

PROVERBS: THE WAY OF WISDOM

GREED & GENEROSITY

Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: 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. — Proverbs 30:7-9

Read: Proverbs 28:6-8, 19-27

The numbers tell a story, and the story is a scary one. The majority of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. The average credit card debt per U.S. household is well over \$10,000. Crushing student loans are sitting at an average of \$40,000 per borrower. When it comes to money, we have a problem. In a time when financial wisdom eludes us, Proverbs shines like a light in the darkness. In all of Scripture, this book is best suited to shape our perspective on money. Not only does Proverbs frequently speak about money, but it approaches the topic realistically. Being rich isn't any better than being poor, and vice versa. Both poverty and wealth provide unique temptations and challenges. No matter our account balance, Proverbs calls us to steward our money with wisdom.

According to Scripture, more money isn't the answer to our money problems. Money isn't everything. What's more valuable than money? Proverbs lays out an extensive list. Wisdom, humility, friendship, and righteousness are all far better than money. And most importantly, the fear of the Lord is more valuable than what money can offer us. Money cannot satisfy our restless hearts. When our lives are driven by accumulating wealth, we invite greed into our hearts. Greed leads us to take for our own benefit. It oppresses the poor and fuels division. Although greed holds out the promise of fulfillment, it never comes. Greed is like a black hole: it can never be filled, but consumes and devours forever.

Wisdom reveals that greedy people will end up poor in every sense of the word. But at the same time, the generous will grow rich in ways that exceed mere wealth. To see this truth, we only need to look at the life of Jesus. No human has ever been more generous than Christ. As 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich." In humility, he gave his life so that the spiritual poor may be rich in mercy. He laid down what was rightfully his own so we could have an eternal inheritance. God is generous, and he calls us to follow him in generosity.

Discussion/Reflection

We want to apply God's wisdom to transform how we think, feel, and act. The following questions are meant to stimulate conversation, correction, and change.

1. **How is God's wisdom on money different from the world's wisdom?**
2. **What are some specific ways you are looking to money to fix problems in your life? How does this misplaced hope rear its ugly head?**
3. **Right now, what is keeping you from being more generous with your finances? What is one step you can take to be more faithful in this area?**