



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V21 N41 November 17, 2019

TOXIC

“The Lethal Lure of Greed ”
Proverbs 11:24

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Generosity

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 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.”
2 Corinthians 9:6-7



Is greed ever good?

Greed, according to Webster's Dictionary, is the “excessive desire to acquire or possess more (especially more material wealth) than one needs or deserves.” Greed is similar to envy but with an emphasis on excessiveness. Envy can be had over the smallest of things your neighbor possesses. Unbridled greed wants more than what your neighbor has; greed wants the entire neighborhood. Greed does not require the possessions of another. You can be greedy with no one else around.

Money or possessions are most often connected to greed. People can be greedy for power or fame, but even these are often desired because of their connection to wealth. 1 Timothy 6:10 states it well: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” The “love of money” comes from a single Greek word, *philarguros*. This word is comprised of two root words – *phila* meaning “love of” and *arguros* meaning “silver.” The Periodic Table of Elements uses “Ag” as the symbol for silver. For ages people have struggled with the elemental desire for wealth.

Greed produces many pathologies that lead to many sorrows. Stinginess, hoarding, boasting and “show-boating” often accompany greed. Once you get what you want, you have to do something with what you now have. Many people obsess over their many possessions and worry that they may soon lose them. Others may flash their wealth to show a level of superiority. Unfortunately, what we have often ends up having us, making us slaves to the task of protecting or projecting our assets.

Many solutions for greed have been tried, most with limited success. Some have tried to stamp out greed with collectivism or monasticism. Others have tried excessive regulation and taxation. Some have declared that greed is good and should not be regulated at all. None of these solutions has offered relief from the excessive and reprehensible effects of greed.

Charles Dickens' most famous tale, *A Christmas Carol*, personified greed through one of the most iconic of evil characters in all of English literature, Ebenezer Scrooge. According to Dickens, Scrooge was “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster... He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.”

The transformation of this ogre of greed came after Scrooge realized he was not yet judged for his avarice. He opened his window on Christmas morning to learn he had more than wealth; he had life! And life was to be lived and shared with others. The 1970 film musical *Scrooge* began with a classic refrain, sung by Scrooge himself, entitled “I Hate People!” Scrooge angrily sang about those who frittered away his wealth. After Scrooge's transformation, this same refrain transforms into the joyous carol “I Like Life!” Scrooge's solution for greed was not regulation; rather it was the enjoyment of what he already had, shared with those around him. Greed is transformed through the practice of joy and generosity.



1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Proverbs 11:24-28

24 *One person gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.*

25 *A generous person will prosper;
whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

26 *People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray
God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.*

27 *Whoever seeks good finds favor,
but evil comes to one who searches for it.*

28 *Those who trust in their riches will fall,
but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*

READ in other translations

²⁴*One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers
want.*

²⁵*Whoever brings blessing will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered.*

²⁶*The people curse him who holds back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.*

²⁷*Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,
but evil comes to him who searches for it.*

²⁸*Whoever trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf. (ESV)*

²⁴*One person is generous and yet grows more wealthy,
but another withholds more than he should and comes to
poverty.*

²⁵*A generous person will be enriched,
and the one who provides water for others will himself
be satisfied.*

²⁶*People will curse the one who withholds grain,
but they will praise the one who sells it.*

²⁷*The one who diligently seeks good seeks favor,
but the one who searches for evil – it will come to him.*

²⁸*The one who trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.*

(NET Bible)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline each phrase that indicates positive result or blessing.
- Circle each phrase that indicates a negative result.
- Draw a box around expressions of generosity.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. List statements of *irony* in Proverbs 11:24-28. What makes these statements so ironic?
2. How is it possible to come to poverty if you are not wasting your resources (Proverbs 11:24)?
3. Proverbs 11:25 is only *positive*. How does this verse expand upon Proverbs 11:24a?
4. Is Proverbs 11:24-25 a guarantee that God will increase your wealth if you are generous? If not, what is the *purpose* of such a statement?
5. What does it mean to “withhold unduly”? How is this an expression of greed?
6. How does Proverbs 11:26 depict greed?
7. What does Proverbs 11:27 contribute to the subject of greed?
8. How is the second half of Proverbs 11:28 *different* from the first half of Proverbs 11:28?
9. Greedy people are rarely popular. Why is this so, according to Proverbs 11:24-28?
10. **Discussion:** What is the solution to a struggle with greed?

Commentary On The Text

As we have seen in other studies of the Book of Proverbs, chapters 1-9 are often treated as a collection of wisdom discourses specifically prepared by the old and delivered to the young and naïve. Proverbs 10-31 have been considered by most Bible scholars as a collection of short, random statements of wisdom coming from the wisdom and experience of King Solomon (Ch. 10-22:17) and other writers (Ch. 22:18-Ch. 31). These random statements of wisdom may be one or more verses in length. There seems to be a very loose arrangement of subject matter in this latter portion of the book of Proverbs.

The focus of our study this week is Proverbs 11:24. This proverb about wealth is related to other proverbs adjacent to it. Some have called this verse a literary “*janus*.” Janus was a mythological god of direction. He had two heads and could look both forwards and backwards at the same time. Proverbs 11:24 looks to verses before it for clarification and verses after it for examples. “On the one hand, it is linked with v. 23 lexically by [Hebrew] *'ak* 'only' (vv. 23a, 24b) and by the principle of paradoxical payments, which is now made concrete with reference to the generosity of the righteous and the measureless greed of the wicked (cf. 10:3; 21:26). On the other hand it is linked with vv. 25-26 by the principle of 'the tight-fisted man ends up poorer and the open-handed man richer'" (Bruce Waltke, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, “Proverbs 1-15,” 506). What is said about greed and generosity from Proverbs 11:24 will be further explained by verses before and after.

