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Proverbs: Money (Part 1)



Proverbs - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the idea of money and possessions in the book of Proverbs. He highlights the dangers of materialism and the importance of using money in a way that honors God. He also discusses the biblical concept of an "evil eye" versus a "good eye," which refers to generosity versus greed. While having money is not inherently wrong, Gregg cautions against putting too much trust in it, as it is unpredictable and temporary. Instead, he encourages listeners to focus on building a loving home and maintaining a clear conscience. Ultimately, he argues that meditating on God's word can lead to a deeper understanding of wealth and success.

Transcript

We're taking another theme in the book of Proverbs, and under the general heading of the world's traps, escaping the world's traps, we've looked at those which have to do with the lusts of the flesh, which is, of course, things that the body craves. Food, drink, sex, things that are natural desires built in to our bodies, which, of course, can be troublesome if they are not governed by a soul that is devoted to obedience to God. Now there's another of the world's traps, and that is what John, in 1 John 2, refers to as the lust of the eyes.

The lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes. Now many people misunderstand what is meant by the lusts of the eyes, and perhaps it's because they think of lusts always in terms of sex. I mean, the word lust in our vocabulary, in our society, if you use the word lust without any modifiers, of course the natural thing everyone thinks of is sex.

The word lust, though, means desire, and there are desires of the eyes. The reason many people misunderstand this phrase is because Jesus spoke, in the Sermon on the Mount, about the danger of a man looking at a woman to lust after her, and so you've got the word look and the word lust in the same verse. So you think of the eyes and you think of lust, and so it sounds to many that the lust of the eyes really refers to looking with sexual lust at somebody of the opposite sex, and that's not actually what is meant by the term.

That would fall under the category of lust of the flesh, the sexual desire, but lust of the eyes is a term that refers to seeing something that is not necessarily in the category of lust of the flesh. There's nothing about the thing itself that satisfies a physical desire. For example, the desire to have a fancier car than somebody else has.

The desire to have whatever, decorations or jewelry or things that are attractive to the eye, but are not necessarily related to any need of the body or any particular natural craving. Things that you see and desire because they please the eye. You know, when Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 and verse 6, it says that she saw the fruit was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eye and that it was to be desired to make one wise, and therefore she took and she ate of it.

Three things she saw that influenced her to sin. One was that the food, it was good for food, that's the lust of the flesh. It was pleasant to the eye.

That means it was attractive and it was to be desired to make one wise. This is the pride of life acting upon her. But the second one of those, and this would have probably been more of a factor with Eve than it might have been with Adam because of the nature of women to want to bring attractive things into their homes, have attractive things in their life.

Men like attractive things too as long as they're women, but women like attractive things that just look nice. More often, I'm not saying men never do, but this is something that a woman is much more likely to want to pick up something because it looks so good on the mantle or looks so good on this particular cabinet or something in the home. This fruit is so pretty.

It looks so nice in a bowl as a centerpiece to our dining room table. It's attractive. It's good for food, that appeals to the flesh, but it's just pleasant to the eye too.

And that is the lust of the eyes. Now the lust of the eyes, therefore, really has to do with the desire to acquire things just for their own attractive mistake. It's part of the larger category of greed, really.

Wanting to possess something, not because it has any particular value in itself, but just because it feels good to have it. And so many people will buy many things that are of no use to them just because it makes them feel good to own them and to see them. That should not be thought to be in itself a bad thing.

God did make people with the capacity to appreciate beauty. I seriously doubt that any of the animals that God made sit and contemplate a fun set or appreciate the delicate construction of a flower or as Brad was talking this morning, he found a dead moth. He was marveling at the way it was made and so forth.

And to think how the moth itself had no idea of how wonderfully it was made. But we are

made to appreciate those things. We have an aesthetic sense that is part of being human.

And that itself is part of being in the image of God. Because God obviously has an aesthetic sense. It's obvious that he made things beautiful when he could have made them drab.

He could have made everything black and white, but he made a large variety of colors and quite a combination of colors. And every natural scene in its own way is beautiful, whether it's a desert or a forest or an ocean. It's just that God has made things beautiful.

The starry heavens are beautiful. So there's nothing wrong with appreciating something for its beauty. You don't have to want something or appreciate having something merely because it's practical or because it meets a need of the body.

But the love for the eyes speaks of this particular tendency to desire something for no other reason than it's just seems nice to have it. And this is related to the desire for money. Because money is what you need to get things.

