

MONEY AND PROVERBS (Part 2):  
PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF GETTING IT AND SPENDING IT

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The state of our economy is much in the news with national elections looming on the horizon for this fall. Inflation is a central part of this economic picture. Government spending coming out of the pandemic has seemingly contributed to this inflation. As a result, the Federal Reserve has felt compelled to raise interest rates. That in turn has adversely affected the housing market.

According to Redfin Monthly Housing Data the average price of a house in Nevada is \$437,000. The average mortgage interest rate on a 30 year loan is about 7.6%. If one was to finance that \$437,000 house with a thirty year loan on \$350,000--- assuming that somehow the buyer could come up with an \$87,000 down payment, the monthly mortgage payment would be close to \$2500 a month. That is a lot of money for young couples to come up with. According to Zillow the average rent in Nevada is \$2100 a month. That also sounds like a lot of money to me, especially considering that my mortgage involves a 2.25% interest rate. Of course, other kinds of loans and credit card debt are also affected by these high interest rates.

A central issue in this whole deal is borrowing money. The Book of Proverbs contains wise advice to the people of God about borrowing and other practical aspects of getting and spending money. The theme of the Book of Proverbs that we have been studying is wisdom, which I have defined as “skill in daily, godly living.” These proverbs are not absolute guarantees. They are general principles of wisdom which generally prove to be true.

Two weeks ago we considered what the Proverbs have to say about the attitude that the wise man should have about money in general. We saw that the wise man will not make the acquisition of money his top priority in life. We saw the pursuit of money compared a number of times in the book to the pursuit of wisdom and character development. King Solomon stressed that wisdom and character development are much more important goals in life than making money. A right attitude toward money, according to the Book of Proverbs, will also be reflected in generosity.

I.

Today we are going to look at practical principles in the Proverbs that deal with the handling of money. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. GETTING MONEY) First, we are going to look at the income side of the ledger. What are the Biblical principles that we need to understand in GETTING MONEY?

A.

(I. GETTING MONEY A. HARD WORK) At the top of the list we find in this Old Testament book the importance of HARD WORK. We saw that a couple of weeks ago when we were looking at what the Proverbs have to say about the lazy man. In terms of the value of work in getting money we can consider #10 v. 4 (PROVERBS 10:4), which says, **“A slack hand causes poverty,/ but the hand of the diligent makes rich.”**

Here and elsewhere in the book we are told that the wise man will be a hard worker, and he or she can expect to be rewarded financially for his labor. Wealth acquired by virtue is a good thing. Such is the lesson we learned when we looked at verses about laziness and the sluggard.

Professor Rodney Stark in a book entitled *The Victory of Reason* says that the wealth and progress of Western Civilization are due to Christians who bought into Biblical values like hard work. He writes, **“The success of the West, including the rise of science, rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about were devout Christians.”** Historically Christians worked hard, delayed gratification, cared for their families, and saved for the future.

B.

(I. GETTING MONEY A. B. HONEST DEALINGS) The next principle that I find in the Proverbs about getting money has to do with the importance of HONEST DEALINGS. Look first at #10 v. 3 (PROVERBS 10:3): **“The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry,/ but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.”** The author of this proverb, perhaps Solomon himself, has learned from his observations of life that the righteous--- those who live by godly principles--- seem to be taken care of by the Lord in one way or another. They seem not to go hungry. This is generally the case, but there may be exceptions. Such is the nature of wisdom literature.

In the New Testament Jesus talks about two possible masters that we may serve in life. He says that we can serve God or Mammon, i.e. money, but we cannot serve them both. We must choose between them. Ultimately it is a choice about where our security in life will lie. If we choose to serve money, then we will give up godliness. For if the thing that drives us in life is making money, then we will sacrifice honesty and ethics and righteousness when our financial goals are threatened.

If we choose to serve God, He may bless us with money, or He may not. But the author sees generally that God takes care of those who choose to serve Him. The proverbs in this book tell us that the best security really lies in serving God, which will be reflected in righteous living. That righteous living will be demonstrated by obedience to God's laws and man's laws in our business life.

A second verse that relates to this subject is #11 v. 1 (PROVERBS 11:1) It says, **“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,/ but a just weight is his delight.”** Back in that time commodities were often bought and sold not with bills or coins but in terms of the weight of a certain amount of gold or silver or other precious metals. Merchants

and businessmen would carry around with them scales or balances (BALANCES, ANCIENT) with a set of weights.

