025, the U.S. now has 759 billionaires (almost double from 10 yrs ago) who possess \$4.48 trillion of the world's wealth. According to Dave Ramsey, there are now 24.5 mil. millionaires in the U.S. which is more than the population of Florida.

To give you a little perspective – 50% of the world's wealth is owned by 1% of the people, while the poorest people in our world combined own just 0.75% of the world's assets. **Meaning** – if you have food in the fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a safe place to sleep, you're wealthier than 75% of the world. If you have money in the bank and spare change in a dish, you're in the top 8% of the world's wealthiest people. *It's all a matter of perspective!*

BTW – professing U.S. Christians make \$5.9 trillion annually, yet give less than 2.7% w/ only 5% actually tithing. This means we either don't know what God expects of us or we don't care and have made a conscious decision to invest in only what matters to us.

WTM – were you aware that God graciously gave us a precept and spiritual device to assist us in keeping our lives focused on the essentials so that we never get caught in the weeds of life? It is called the **TITHE**.

LBH – For most people – **tithing** is a 4-letter word. And *we don't like it b/c of what it demands of us*. **AAR** – you'll hear people mis-teach the Scriptures saying things like the tithe is OT or under the Law and doesn't apply to NT believers. Or, the tithe is just about the church needing money. You also will find too many pastors who mis-teach tithing to get people to give. Yet none of these are an accurate reality but a completely wrong perspective of what is actually an amazing blessing of God to us. **For at the heart of the tithe is the very secret to living a fulfilled, God-honoring life in the center of His will.**

So YES – stewardship always begins w/ our finances, b/c in most cases, it's our love/pursuit of money that prevents us from living yielded to God and keeping life in perspective. You could say that our offering is the doorway to stewarding every area of our lives.

Which brings us to **Proverbs 3:9-10**: *Honor the Lord w/ your wealth, w/ the first-fruits of all your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over w/ new wine.* Proverbs 3:9-10

first fruits – is a reference to the tithe or **tenth part** and refers to giving to God as an act of worship the **first/best** portions of every area of our lives including our *time, talents, treasures, tongue, temple, and testimony*. We begin learning of this principle long before the **before the Law** in Genesis 4:

*Now Adam had relations w/ his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "W/ the Lord's help, I have produced a man!" Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented **some** of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift – the **first and best** portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.* Genesis 4:1-4

Note the obvious question – Why did God accept Abel's offering but reject Cain's offering?

B/c Abel saw His offering as an act of **worship**, He gave God his first/best; whereas, Cain saw his offering as an **obligation** so He gave God his least/leftovers.

SEE – in giving God the first/best 10th, we are:

- Acknowledging that every blessing in life comes from Him and we're stewards of these blessings.
- Allowing God to sit on the throne of our lives giving Him 1st place as the object of our worship.
- Trusting God's way is better than our way by readily submitting to His will for our lives

In the story of Cain/Abel, we're being reminded that giving/generosity are more about one's *attitude* and *ambition* than it is about the *amount*. We also learn that God is more interested in what He can give **TO** you and do **THRU** you than what He can get **FROM** you.

Meaning – stewardship doesn't begin w/ us, but w/ God. It's about how He wants to move in/thru our lives for His glory – and about how God wants to bless us!

If we could ever grasp this truth – it'd revolutionize our lives. Listen again... in stewardship, *God is far more interested in what He wants to give **TO** you and do **THRU** you than what He can get **FROM** you.*

Let me translate. God wants to bless us, but to do it, He has to get us to GIVE UP what we think is best for us so that it doesn't prevent us to receiving and experiencing the better He wants to put in our lives.

Truth is – we tend to hold out on God. We'll say, "You can have my problems, but not my pocketbook."

DYK that during the crusades, the Catholic Church hired mercenaries to help in the war against Islam. But before a mercenary was allowed to fight, he had to be baptized by immersion. These men would enter the waters, but prior to going under, they'd draw their swords and raise them out of the waters not willing to surrender their swords God.

I think many people today approach God in a similar fashion when it comes to their money – God I want you blessings but I can only give you so much of me.

I **HONOR** the Lord w/ Your Wealth

Simplify – *why do you do what you do w/ what you have?* It is to win the applause of men or the applause of heaven? Is it to bring honor to you or to God?

In this instance, Solomon is encouraging us to use every *gift*, *talent*, and *blessing* in our lives to shine a light on the *person*, *presence*, and *power* of God.

II **FIRST-FRUITS** of all of your crops

Our crops are the **means** or **provision** God has blessed us with. And we're to give the first/best of every blessing in our lives in order to glorify/honor God.

Time	prioritizing God in our day
Talents	using our gifts, talents, abilities for Him
Treasures	using our financial resources for G.C.
Tongue	honoring God and others w/ our speech
Temple	taking care of our physical/mental body
Testimony	guarding our reputation/influence

Listen – when we make our priority giving God the first/best of every area of our lives, it changes every priority, value, and behavior in our lives. This is why understanding stewardship is so essential to following Jesus. **An example is a 10 min. conversation...**

III Your **BARNs** will be filled

To be clear – this is **NOT** a health/wealth prosperity teaching, but a promise from God that if we put Him first, offering to Him our first/best of every area of our lives – *He will reveal His will, guide our steps, and meet us at the point of our need* for His glory.

IOW – this is where the rubber meets the proverbial road in stewardship. Uniquely tied to stewarding our blessings is God's specific will for our lives. That is, the reason/purpose for which God created us.

If I will honor the Lord by putting Him first in my life – then He will direct my steps toward His will for me.

But here's the issue – b/c we're sinful, self-centered, and short-sighted by nature, we often don't understand that our *time, talents, treasures, tongue, temple*, and *testimony* (our blessings) are about discovering and living out God's will for us.

As a result, more often than not – we see our God-given blessings them as a means to live any way we want for whatever we want w/ God's approval.

So, to help/bless us – God asks for a ***tithe*** of every area of our lives so that we will trust in Him instead of in ourselves releasing Him to bless us for His glory.

THUS – when we honor God by giving Him the first and best of every area of our lives – we enable Him to do **FOR** us and **THRU** us what only He can do.

If you want to be rich – GIVE! If you want to be poor – GRASP! If you want abundance – SCATTER! If you want to be needy – HOARD!

I love the story of the wealthy man who stood before his church to challenge the people to give. He shared his testimony, "I've not always been rich. There was a time when I was a very poor. A few years ago, I attended a church service and heard the pastor speak about trusting God w/ all that you have. I had only \$20 to my name and it was in my pocket. That AM, I decided to take the preacher at his word so I put the \$20 in the offering and walked away from church putting all of my trust in God". He said, "If I were to put all of my money in the collection plate today, it'd be over a million dollars!" W/ those dramatic words, he sat down. An elderly lady sitting behind him leaned forward and whispered loud enough for everyone to hear." I dare you to do it again!"

Remember – God brought the pie. He owns it all. To be wise w/ money and all of your blessings means to bring it under His control and to give to Him what belongs to Him, the first/best not the least/leftovers, and then managing the rest to His glory.