Some people even just like to look at money itself, especially back when money was in the form of gold, something shiny and beautiful. I mean, I know that I have on occasion owned gold coin and they are really something to look at, you know, just to hold some gold coins in your hand. They're heavy and they're beautiful.

And you think, wow, this is amazing. It's amazing the power that gold has over the mind and over the soul, if you allow it to. It's just a beautiful thing.

But you also realize it has a value, a symbolic value that is capable of getting other things that you want. And therefore, the lust of the eyes has to do with wanting to acquire things, beautiful things, pleasant things, but not things that are necessarily related to the flesh, that is to the body's desires. Those desires we call the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the eyes would be the acquisitive impulse. Many people like to collect things, many more things than they need. Some people have fetishes for certain kinds of items.

I have someone, a relative of mine, who from his youth, he's just had this fascination with elephants. And so he's got his house full of statuettes and statues of elephants and so forth. What's the practical value of that? Well, none.

But is there anything wrong with it? Not particularly. It might seem a little imbalanced. But on the other hand, different people have different things.

Some people like to have beer spines or something like that. It is attractive. They're cool.

There's nothing wrong with that. Unless, of course, it becomes something that drives you

to do what you shouldn't do. That's the same thing with the lust of the body are good things that God created.

But when they become influences for doing the wrong thing, then they are a problem. They're a trap that the world provides. Now, in the Hebrew idiom, it's rather common to find the expression an evil eye or good eye.

And because it's related to this matter of the lust of the eyes, a good eye actually is a term that means generosity. A person is a good eye is said to be generous. He's not greedy.

A person is an evil eye is greedy. Now, this idiom is sometimes concealed in our translations. In the Proverbs, we read of a person with an evil eye.

But I think if I'm not mistaken, the English translation puts it in something more like a modern idiom, and you don't see it every time it comes up. We do find it in Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapter six, when he's talking about attitudes toward money. In Matthew chapter six, he said in verse 19, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

But where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. They say the lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

If your eye is bad or evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness? No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Notice that verses 19 through 24 are all about attitudes toward money. But in the midst of it is this little thing about the good eye and the evil eye. And he is using the Hebrew idiom.

A good eye is a generous attitude. A bad eye is a greedy attitude. And we find him using that expression in Matthew chapter 20 also in one of his parables, the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

This man went out and hired people at various times during the day, but they all got paid the same wage at the end of the day. And it says the ones who had worked longest murmured about what what they were paid, although it was what they had agreed to work for. And he says that the murmurers were rebuked by the employer.

And among other things, he said this to them in Matthew 20 and verse 15, he says, Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am

good? Is your eye evil means are you greedy? Matthew 20 and verse 15. So Jesus is using in more than one case, this Hebrew idiom, the evil eye is greed. And you'll find it from time to time also in the book of Proverbs.

So what we're dealing with here is the loss of the eye, the way the eye affects behavior. And while we don't necessarily think of covetousness or greed or being money hungry as related specifically to the eye, the Hebrews did. And therefore, the loss of the eyes refers to this impulse to want to acquire more than you need, more than your body even craves.

But there's something else in our nature that craves it, that wants to own more than somebody else has or wants to have something that others don't have or just wants to have more and more and more than is what is needed. This is the loss of the eyes. And we can see how the eyes are related to this in many cases, because people often want a much larger or more fancy or luxurious dwelling than they could possibly use more rooms than they would ever need.

You know, a more attractive car than is necessary. I mean, if you pay more for a car, because it's a quality automobile, and it's actually ends up being a good economy, that you're buying a car that's going to last better and work more reliably. And it has to be more expensive.

There's I can't see why that would be wrong. That might be good stewardship. But let's face it, some people want cars, a certain car, as opposed to another car, mainly because of the logo that's on it, or the prestige associated with it.

And why? Is it really that much more comfortable than every other car? I'm somewhat more, probably. I'm sure when you pay more for a car, you're going to get more comfort. But I've never found even a cheap car that wasn't sufficiently comfortable for me to get to where I needed to go.

And it's not that I'm a Spartan, though I might be, but it's actually just that I don't pay any attention to how soft the seat is, unless I've been driving for a lot of hours. But I could put a cushion on my cheap car seat and get by just as happily and save a lot of money while I was at it. But let's face it, people often buy these things more for the prestige, or they at least crave them.

They often don't buy them because they can't afford them, but they wish they could. They have this desire, this lust of the eyes. And so the Bible has a lot to say, and Proverbs has a lot to say, about attitudes with reference to possessions.

