

The Wisdom of Giving

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[0 : 00] Are you a wise person? I've asked that question several times as we are in our study in Proverbs.

God wants us, as His people, to be wise in very practical ways because that's what the book of Proverbs is all about.

It's talking about how to be wise in the way you handle your money, how to be wise with your words. Boy, we could sure use that in this country right now, couldn't we?

How to be wise in personal relationships, how to be wise in terms of the way you go about doing your work. God wants us to be wise, and He's given us the book of Proverbs provide a lot of counsel as to the way we need to think, the way that we need to act, things we need to learn in order to be wise.

What we're going to look at today is how a wise person gives their money. And we're going to do that from Proverbs 3, verses 9 and 10.

[1 : 19] We're going to look at the giving habits, the attitude, the priority of wise people. Now, if you were here last week, you know that we are skipping over verses 5 through 8.

And this is the reason. Tonight, we're going to have a business conference, and our budget's going to be presented. And then next Sunday morning, we will vote on it.

And so since we as a church are at a time of the year where we are going to talk about money, I thought I'd just skip a few verses and get to where Proverbs talks about giving our money.

We'll come back to verses 5 through 8 in three weeks. Next Sunday, we're going to observe the Lord's Supper together and baptism. The week after that, I'm going to do a message related to Thanksgiving.

And so we'll come back in three weeks and look at the most, what I'm assuming is the most well-known passage in Proverbs, Proverbs 3, 5 and 6.

[2 : 26] Trust in the Lord with all your heart. You probably know that. And hopefully, think about that. Seek to live that way, as we all should. But right now, let's look at just two verses this morning, verses 9 and 10.

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce. Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Now, you know as Solomon writes these words, He's writing to people, many of them were farmers. It was an agricultural society.

So that's the context here. What we have to do is apply it to how we acquire wealth today and what we do with it, how we spend it, and things of that nature.

So you think about that part as we go through this, and I'll try to make applications as well. The first thing I want us to see is in verse 9, the first phrase, Wise people honor God with their wealth.

[3 : 36] Wise people will honor God with their wealth. Now, what does it mean to honor God? The word honor means to acknowledge God's significance, acknowledge God's importance.

Acknowledging God like that means to worship Him. Worship is acknowledging and praising God for who He is. Acknowledging His worth, His value, His importance.

And responding appropriately to that. So let's think. When you think about worshiping God, what kind of things come to your mind?

Tell me right quick. When you think about worshiping God, what kind of things come to your mind? This is a dead crowd. Singing.

Singing is a big part of worshiping God in Scripture, in the Bible, and throughout the history of the church. Singing. Praying.

[4 : 48] Reading Scripture. Listening to a sermon with the idea, Yeah, this is God's Word. I want to listen to what God says, and I want to respond to it. Well, do you ever think about the giving of tithes and offerings that we do in our church?

Is really a part of worship? We take the offering while we are here together in this worship service by design.

It is intentional. It was a regular part of the worship of the people of Israel, and it needs to be a regular part of our worship as well.

Now, some churches do not take an offering like we do in the service, and there's nothing wrong with that. There are some great, strong, healthy, biblically sound churches.

They'll have some type of box set up in the foyer or places around the church, and they make it widely known. You know, it's printed, it's announced.

[5 : 57] That's where you give. As you come in, as you leave, you put your money in the box.

That's how they do it. They don't do it in the worship service. Some of you may mail in your offerings, and I know from time to time people do that.

Some of you may have your tithes and offerings on a regular basis sent by your bank to our church. Nothing wrong with any of those things.

In fact, a lot of churches today have online giving. You can have your regular offering drafted from your bank account to our church.

It's whatever date you want to have it done that. A lot of churches are doing that. We are going to have that as an option in the very near future, and you'll hear more about that. What I want us to think about is there are many ways in which we can give.

We do it on Sunday morning, and we will continue to do it on Sunday mornings as a part of our worship service because it is worship. But whenever you give or however you give, if you mail it in, if you have your bank to send it in, if it's going to be drafted, it is important that you think as you write the check, as you look at your bank statement or however, it's important that you think, I am giving this to God because He is worthy of it.

[7 : 28] I want God to know that this is one way I'm trying to honor Him. This is one way I'm expressing praise to Him and gratitude to Him through my giving. no matter how you do it.

Even here in this worship service when the plate is passed, you can just sort of be indifferent to it. If you give yours in this offering, I want you to stop and think as that plate is passed, that this is something I am giving to God as a way to honor Him because He's given it to me.

He is the one who has enabled me to work, have the ability to work, and have what I have. So I want my giving to be an expression of worship, of praise, of gratitude to God because He's worth it. I want to honor Him with my wealth. Now, do you do that? Are you consciously worshiping God, honoring God from your wealth?