A dishonest trader carried in his bag two sets of weights--- one that was lighter than it should be to use to buy more of whatever he was purchasing than he legitimately should be getting. He also had a set of heavier weights that he would use in selling so that he was giving up less than what he should be giving up to a buyer. Archaeologists have discovered many of these ancient weights. Few of them are exactly identical in weight. So this issue of differing weights was a real issue in ancient times.  
(PROJECTOR OFF)

The author in Proverbs #11 v. 1 says that this kind of dishonesty in trying to make an extra gain is not just a sin against another person, it is an abomination before God. Today we have state and local standards boards that go around and check scales in the grocery store and pumps at gas stations. So correct standards and weights are not so much of a problem for us.

But there is a broader application to all of us that we are to be honest in all of our dealings in which we earn money. We are to be honest with our time cards, with our expense reports, with our business expenses and with our sales pitches, if we are selling a product or service. We are to be fair and just in the treatment of our employees.

Initially it may sometimes seem that the sales person who stretches the truth and applies pressure to buy his product has an unfair advantage over another who places a higher priority on integrity. Sometimes that person or company may do better financially-- at least in the short term. But sometimes they do not.

I have a mechanic who services and repairs my cars who is an honest man. I have had issues which I have suspected might involve expensive repairs. The mechanic could have put in new parts when I did not need them. But he has turned down opportunities to do that. Most of the auto repair places in our town seem to have a good reputation. In a smaller town like ours, word gets around pretty fast about businessmen who are dishonest and take advantage of customers. Honesty generally tends to pay off in the long run.

C.

(I. GETTING MONEY A. B. C. BRIBERY) There are a number of proverbs which deal with BRIBERY. Let's look at one from Proverbs #15 v. 27 (PROVERBS 15:27):

**“Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.”** The Hebrew word for “greedy” implies gain by dishonesty or violence. The second line specifies bribery. Greediness makes one susceptible to bribery. The author says that while the one involved in bribery may think that he is bringing prosperity to himself and his family, in the end it will bring trouble to his or her family.

The consensus is that these proverbs were collected and arranged originally for the purpose of training young men for government service. Occasionally they might be tempted to bribe higher officials to improve their own job standing. Perhaps more often the danger was that they would be tempted to receive bribes from citizens who wish to receive special favors. Bribery is occasionally a problem in our country. In many other parts of the world it is much more common. It is unfortunately regarded as a typical way of doing business.

A group called Transparency International conducted a survey several years ago of government practices in 95 different countries. This outfit found that in one year an average of one in four people paid a bribe to a government official to achieve some favor.

D.

(I. A. B. C. D. CHARGING INTEREST) The fourth principle that relates to making money that I find in Proverbs involves CHARGING INTEREST. The Old Testament prohibits Jews from collecting interest from fellow Jews. Consider Proverbs #28 v. 8 (PROVERBS 28:8): **“Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit/ gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.”** The original Hebrew word translated here as “profit” has an uncertain meaning. It always appears in the Old Testament with the term translated here as “interest.”

Interest in these days involved a fixed loan fee that withheld part of the loan at the beginning of the transaction. Exodus #22 v. 25 commanded the Israelites not to charge interest on a loan to a fellow Jew who is poor. Leviticus #25 vv. 35-37 say the same thing. Deuteronomy #23 v. 19 said that no interest was to be charged on a loan to any fellow Jew. Deuteronomy #23 v. 20 said that foreigners, however, could be charged interest.

In applying these ideas and this proverb today, we have to realize that both the economic and religious systems were different in these Biblical days. According to the Old Testament law the Israelites were bound together with each other, not only as fellow countrymen but also as fellow participants in a spiritual covenant with God. That meant, among other things, that they had a moral responsibility for the well-being of their fellow Jews. The economic situation was such that people did borrowing because they were in financial difficulties. Maybe there was illness; maybe there was famine. But people did not normally borrow money to buy a new chariot or to build a new house. That isn't how things were done.

In Chapter 28 reference is made to the poor in vv. 3, 6, and 11. The context suggests that in v. 8 the author is talking about loans made to poor countrymen. Most scholars agree that the ten passages in Proverbs that refer to loans deal with acts of charity made to help the poor rather than to loans of a commercial nature.

Proverbs 28:8 implies that charging interest in this situation is wrong. It says that God will sovereignly divert such unjust profits to people who are more generous to the poor.

The application then to us is not that our modern banking system is inherently sinful. The application is this: We who are truly Christians are children of God. Therefore we have a family responsibility to one another. If we loan a fellow Christian money because he or she is in some kind of financial difficulty, we ought not to charge interest.

E.