And possessions often means money, because money is that by which possessions usually come to us. We buy them. Now, money is a very important category, because, at least in ordinary life, money comes to you in exchange for hours of your life.

Your life is only so many hours long, total. There's an hour in which you're born, there's an hour in which you die, and between those two there's a certain finite number of hours. Every hour you spend sleeping is an hour that you've lost.

Every hour you spend working for someone else is an hour that you've lost. Or we might say used or invested. It's not necessarily lost, but even if it's well spent, it is lost for any future use.

It's gone. And your life is ticking away, and every hour that goes by is something you can seize and exploit for good, or you can let slip on by. You either spend your life or you invest it.

You may be just spending it, but you can invest it. Now, money comes, usually, and possessions come from having money, and money comes from the investiture of hours of your life. Unless, of course, you're born into money.

That's a different thing. In which case, that money was earned by somebody else's work at some other time previously. Maybe a grandparent or a great-grandparent or someone even further back.

Maybe there's been money in the family, old money, but it still is something that came to somebody originally because of work. Either their own work or the work of servants and slaves that worked for them. One way or another, money comes originally from the giving of hours of a human life, and therefore, the money you have is symbolic of your life itself.

And that's why the use of money is, in a sense, significant. Because it is the use of that which was acquired through hours of your life, and therefore, it is a use of your life itself. When you give money, you're giving something of your own life.

Something of that which took some of the hours of your life from you in order to acquire it, and now you're giving it to somebody else. You're giving of your own life. Now, the Bible says, of course, that we as Christians are not our own, and we've been bought with a price, and therefore, none of the hours of our lives are our own.

We don't own anything. We don't own ourselves, even. And that being so, it means that every hour that we have, not just when we're awake, but even the hours we sleep, all of our hours belong to our Master.

All of them belong to God. And that means if we go out and spend some of those hours to acquire possessions, money, that money belongs to Him. It was bought on God's time.

It was bought with God's hours. They're not yours, they're His. And for that reason, the Christian sees God as the owner of all his possessions.

Therefore, the Christian is the steward of somebody else's stuff. Everything you have, not any of it is yours. You say, but I earned this with my own hard work.

Not your own. Who gave you the power to work? Who gave you hours of the day to work? Obviously, every hour is a gift from God, and is owned by God. And therefore, everything we have is His.

And that means that someday, we'll stand before Him and give an account for the way we used His stuff. Jesus told at least two parables, if not three, that have that as their primary meaning. Okay, what's the book of Proverbs say about money? I want to talk first of all about people's attitudes toward money, as discussed in Proverbs.

Then I want to talk about what Proverbs says about obtaining money. And then what it says about using money. Money has to come in before it can go out, but once it comes in, it usually goes out.

So, we have to have some insight as to how money is to come in and how money is to go out. But first, we need to consider attitudes that people have about money and attitudes they should have about money. In chapter 14, in verse 20 of Proverbs, it says, The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends.

Now, it's quite obvious what this means is that people like rich people better than they like poor people. Or at least there's a lot of people of whom that can be said. There are many who will be the friends of the rich who would not pay any attention to the poor.

It means a number of things. One is that if you have money, you never know who your real friends are. You never know why people are your friends.

Because they may be friends only because you have money. And if you lose your money, you'll be poor and then they won't be your friends anymore. They are your friends only because of what you possess.

And no doubt, that is for one of two reasons. One is that, well, it's effectively just one reason, no matter how many variations there are. It's because they hope to gain something.

They see you as a cash cow. They see you as somebody that they can get something out of. And maybe they're not hoping to get money from you.

They might be hoping to get something else. Maybe the prestige of being the friend of somebody who's famous and rich. But the point is, they don't love you for who you are.

They love you for what you have. And if you don't have it someday, then they won't love you anymore. The prodigal son probably found that out when he went into a far country and he had a lot of money from his inheritance.

And he partied hardy until the money was gone. And then no one wanted to give him anything. No one wanted to give him a place to stay.

No one wanted to feed him. He had to find a job eating with the pigs. Because when the money was gone, so were the friends.

That's a certain thing that we observe and that Solomon observed about people's attitudes toward money. If you have it, people will like you, but at a very shallow level. Also, in chapter 19, verse 4, Solomon said, Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friends.

Now, there's a sense in which wealth makes many friends can be a positive thing, too. Because Jesus said in Luke 16, Make friends for yourselves with unrighteous mammon. There is such a thing as making friends in a positive sense using money.