A lot of translations will say from your wealth. Are you doing this intentionally and consciously?

Honoring God with our wealth is the foundational principle of wise financial stewardship.

[8 : 52] Honoring God with our wealth, giving, giving of tithes and offerings. That is where we need to think of it. We need to think of that as just a foundational principle of wise Christian stewards or wise Christian money managers.

Now, the next phrase in verse 9 is the first application of this principle. Honor God with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.

The giving of first fruits, the number two, look at it, the way I put it on the outline. Wise people make giving to God their first priority in using their wealth.

And that's what we're talking about here and with the first fruits of all your produce. The giving of first fruits, giving of people of Israel to God was originally intended to be a response by the people of Israel to God for delivering them from slavery, bondage in Egypt.

Here's an example in Deuteronomy chapter 26. In Deuteronomy 26, beginning about verse 5, they are instructed, people of Israel are instructed to say this and then do this in relation to their first fruits.

[10 : 17] We're going to pick up in verse 8. Look at it. They, the people are to say this as they give. So, so the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.

He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O Lord, have given me.

And then they're instructed, place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before Him. It's an act of worship.

What Moses is doing here is saying, because God had delivered them, he said, really, because God's delivered us, but because God had delivered the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and brought them into the promised land, they were to present Him with first fruit offerings. They were to be expressions of worship and gratitude. Now this is in Deuteronomy. Moses is preparing the people to do this when they get into the promised land.

[11 : 32] He's preparing them to be faithful in giving these first fruits as His faithful people in that promised land. Well, I want us to think today, you and me as Christians this morning, because God has delivered us from bondage to sin through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, we should desire, we should really and truly want to express our appreciation, our worship by giving the first fruits of our wealth.

And if we'll keep in mind what God has done for us in Christ, our giving will be genuine. And if you'll stop and think about what God has done in sending His Son into the world to die on the cross and pay the penalty for your sins, so that through faith in Him, you can be forgiven, you can be made right with God and become a child of God.

If you'll think about that, what God has done for you, you'll want to give to Him in a way that expresses, I'm thankful, Lord, I praise You, God, You are worth it.

You are worth these kinds of offerings. This principle of first fruit giving teaches us to make giving to God the first priority of what we do with our wealth or the first priority of how we use our wealth. God deserves our best in everything, doesn't He, if He is God? He deserves our best in everything, including our giving.

[13 : 32] Moses made that clear to the people of Israel, not just in that passage, but in other places. Look at this one, just one verse in Exodus 23. He said, The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of your Lord.

That has been called a classic one-sentence description of the law of first fruits. God deserves the first, the best of our wealth.

Not just what's left over after we've used it in the way that most pleases us.

One man explained how his father taught him to do this in a very helpful way. I want to tell you what he did. This man said, My dad placed a dollar bill on the table and then he placed ten dimes beside it and he told me those ten dimes equal that dollar bill.

And then he took those dimes and he stacked them up, a stack of dimes there on the table and he asked his son, the son said, he asked me, Which one of those dimes is the Lord's?

[14 : 55] And the boy said, the one on top. And the dad said, That's right. The one on top of that stack of dimes is the Lord's.

Always give him the first one, not the ones that you have left over after you've spent whatever you wanted to spend.

Now that's just a simple little story, example. You can visualize that. It's simple. It conveys the point of how we need to make giving the first 10% of our income to God our top financial priority.

You think about it. How else can we honor God? We're talking about acknowledging His importance, acknowledging His significance.

How else can we acknowledge or honor God with our wealth if we don't make giving to Him our first priority, our top priority?

[16 : 07] Now lest you think something like this is, well that's just Old Testament law type stuff, that was just applicable for the people of Israel, I want you to look at what the Apostle Paul says along this same line about our priority in giving.

Look at what he says, it's in 2 Corinthians 9. He says, remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

I want to pause there. What Proverbs says, honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce, that's what we ought to do.

God desires that we show our love and gratitude that we truly honor him by giving. Giving him the first fruits of what we make.

[17 : 16] Giving him off the top. Giving him the first priority. But look at that verse again. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

God only wants you to give what you give because you want to. Because it's in your heart to do it. God does, let me say it this way, no one's going to know what you give here.

I don't know and I don't ever want to know what anybody gives. What you give is going to be between you and God. Now the people who count it know it's recorded by financial secretary, that kind of stuff is all confidential.

But nobody's going to know and no one in the world would ever say anything to you, say anything to you that you ought to be giving more. That's not enough or anything like that. What you give is between you and God.

