



WISE GIVING

Introduction: We need to be wise with the money that God has given to us. He is our provider. It is his job to apportion what we receive, and our job to manage it faithfully. The first step in managing our money wisely is to give back to God.

This Week's Primary Text: Proverbs 3:9-10

Sermon Points:

1. We start by giving to God because he gave to us first

Godly wisdom challenges our perspective. The world will tell us to keep every bit of the money we make for ourselves, whereas Godly wisdom teaches us to think beyond our own desires and to give.

In the Old Testament, God expected the people of Israel to give him the first fruits of their crop. As farmers, they knew that the entire success of their crop was dependent on God providing the exact conditions that they needed in order to bring about their harvest. It would have made total sense to them to give back to God for his abundant blessing.

God is the source of all of our wealth too. Whatever we have, he has provided the means for us to attain. Our part is to work hard, and to show up to the best of our abilities, in order to make the most of what he has given to us.

It is important for us to all acknowledge that there is no such thing as "self-made" wealth. Every single opportunity and situation that worked favorably towards the generation of that wealth was permitted by God. He could just have easily stopped, hindered or even unraveled every deal that brought about success at the last minute, which would have resulted in a very different financial outcome.

God is our provider. Everything good comes from him (James 1:17). Romans 8:32 tells us that God has provided for our greatest need - the atonement for our sins - through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It then asks us a rhetorical question, if God has been so generous in giving up his own life for us, then won't he be generous towards us in all areas of life as well? The answer is an obvious and resounding "Yes".

2. We start by giving to God because he deserves our worship

Proverbs instructs us to *honour* the Lord with our wealth. The choice to honour someone is far above just a sense of duty," but is the determined, purposed decision to give to someone the greatness, glory and praise that they deserve - because of who they are. Honouring the Lord, is an act of worship. How we use our time, treasure and talent all reveals what we honour most. If we esteem ourselves most highly, it will show in the way we spend our time, energy and money.





If we are to honour the Lord with our wealth, we will be glad to give to him the first fruits of our wealth, with a heart of joy.

Honouring God with our wealth is a heart issue. If we have only been given a very small amount of money with which to give, we can give that small amount with a generous heart. God is pleased with this kind of giving. The amount we give is not the issue – the heart is. God knows what he has given us, and he knows our hearts towards him. He knows whether we give to him in worship and honour, or if we give to him begrudgingly, hoping that he will, in turn, top us up for being dutiful. If we struggle to worship God through our giving, let's ask him to change our hearts so that we will be released from our desire to control our own wealth and hold onto it, as though we have no provider.

3. We start by giving to God because God rewards wise stewardship

We know that laziness is not an option for us, and that in life you have to work hard in order to get anywhere. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 even tells us that if we will not work, then we will have nothing to eat. But there is more to it than just the basic reaping and sowing principle at play. Reaping and sowing is the only way a farmer is able to harvest a crop, but even those necessities only get a farmer so far. Without the right amount of sunshine and rain, his work will come to nothing. There is always the God-element required, in order for anything in our lives to flourish. Our flourishing requires God's design and blessing. One of the ways he has said that we will flourish is when we are good stewards. If we are good stewards of what he has given us, he will give us more to be faithful with. Our giving back to him is one of the primary ways we demonstrate good stewardship.

Discussion Questions:

1. Godly wisdom says that we should give to God, rather than keep it all to ourselves. Why is this true?
2. There is no such thing as "self-made" wealth without God's intervention. Explain why this is true, and then what the implications for Christians could be?
3. What is the link between honour and worship?
4. Why is the way we spend our money an indicator of what we worship?
5. *Personal reflection: Read Matthew 6:19-21, and then consider your current spending patterns. What does your spreadsheet reveal about what you value most?*
6. If we struggle to give to God generously, and only give begrudgingly each month, what is it that we are struggling to believe? Explain.
7. Why is God more concerned about our hearts than the amount we give? (See 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 for further thought).
8. Why is our giving to God, a primary display of good stewardship, and why do you think he rewards us with more, if we handle his resources well?