For example, if you help the poor, they will probably feel more friendly towards you. It's a shame that it takes a financial gift to make some people feel friendly toward you and who wouldn't otherwise. But the truth of the matter is money can be used in a way that benefits, genuinely benefits other people and creates gratitude in them.

So that you are more popular, even in a not such a shallow sense. People see you as a generous person. They appreciate you.

Of course, they've benefited from your money, but more they've benefited from your generosity. And what they appreciate could well be your generosity. Even when the money stops coming, the memory that you were generous to them when they were in need is something that seals a friendship for life.

So money can be a good thing. You never really know what kind of friends you have if you have money, especially if the friends that are second up to you while you have money are people who stand to get money out of you. But many times people that have been benefited from your generosity because you had money, don't hope to receive any more from you.

They just appreciate you. They just have gratitude. Money is a good thing.

It can be put to use of making friends in a good way. Although it may not be that that's what Solomon is thinking of here. It's certainly the way he words it can be taken as a good thing or a bad thing.

Obviously, nobody wants to have friends who are only friends because of the money they have or the money they've given. At the same time, it's sort of a byproduct of being a generous person who has money that he leaves behind him a trail of thankful people, hopefully. People should be thankful anyway.

In chapter 10 and verse 15, the rich man's wealth is his strong city. The destruction of the poor is their poverty. Now, the rich man's wealth is his strong city means that's his refuge.

It means that's what he places his security in. This may not always be true, but it is certainly the tendency of the human heart. To possess riches very seldom is different than trusting in riches.

It can be. Jesus said it's very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And the reason is simply that if he has riches, it's really hard not to trust in them.

After all, when you can, it's hard not to. I've told the story before how that when my wife was killed in an accident, the car that hit her was insured and some insurance settlement guys came to my door one morning with a check for me, a big check. This was back in 1980 or 81, early 81 perhaps.

In those days, I was living very inexpensively and had always done so. I was sharing a house with some other brothers and we're sharing the rent. And of course, the cost of living was low back then in the early 80s.

And I believe I was living on about \$400 a month. 400, less than \$5,000 a year. And that was about what my income was too.

I had, you know, I didn't have any surplus. I got the Lord provided as I needed and I didn't need much. The amount that I received, however, was at least enough to survive for five years at my accustomed standard of living.

Which means that I wouldn't have to trust God for that long. Because I always, because of the low, my low income, I always had to trust God day by day. Or at least month by month, whenever the bills came.

Phone bills, electric bills, rent, usually those come once a month. But the point was that I, even for food, that was more of a, sometimes a day by day need that God had to provide. I pray, give us this day our daily bread and meant it.

This day's bread. I need it today. That might sound like a way that nobody in America needs to live.

But I actually kind of liked living that way. I, that was, that was really my choice. I mean, I could have, I could have chosen a different way of life.

I could have even tried to raise money and things like that for my ministry. But I, it's just, I just wanted to see God work in my life. I like the idea of seeing God provide.

And when there's extra money on hand, it's not as obvious when God is providing. I'm not saying you can't see God provide when you have money, but it's, it's much more

obvious when you have a need and there's no provisions and you pray and the provision comes in a timely way and it's essentially the amount you need and not more or less. And when you see that happen day by day, month by month, year by year, that's it.

That's something that I've always found to be exciting. I like that. And so when this money was given to me, I thought, now what's, how is this going to impact my life of faith in God? I knew that it could, I knew it probably would, but I was determined that it shouldn't because I didn't want to change the way that I was trusting God for things.

And yet this money was sitting there in the bank. And so I, I resolved that I would give myself one year to disperse all that money. I would give it away.

And, or, I mean, I used a little bit on things I needed, but other things I bought for other people and stuff. And I just decided I was not going to have any of that money left at the end of the first year. And I just didn't want to just write a big check to one place and then later regret it because I hadn't thought it through.

I wanted to give to people as I saw need to come up and as I had time to give it some thought, but I didn't want to spend more than one year in possession of that money. So I did get rid of all that money within one year. And yet during that year, it was an uncomfortable year for me because I didn't have to trust God for anything.

I determined I'm going to still trust God just like before. This money is not going to make a difference. I'm going to still trust God.

But it was impossible to trust God like before because I drove an old car. And before that money was there, anytime I drove anywhere out of town, I had to just be praying and trusting God that the car wouldn't break down because I don't know if I'd have enough money to have it towed somewhere. But now I had enough money.