(i. A-D. E. BORROWING) The last principle deals with a related issue. It deals specifically with BORROWING. Proverbs #22 v. 7 addresses this. It says (PROVERBS 22:7), **“The rich rules over the poor,/ and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”** It may be helpful to keep in mind that there are many issues that the Proverbs deal with where the question is not about sin versus no sin. The issue often has to do with the wiser course of action, the path that is most likely to be beneficial in the long run. The last verse that we looked at seemed to assume that borrowing or lending under certain conditions is not sinful. The proverb here seems to imply that, from the borrower’s perspective, it is better to avoid it if possible.

Again the Old Testament borrowing situation was much different than what we have today. They did not have banks as we know them. Borrowing was done on the personal level. There also was no such thing as bankruptcy. If you defaulted on a loan, you might be forced to sell yourself as a slave to your creditor. If that did not cover the loan amount, your wife and kids might have to become slaves, too. So the borrower literally could become the lender’s slave.

This proverb implies that there is more involved than that. It points to the notion that there will be a change in the relationship between the people involved. The borrower now has an obligation to the creditor. He owes that person something. In a sense he is going to be working for that person to return his money. That creditor is in a position to do the borrower harm if the money is not forthcoming.

The application to us Christians would be that it is wise to avoid borrowing money from other individuals. It is not sin if we do it. Sometimes it may be unavoidable. But as Romans #13 v. 8 (ROMANS 13:8) encourages us, the ideal is: **“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”**

My interpretation is that dealing with financial institutions is a somewhat different matter. The proverbs in this book were not addressing the kind of economic system that we have today. That needs to be taken into consideration as we try to apply these Biblical principles. (PROJECTOR OFF) Banks and credit unions and mortgage companies are in business to loan money. In order to own a house or to expand a business today, we typically need to borrow money. Sometimes we are part owners of the institution involved. Typically we put up our house or a car when we borrow money as collateral. If we go under financially, we don’t have to sell our kids or ourselves as slaves. The lending institution may sell the house and get their money back in that way. Perhaps they will repossess the car.

The real trouble comes when we acquire excessive debt, when it becomes questionable as to whether we have the assets and income to back up our loan. We also get into trouble when we don't pay off our credit card balances. Credit cards are designed, in a sense, to make us slaves. According to Forbes Advisor the average credit card rate today in the US is 27.9%. That is a very expensive way to borrow money. The average per person balance on those credit cards is \$6500. (Wallet Hub)

We live in a society that encourages us to live beyond our means. We are bombarded with commercials and advertisements and the lifestyles of people around us that convince us that all kinds of products and services are things that we just need to have. We owe it to ourselves and our families. Much of that presentation is a lie. We would be better off to live within our means. Sometimes we aren't sure if we are living within our means because we aren't living by a budget. Having a budget is often a good thing to have.

#### II.A.

(II. SPENDING MONEY) Let's move on to the other side of the ledger. What does Proverbs have to say about SPENDING MONEY? (II. SPENDING MONEY A. HONESTY) There are several verses that stress the importance of HONESTY in spending. Look at #20 v. 14 (PROVERBS 20:14): **“Bad, bad,’ says the buyer,/ but when he goes away, then he boasts.”**

The warning is perhaps directed to the naive seller who is trying to make money. But the proverb clearly implies that there can be a wrong attitude in the buyer. Bargaining has been part of the Middle Eastern culture not just for centuries, but for millennia. So bargaining is not the problem. The problem is with a buyer who is rude and insulting and who takes advantage of a financial situation that forces someone to sell cheaply. All the while the buyer is demeaning the article or service in question. Then he goes away and gloats over the deal that he got and how he stuck it to the seller.

#### B.

(II. SPENDING MONEY A. B. HYPOCRISY) Honesty is also involved in the second item under spending money. The issue is HYPOCRISY. Consider Proverbs #13 v. 7 (PROVERBS 13:7): **“One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing;/ another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.”**

The point is that we should not pretend to have a certain level of income that we do not. The poor person may pretend to be rich because he wants to impress or control or manipulate. The rich person may fake poverty as an excuse for miserliness, perhaps in that early context to avoid giving alms. The wise person needs to see through financial appearances.

In a Christian congregation some of us may be tempted to appear to have less money than we do so that others do not feel jealous or bad or whatever. But if our attitude toward money is right, and if we are generous in the use of our talents and energy and money, we do not need to feel bad to have a nice car or a nice house or nice toys. We

do not flaunt our wealth, but we do not deny God's goodness to us either. Having financial resources is an opportunity to give the Lord credit for His blessing in our lives.

C.