The Bible has much to say about what we ought to do. We ought to honor God with our wealth, with the first fruits. but when it comes time to actually give, what Paul is saying here is you need to give what you want to give, what's in your heart to give.

[18 : 40] You shouldn't give because you feel any kind of pressure and you need to give when you give it, cheerfully, with joy.

You're happy to do it. And if you can't give it that way, just don't give it. This is not about trying to get money from you. What we're reading here is God's word to His people wherever they are, whatever church they're a part of.

God is saying this for our benefit. If we're really His children and really want to honor Him and show Him that we honor Him, we need to give, we need to give off the top, but we need to give, not under compulsion, not reluctantly, but we need to give cheerfully.

And then that last verse, and God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

In other words, God will give you what He wants you to give. God will make it so that you can give if you will give obediently and faithfully. Now, let's make all this real personal.

[19 : 58] How does your giving compare with what we're looking at here in this passage, with what Paul said there? You think about you.

Do you honor God by making your offerings to Him your first priority in terms of what you do with your money? money? I mean, everybody in here who has some kind of income, it comes monthly, it comes bi-weekly, it comes weekly, it comes some time.

As your income comes in, as it becomes available to you, is your giving to God your first giving? because you want it to be. It's your priority, it's your commitment, it's how you want to honor God. Second question, do you express your gratitude to God for what He has given you by giving back to Him?

In other words, do you honor God with your wealth because you recognize that what you've got, God has allowed you or enabled you to have?

[21 : 19] And so you're giving to express your gratitude to Him, and you're acknowledging that it does come from Him. Number three, do you demonstrate your trust in God to supply all your needs by giving Him the first fruits of your income?

Now, it does take faith. When your income comes in, let's just say it's there in the bank. If you're going to give to God first, no matter what, you've got to have trust and confidence that once I give to God, He's going to enable me to fulfill all my other obligations.

promises. He's going to enable me, He's going to meet my needs. Now, God promises to meet our needs, but does not promise to meet all of our wants.

He doesn't promise to fulfill all of our wish lists. And God expects us, as the book of Proverbs, and we'll talk about that later on down the road, God expects us to be wise managers of our money.

If we will have, if we'll be wise managers of our money, and understand the difference between needs and wants, we can give off the top, and we can trust God to meet our needs, and to have what we need to have, but I want to be honest with you.

[23 : 01] To give, like we're talking about this morning, you can't do everything that everybody else does. You will sacrifice something in order to give to God.

When I was growing up, when my boys were growing up, it was not unusual for people to tell their children, it wasn't unusual for children to say to their friends that they couldn't do something because we can't afford it.

And there was no shame in that. There was no embarrassment or disgrace. There was a lot of things when I was growing up, we couldn't do because my family couldn't afford it.

My mother and daddy both worked, and they did well, but we couldn't afford to do everything that everybody did. And when my boys were growing up, Lisa and I both, we never, ever hesitated or felt any shame at all to say to them, we can't afford to do that because we could not afford to do that and give what we were going to give to the Lord and manage the rest of it in a wise way.

And if you won't teach your children today lessons like we can't afford it, you are setting them up for financial ruin themselves if you don't follow yourself first.

[24 : 33] We're talking not just about giving this one, we're talking about being wise with our money. We're talking about being good stewards with our resources. resources. You cannot do everything, have everything that everybody else has and give to God.

I'll just say it right there, but so be it. So be it. It is better to be faithful to God and obedient to God and not have the latest gadget than to have the latest gadget.

for you and your family and knowing that you're disobedient to God. Fourth question, what kind of commitment to God do you demonstrate by your giving?

And every single one of us in here, we are demonstrating some kind of commitment to God by our giving. Are you pleased with it?

Final thought, verse 10, a wise person understands he can never out-give God. Look at it. Then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

[25 : 54] Speaking to people who are farming, agricultural mindset here, what it is promising that God will meet your needs. God will give you what He wants you to have.

God will bless faithful giving. Now, this can be abused and it has been abused by these health and wealth type preachers. What they'll always say is, you give to me and God will bless you.

Watch these birds who are always trying to entice you to give to them instead of thinking in terms of giving to God in various ways.

it's not a promise, this is not, this is not a promise that the way to become rich is to give to God.

We've already seen, you know this anyway, Proverbs are not promises, they are general statements of how life normally works.

Proverbs are general statements of how life normally works. That's what Solomon intended as he wrote this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a general principle that God blesses those who make him their priority in their giving, not because they want greater wealth, but because they want to honor God.

[27 : 17] Don't think in terms of I give so God will make me wealthy, or I give to get. That's not what he's talking about there. This verse is telling us that as a general rule, giving generously to honor God will result in God giving us greater wealth.