I could buy a car. If my car broke down, I could leave it at the side of the road, have it towed to the junkyard and buy another car with cash. And I had, I just didn't have need anymore to trust God.

I didn't have to pray for God to provide for the phone bill each month because there was enough to pay for the phone bill for years to come. And it was a different inward reality for me. And I realized that as much as I was determined not to trust that money, the knowledge that it was there made it impossible for me not to know that it was there and that I didn't really have a crisis.

I didn't really have to have God come through for a while. I could pretend like I needed God to come through, but I knew in my mind I really don't need him to come through. He already came through in advance for a long time to come.

And I'll tell you, it was a relief to me when that money was gone. Not that anyone else

would have to make the choices I make. I make the choices I make because I enjoy them.

These are my own private lifestyle choices. I don't have any conviction that anyone else needs to do it. But I did discover from my own experience that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

It might even be nonsensical to say that you can trust in God in a desperate sort of way when you're not desperate, when there really is plenty on hand. Jesus, when he was talking to his disciples, said this about the rich, how difficult it is. He said in verse 23 of Matthew 19, Having something that is a security against the future, it's a given that you cannot help but put some of your confidence or some of your peace in knowing that it's there.

Now, that doesn't mean that you can't have stuff and still be a person of faith. Obviously, if you have stuff, you have to know that all of it could disappear. Your job, your pension, your whatever, your investments, they can all just vaporize.

Something could happen. I mean, any number of things could happen. The things you own, Jesus said thieves can break through and steal or moth and rust can corrupt them.

That's why I said don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth because those things do happen. But many times, while those things have not yet happened and while that wealth is there, it provides a buffer against disaster, which is, of course, something that the owner of the possessions is mindful of. And it's not wrong for him to be mindful of it.

It's just a dynamic that we have to acknowledge is present. The rich man's wealth is his fortress. It's his strong city.

The poor man, his poverty is his destruction. He doesn't have a buffer against disaster that the rich man has. Now, Solomon may have never experienced poverty being a king from birth.

He certainly never experienced poverty. And therefore, he may have looked on a poor man and just assumed that guy's got nothing. And as a king, he might not have ever had the experience to know that a poor man who trusts in God has all that he needs.

David knew this because David had spent years in poverty. David was not born in royalty as Solomon was. And David often spoke about himself as a poor man and spoke of the faithfulness of God to him.

Solomon just looked at poverty and said, man, that guy's got nothing to protect him and did not have the experience that a poor man who trusts God does have of knowing that, well, you may be poor in terms of what you've got laid out, but that doesn't mean you're going to come to destruction because there is, in fact, a God who provides for the poor if

they look to him, if they trust in him. In chapter 18 and verse 11, Solomon said, the rich man's wealth is his strong city like a high wall in his own esteem. And this says the same thing, but more than the last one we looked at.

Both say that the rich man's wealth is his fortress, is his strong city, is his wall against his cushion against disaster. But in this case, it has the little slight at the end in his own esteem. That's how he sees it.

The truth is that wealth is no true guarantee of security. As Jesus pointed out, moth and rust do corrupt, thieves do break through and steal. In the rich man's own thinking, in his own esteem, as he assesses things, he is secure because he has wealth.

But there's a little hint here by the inclusion of in his own esteem, that phrase, qualifying it, Solomon may be giving a hint that, well, you know, it may not be that is such a strong city. It may be a city that is capable of being breached, the walls being breached, and the man may succumb if that's what he is trusting in. But he doesn't know it.

He's rich. He's confident. He thinks he has security.

So people look to money as a source of security. And that's why Jesus said what he did about laying up treasures for yourself. You need to lay up treasures in heaven.

Those aren't going anywhere. Those cannot be taken from you by anyone. And so the reason that it's not really wise to let money be your security is because money is unpredictable.

The economy is unpredictable. A few years ago, the economy was booming. And if you go back a little further, you had the dot com, you know, explosion where lots of people made millions on Internet companies.

And then there was this bubble that burst, and then it just disappeared. And people who are wealthy at one moment may end up not being wealthy at the next moment because of the drop in the stock market or some other thing. And so it's an unpredictable thing to put your security in.

And yet people by nature tend to do so anyway, partly because if they don't know God, there's not much else to put your security in. You can put your security and you can be secure in the fact that you're in a country that has a strong national defense or a strong economy or any other number of things that are natural and unpredictable. But money is one of those things that is, in fact, unpredictable.