(I. A. B. C. LENDING) Next we are going to look at what Proverbs tells us about LENDING. We are going to consider the first four verses of #6. They tell us this (PROVERBS 6:1-2): **“My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,/ have given your pledge for a stranger,/ if you are snared in the words of your mouth,/ caught in the words of your mouth, (PROVERBS 6:3-4) then do this, my son, and save yourself,/ for you have come into the hand of your neighbor:/ go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor./ Give your eyes no sleep/ and your eyelids no slumber...”**

Remember again that King Solomon probably compiled these verses for the original purpose of using them in the training of young men for government service. Here he wanted them to be aware of the dangers of putting up security for someone else. Today we might call this cosigning a loan. It could also include putting up money for bail for someone who has been arrested.

(PROVERBS 6:1-2) The first line of v. 1 calls the borrower a “neighbor.” The second line calls him a “stranger.” That is perhaps a bit strong. The NIV translation calls the individual in line 2 of v. 1 simply “another.” The first and second line are probably referring to the same person. The two lines appear to be an example synonymous parallelism. The young man in view has become a cosigner. The borrower is not a relative and probably not even a close friend. He is an acquaintance, a neighbor. Verse 2 implies that the young man has acted hastily and without thinking things through. The remaining verses strongly urge him to do all that he can to get out of this agreement.

The point seems to be that it is unwise to become surety, or put up security, for a borrower to whom we have no primary obligation and who may not be accountable to us. It is not saying: Do not help the needy. It is saying: Be careful about signing yourself away to someone whom you may not know very well or about making a financial commitment to someone the implications of which one may not realize, or that may cause hardship in fulfilling.

Chapter 11 v. 15 touches on the same subject (PROVERBS 11:15) It says, **“Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm,/ but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure.”** There are dangers that may result from putting up security for another, especially for a stranger. The cosigner may lose money. The borrower's attitude toward the cosigner may be affected. Potentially the cosigner may feel anger toward the debtor if he does not pay up. If a significant amount of money is involved, the cosigner and his family may suffer financial harm.

Earlier we looked at Proverbs 22:7 (PROVERBS 22:7), which says, **“The rich rules over the poor,/ and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”** We looked at that verse from the perspective of the borrower. But there are implications here, too, for the

creditor, or cosigner. If we are loaning money of some significance, or putting our credit on the line, the relationship may change. That friend now owes us. He has some kind of debt or obligation toward us. If for some reason he or she defaults, he or she will probably feel guilty, and we may be upset.

Over the years Suzy and I have occasionally made loans to people in need. Sometimes they have paid us back. Sometimes they have not. The policy which we have come to follow most of the time is not to loan money to people. If it seems appropriate to give money to someone in need, we usually do it without strings attached. If we aren't willing to give it away, then most of the time we won't loan it out either. That way it seems that relationships are less likely to be injured. Shakespeare was probably not far off the mark when one of his characters in "Hamlet" said **"Neither a borrower nor a lender be,/ For loan oft loses both itself and friend."**

D.

(II. A-C D. SAVING) The last category to consider under spending is SAVING. The proverb which we will look at is #13 v. 22 (PROVERBS 13:22): **"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,/ but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous."** The individual whose life is characterized by sin is usually an undisciplined person. So what money he or she has, is usually spent. In the end it typically ends up in the hands of people who live by better standards.

The good man leaves an inheritance for his grandchildren. That means that he has saved some money. That usually takes work and discipline. It requires planning. It takes budgeting. It means delayed gratification. It means that this individual doesn't buy into the philosophy of the world around us that we owe it to ourselves to live well, whether we can afford it or not. The saver determines not to live beyond his means. He determines not to get caught up in credit card debt.

This individual also recognizes the value of compounding. A little money set aside regularly beginning early in life in a reasonable investment will over time increase significantly in value. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to do this. You just have to be disciplined and methodical.

Proverbs #30 vv. 7-9 (PROVERBS 30:7-8) expresses an appropriate conclusion to a consideration of the wise use of money. It reads, **"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 (PROVERBS 30:9), 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."**

Many of us may have prayed that the Lord might keep us from poverty, but few of us, I suspect, have prayed that the Lord would keep us from riches. Perhaps all of us deep down think that we could handle that. But wisdom teaches that there are dangers in both. The lesson is that we need to find our real security in the Lord and seek to use wisely what money He sovereignly chooses to give us. The Bible assures us that if we



have trusted in Jesus who died for our sins, we have the greatest security that we could imagine. For the Bible tells us that eternal life and a trip to heaven are ours simply as a result of receiving the gift of salvation by faith in Jesus.