But the point is not that God's going to make you rich. The point is that as you give to honor God, you're going to be blessed by God. He's going to give you more so that you can continue to honor Him with your giving.

God gives to those who will be wise, who will seek to do His will, who will seek to honor Him and be a blessing to other people with their money.

Now lest you think this is just some kind of obscure verse here, look in Proverbs 11, verse 24, it's on the screen. One gives freely, yet grows all the richer.

Another withholds what he should give and only suffers want. God blesses generosity, but He withholds blessing from the greedy as a general rule.

[28 : 32] Generosity is the better path or the best path to greater wealth if our desire is to honor God with it all and to be faithful stewards with what God gives us.

But stinginess and greed is a path to financial ruin in the long run. I have no idea what anybody in this church gives nor do I ever want to know.

Don't tell me. I would not want to know what you give. It's none of my business. But I am confident that many people in this church give to God just like this proverb says.

There's no doubt in my mind that many people in this church honor the Lord with their wealth, with the first fruits of all their produce. The tithes and offerings that come in that you can read about in the newsletter just like I do.

Those tithes and offerings, that amount would not come in if there were not people who were faithfully honoring God with their wealth. And if that's you, I pray that God will affirm you in that.

[29 : 50] Thank you. from your church family. Many people in this church, they can read Proverbs 9 and 10 and they can say, I know it from experience.

Lisa and I, we can say that from 38 years experience of marriage, giving this way, God does work this way.

And we've done it for 38 years by the grace of God. When we first got married for the first four years, one of us was in school full time. When we first got married for the first several years, while our children were young, we had one income.

Our boys grew up just like the average person in this church. We put them through college, just like a lot of you. I know what it's like.

Lisa and I know what it's like. At various stages, various levels of income, various expenses, we know what it's like to sweat when you pay your bills, when your children's involved in a lot of things, especially they're going to college.

[31 : 08] college, that's tough. But God has always been faithful. God has always blessed us with a whole lot more than we needed.

And I know for a fact, because I've heard some of you say it, that is the testimony of many people in this room and many Christians in this world. But if you do not honor God in your giving, as this proverb is telling us to do, I want to ask you, why not?

Is it that you really just don't trust God to meet your legitimate needs if you give? That's a trust issue. a trust God issue.

You need to think about that. Or do you really want to say to God, Lord, I can't trust you. I believe you sent Jesus, your son into the world to die for my sins. I believe you'll take care of me for all eternity because I'm trusting in him and him alone for my salvation.

But I don't trust you to meet my needs on a regular monthly basis. Or if you're not honoring God, giving him, giving him like this, could it be that you just don't love him enough?

[32 : 34] You don't really want to give him like this because you don't have the kind of relationship with him that compels you to just want to express your love and gratitude and appreciation by giving.

Could it just be that, just to be all honest, you're just basically selfish and greedy. What's yours is yours. And you're not going to give any to anybody.

You're going to take care of you. There's a lot of people in this world today, even in some churches. If you're not giving to God, you're not honoring God with your giving and making him your first priority.

I'm being very serious here. What is your problem? because there is a problem. If God is convicting you that there is a problem, I want you to understand this is sin.

And if you'll confess it to God, repent of this attitude, these ways, and seek his forgiveness, he'll forgive you and cleanse you, and then make a commitment that you are going to seek as of today, starting to honor God with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.

[33 : 56] values. But now you've got to ask God for the wisdom to know where to start and how to start.

Because you're not starting at ground zero, you've got bills, you've got obligations. So you need to ask God to give you the wisdom to know how to start honoring him with your wealth, making him, giving to him your first priority.

God will give you that wisdom. He'll help you to start, start where you are. But the important thing we need to understand this morning is wise people honor God with their wealth.

They make giving to him their first priority when it comes to how they use their money. Let's pray together. Father, Father, help us to hear you this morning about this general principle of life in relation to money.

Father, if there are people in this room who are not Christians, help them to understand that this message is not for them. because what you want from them is their heart, their life first.

[35 : 29] And if that's the case, I pray, dear God, that you would just compel that person to admit their sin, their selfishness and turn from it and understand that when Jesus died on the cross, he paid the penalty for their sin.

Cause that man or woman or young person to call upon Jesus to save them right now. Lord, I pray that you will affirm those who are seeking to honor you with their wealth.

But Lord, I pray that you will convict those who aren't to start now. And assure them that you will guide them along the way.

Show them how. If they want to. And they'll make the commitment to start. In an attitude of prayer, let's just listen to the Lord and respond to him. And I'll be happy to pray with you, help you here at the front.

If you come down during the next few minutes. Amen. Amen.