You can't guarantee the outcome. In chapter 13, verse 7, it says there is one who makes himself rich yet has nothing. One who makes himself poor yet has great riches.

You can't really be sure whether making yourself rich is going to you're going to end up

rich. You know, even if you have a large, you know, insurance policy against every kind of disaster, disasters can be larger than were anticipated, can be more expensive than anyone could have guessed. And a man's wealth may be gone in a very short time.

That which he thought would be good for him for the rest of his life. On the other hand, a person who is poor may have a change of fortunes. And God is the one who really decides.

There's one who makes himself poor, yet he has great riches. Jesus said, give. That's making yourself poor, perhaps give, and it'll be given to you.

Full measure, pressed down and shaken together and overflowing shall men give into your bosom. So, there's some who don't try to make themselves rich, but they get unexpectedly rich, or at least well off. Others who make every effort to make themselves rich, and yet they end up poor by some fluke, by some turn of events that was unanticipated.

Economic prosperity is very unpredictable, and for that reason it doesn't make a good source of security for us. It says in chapter 23 of Proverbs verses four and five, do not overwork to be rich because of your own understanding. Cease.

Will you set your eyes on that which is not for riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven. Don't knock yourself out for the purpose of being rich.

Now, I will say that knocking yourself out to do the will of God is not a bad idea. I mean to work hard, to be diligent, to devote all your energies to the will of God is virtuous, and the will of God might for some people mean making money because there are in fact, the Bible says, those who have the gift, the spiritual gift of giving. My former father-in-law was a multi-millionaire who gave away everything he had, and he was always striving to make more money, which he spent almost none of it on his own life.

He just had this desire to transform the economy and the economic circumstances of Haiti, and he's always trying to think of ways to make more money so he could put more money into helping the poor in Haiti. He gave all his money to Haiti. He gave a little bit of it to other missionary organizations that worked in other parts of the world, but his heart was in Haiti, and he was working night and day.

He might have been called a workaholic. I don't know that he was. He had time for his family too, but he was a man who just had almost like an obsession to make a lot of money, none of which he intended to spend on himself, but all of which he saw as his ministry to give to the poor.

Now, that's different than what Solomon's talking about when he says don't work too hard to be rich. He's not talking to people who see it as their ministry to the poor to be

rich and to give more. Lots of people say, well, if I make a lot of money, then I can give more away.

Well, what they mean is if I make enough money to live as fat as I want to live, then with the surplus, I'll have something to give away. A lot of times people have plenty they could give away now without making more money, but they're not giving it away because of the amount that they're spending on their own lifestyle. And there's not so much a need to make more money as to spend less on things that don't need to be spent on and spend more on the things that are good.

However, there are people who really do give their money to the poor, and they are eager to make more so that they can give more. And that would be, of course, a case different than what Solomon is talking here. But he says don't overwork to be rich.

The desire to be rich, meaning to possess rather than the idea to have to give, is not something that is worth throwing your life and your energies away on. The riches you earn do have, they make themselves wings. It's obvious that Solomon is suggesting the man who's trying to get rich is trying to hold on to his wealth.

And the problem is it gets away from him. If you're already trying to give your wealth wings, then this is not a curse. This is not a bad thing to see happen.

In chapter 27, it says, do not boast about tomorrow if you do not know what the day may bring forth. This is obviously the same lesson that James taught in James chapter four. And talking to people about their business plans and their economic future, in James chapter four, verse 13 through 17, James says, come now, you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell and make a profit.

So these are a business plan that someone has. He's considering that he's going to make this much money and this much time. He says, whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.

That's exactly what Proverbs 27, one says, do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth. James says, you don't know what will happen tomorrow for what is your life? It's even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.

But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Now, boasting about tomorrow.

In James is applied to the plans people make for their finances, their future finances. Solomon doesn't nail it down to that one issue in Solomon's writing there in chapter 27, one, he just talks about don't boast about tomorrow. It may not only be business and

finance that he has in mind there, but James applies it to that.

And it's true. Many people just assume that tomorrow will go in a predictable way financially. And yet there can be reversals that are surprising and unpredictable.

In Proverbs 28, 22, we have this evil eye idiom that I mentioned. Proverbs 28, 22 says a man with an evil eye, that means a greedy man, hastens after riches. You see, this points out what I was saying about the evil eye means a greedy person.

The person with an evil eye hastens after riches and does not consider that poverty will come upon him. So a greedy man does not know that poverty may come upon him. He's not aware of the danger of it.

He's just going for the money. He's going for the gold. And he doesn't consider that all his efforts may be wasted if they're just spent trying to make money and nothing else.

In Ecclesiastes 5, 11, also written by Solomon, Ecclesiastes 5, verse 11, he says, when goods increase, they increase who eat them. When you inherit a fortune, all the relatives show up. Right? If you win the lottery, suddenly you've got a lot of cousins who you never had seen before who show up.

When your goods increase, the people who eat them increase. So what profit have the owners except to see them with their eyes? So making a lot of money isn't always going to turn out better for you. The financial world and financial fortunes are unpredictable.

A number of Proverbs point out that while money is never said to be undesirable, there are many things that are more desirable than money. And that is something that not everybody really understands. Some people just feel like they've got to make money because that's what makes the world go round.

That's what makes life pleasant. That's what makes life secure. If you can buy the stuff you want, you can even buy the friends you want.

If you just have money, it will enhance your life. Well, there's a lot of things that will enhance your life more than money will. In Proverbs 15, verses 16 through 17, chapter 15, verse 16 and 17.

Better is a little, meaning a little in the area of possessions. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted calf with hatred.

Now, he wasn't considering the issue of cholesterol and so forth when he was fed. It's better to eat a dinner of herbs than a fatted calf. But we might find many reasons why a dinner of herbs could be more desirable.

But what he's talking about here is a plain diet. Where in an environment of love, that is

what a poor family might eat. Because they can't afford the meat.

They can't afford a fatted calf. They can't afford delicacies. But if they have a loving home, a loving table, at the table there is love there.

They are richer than the person who has a fatted calf and doesn't have anyone at the table that loves each other. All they love is their food. They don't love each other.

It's better to have a simple lifestyle if that is accompanied with love and with good relationships in the family than to have an opulent, wealthy lifestyle where nobody cares about each other at all. It's better to have a little bit of stuff with the fear of the Lord than to be very rich, have great treasure and have trouble. Some things are better than money.

Love and the fear of the Lord are better than money. In chapter 16, in verse 8, better is a little with righteousness than vast revenues without justice. Vast revenues without justice suggests that there are people who make their fortune, but they do so by exploitation.

They do so by crime. They do so by underhanded dealings. They do so by compromise.

They compromise justice, and by so doing, they manage to gain unjustly. They have unjust gain, and they're rich because of it. But it's better to have a little bit and have a clear conscience, to be a righteous person, to know that you haven't cheated anybody.

And that's why you're not any richer than you are. You could be richer by cheating, but you haven't cheated, and therefore you're not richer. And you feel good about that.

It's better. You feel better about it. You've got a clear conscience.

A man who's gained his money by injustice and by crime cannot really enjoy it at the same level as somebody who's kept their conscience clean. I think a clean conscience is something that our society has lost any concept of, even the church. Christians often just feel like, well, I can just do what I want to do, then I'll just pray, and God will forgive me after I'm saved by grace.

And they've lost Paul's conviction that he should live his life keeping a clean conscience before God and men. To do that which will not defile your conscience will keep you peaceful, will keep you happy. Will keep you secure.

A clear conscience has many advantages, but many times people don't want to pay the price of keeping a clear conscience. It involves, of course, doing the right thing at times when you'd rather not do the right thing. And many times it's easier just to say, well, everybody's doing it, so I can do the wrong thing.

And no one's going to, you know, it's not going to hurt me. I won't suffer anything. My

reputation will not be damaged by it.

Or even Christians, like I say, can say, well, if I do the wrong thing, at least I can get forgiven. And so doing the right thing doesn't become the obsession of the believer as it was with Paul and as it should be. Paul, if you want to do an interesting study in the New Testament, get a concordance out and look up the word conscience and see what the New Testament says about our conscience and the management of our conscience and keeping a clear conscience.

And the goal of our instruction is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience. To have a good conscience means that you are not doing things that you know are wrong and living with the awareness of your guilt. And to be a righteous person who has not gotten rich because you haven't compromised your conscience is a much happier place to be than have a lot of money and know that you got it by crime and by injustice.

In chapter 17 and verse one, it says, better is a dry morsel with quietness than a house full of feasting with strife. Obviously, on some of the general themes that we've already looked at some of these, but just a little different. A dry morsel is not a very appetizing meal, but if you have a dry morsel and a quiet home, a home where the people are not arguing, there's no strife there.

There's a peaceableness in the home. A simple meal, a cheap meal, a low standard of living, really, with a peaceful home is much more desirable than to be full of wealth and feasting and all that stuff, but have no peace in the home. Again, Solomon is aware of many things, although he's a wealthy man, he's aware of many things that a wealthy man may not have, which he may wish he had more than he wishes he had as well.

Peace in his home, love in his home, a clear conscience. These are the things that some wealthy men do not have, and their wealth cannot make up for the lack of it. In chapter 19 and verse 22, it says, what is desired in a man is kindness and a poor man is better than a liar.

So, being a poor man is not really a desirable thing in itself, but it's more desirable to be a poor man than to be a liar. In other words, it's better to be a poor man than a bad man. A poor good man is in a more enviable position than a bad man who's not poor, and so money doesn't make up for the lack of virtue in your life, as Solomon has said in a number of ways in his Proverbs.

In chapter 28, verses 6 and 11, verse 6 says, better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich. And verse 11, the rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding searches him out. This latter proverb suggests that the rich man has much to congratulate himself for.

He's obviously successful. He sees himself as wise. He sees himself as obviously having

done what it takes, what other people have not had the insight to do, to get himself wealthy, to be successful in business and so forth.

That's, he feels like he's accomplished something and he tends to think of himself as the one who pulled it off. But a poor man who has not done all those things may have more understanding than he does, because obviously the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and of wisdom. And so a poor man who actually fears the Lord may have more understanding than the rich man.

And the poor man who's informed by God and by God's word may be, in fact, very much wiser than the man who is worldly wise and has made a lot of money. Remember, Jesus said the children of this age, the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. And he's talking about in terms of money, making money and things like that.

That's the context in Luke 16. The children of light are often not as wise in the area of making money as other children of this world, but may be wise in different ways than that. In Psalm 119 verses 97 through 100, Psalm 119, 97 says, Oh, how I love your law.

It is my meditation all the day. You, through your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers for your testimonies or my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients because I keep your precepts. He said, I'm smarter than my enemies. I'm smarter than my teachers.

I'm smarter than older people than me, but only not because I'm boasting of my own, you know, which was a precociousness, but it's because I am considering your words and they are not because I meditate on your law, because I keep your commandments, because your commandments have made me wiser than them. So he's saying that a godly person can have more understanding, and that's true whether he's rich or poor, and therefore he might be poor. He might be a poor man who's godly, meditates on God's law, and he has more understanding than the rich man.

Though the rich man may have shrewdness, he may have business acumen. He may know the rules of success when it comes to money management and business, but somebody who meditates on the word of God may actually be a man of greater understanding and may be in a more advantaged position in some circumstances than the man who is rich. So although everybody knows that having money is desirable, and the Bible does not deny that, the Bible doesn't deny that people have to have some money.

At least they have to have the things money can buy in some cases. They have to have food. They have to have clothing.

There are things that you need. These things come, generally speaking, by purchasing

them, and that can only be done if you have money. So the Bible does not deny that money is good.

It just points out that having a lot of money isn't necessarily the best thing, although it tends to be mistaken for being the best thing by people who aren't thinking wisely. People who are not putting God and his values first will often feel like there's nothing more desirable than to be very rich, and the richer the better. And Solomon says, well, I am Solomon.

I'm the richest man I know. I'm richer than all the kings around me. I'm richer than any of the citizens in my country.

I'm the richest man I know. And I can tell you there's some things better. Some things are better than that.

Having no strife in your home, having a clear conscience, having that understanding that comes with being schooled in the ways of God and his laws, those things are worth more than money. Therefore, those are the things that should be sought, even while pursuing money, which of course, it is the will of God for most people to work at normal jobs, which is itself a pursuit of money. But it's not just a pursuit of money for the Christian.

It's the pursuit of the kingdom of God. When you are working, a Christian who is at work is serving God at work, because that's what a Christian does in all their waking hours, even the hours they work. They're working for God's sake.

They're working for the kingdom of God. They're seeking first the kingdom of God through the employment that God intends for them to have. And they earn money as God intends for them to.

There's nothing carnal about making money. There's nothing sinful about having much income. But of course, there may be sinful ways of getting that income, and there may be sinful ways of dispersing that income.

And those are other issues that the Bible and the book of Proverbs talks about. There's quite a lot in Proverbs about the way people make money. And that'll have to be saved for the next time.

But we will see that there is quite a bit there more to consider.