Features of a marketplace are assumed by Proverbs 11:24-28. Gain, prospering, refreshing, selling and thriving are all positive aspects of a healthy and vibrant marketplace. Business, especially of an agricultural nature, is presented as normal and expected. Negative comments made about wealth in this passage do not condemn commonplace market elements such as private property, production and profit. The Book of Proverbs as a whole does not condemn the basic building blocks of enterprise as greedy or undesirable. How profit is gained and what is done with accumulated wealth are of greater concern than the wealth itself. “Wealth itself is not regarded as something evil in Proverbs but as something to be desired provided one's priorities and motives are right.... There is no indication that the sages who compiled Proverbs envied the [wealthy] or wished to

attain the status and power which they had” (Ernest C. Lucas, *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*, “Proverbs,” 304).

Greed is a negative focus on wealth that seeks gain improperly (Proverbs 11:1, 18, 24, 26) or a trust in wealth rather than in God's power (Proverbs 11:4, 28). Specific mention of “withholding” (Proverbs 11:24) and “hoarding” (Proverbs 11:26) suggest that this activity was done in some way to produce wealth in an unethical manner. “The concreteness of this verse [Proverbs 11:26] is provided by an agrarian example ... since non-farmers would stand to be harmed by the withholding of grain to drive up the prices. The verse does not state why grain is being withheld, but the idea of getting a higher price for a scarce commodity seems a reasonable supposition” (Tremper Longman III, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament*, “Proverbs,” 263). “Hoarding” as stinginess to keep others from obtaining goods or services or “withholding unduly” in order to make people pay more for no other reason is condemned in these verses. “Price gouging” basic essentials in times of crisis may be a modern day example of such an unethical, greedy practice.

The contrast to greedy practices found in Proverbs 11:24-28 is the practice of generosity. Those freely giving (11:24), generous and refreshing others with their own wealth (Proverbs 11:25), would be considered the righteous who are trusting in God rather than in their own riches (Proverbs 11:28). Proverbs 11:25 uses hyperbole to show that those who are generous with their own wealth may experience excessive growth in the wealth they are attempting to give away. The “prospering” and “refreshing” here are superlatives denoting “fatness” and “overflow,” both images of excessive fullness. The verse is an ironic reversal of the stinginess and unethical manipulations of those whose only concern is their own profit. As with all proverbs, Proverbs 11:25 is a principle and not a concrete absolute.

Greed cheats, manipulates, hordes and does not seek the benefit of others. Generosity seeks to expand its markets, sells its goods at a fair and equitable price and finds ways to share its overflow. Surprisingly and ironically, generosity wins with counterintuitive moves and many people rejoice as a result (Proverbs 11:26). Those who trust in God rather than accumulated riches will tend to thrive and produce, whereas those who focus only on “return of investment” will be more prone to failure. For many, “growth” means “more in the bank.” For others “growth” means “more beneficiaries.” What does success mean for you?

Word Studies/Notes

v. 24 *gives freely* “Proverbs 11:24 states a paradox similar to that of Proverbs 11:17. Generosity would seem to diminish one's resources but in God's economy, brings gain - the reverse is true for those who are miserly (cf. 1 Cor 9:6)” (Lucas, 137).

v. 24 *gains* “The contrast of this verse has to do with generosity or the lack thereof. Contrasting the consequences between philanthropy and miserliness highlights the advantage of generosity. The former gets richer; the latter gets poorer. Thus, the contrast is paradoxical, since common sense might lead one to believe that holding on to one's possessions is a more certain way to wealth. This verse thus fits in with the extensive teaching in the book that promotes generosity as the actions of the wise. Since the latter is a major theme with in the book of Proverbs, we do not consider it an option to understand the verse as an admonition to invest in business ventures rather than keeping one's where-withal on deposit” (Longman, 262).

v. 25 *generous* Literally “a soul of blessing.” “A person who bestows blessings on others. (Vulgate: ‘a soul that blesses’). ‘Blessing’ here means material gifts, as in Gen. 33:11; Josh 15:19; 1Sam 25:27; and 2Kgs 5:15. In conjunction with Proverbs 11:24, this verse reinterprets v 24a (in spite of 24b,) by identifying the one who ‘scatters’ as one who is generous to others” (Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation and Commentary*, 543).

v. 26 *hoards grain* Verse contrasts “selling grain, presumably at normal market value versus hoarding it implicitly in starvation to drive up the price. [This “hoarding grain”] refers to the trader who holds back from sale life's subsistence, exploiting the need of others to advantage himself. ‘Grain’ refers to the precious cereals/grain of the field (Psalm 65:13-14; 72:16) brought to the threshing floor (Joel 2:24), from which food was made... To cover the need for grain from one harvest to the next, private storehouses were found under dwellings. The grain trader had larger stores at his disposal, which he presumably could hold back in times of shortage to raise the price. Huge grain pits are found at Gibeon and Megiddo. Amos 8:4-8 refers to this abuse in the sale of vital grain” (Waltke, 508).

v. 27 *seeks good* Positive comprehensive word with the broad scope of encompassing all of life. In all you do, do this, full of hope. “A single word, suggesting watching for the dawn, underlies the expression [seeks good]. For the general theme of the proverb see Proverbs 11:17” (Derek Kidner, *Tyn-dale OT Commentary*, “Proverbs,” 94).

v. 28 *trust* “The problem is not with wealth; indeed, Proverbs recognizes the value of wealth and the fact that it often can be a blessing of God (as in Proverbs 3:9-10). The issue is one's attitude toward it. Trust is something that should only be placed in God; wealth is a poor substitute. Righteousness implies godliness, in that one cannot be righteous without being godly. Thus, it is in one's relationship with God that leads to prosperity. The metaphor of the righteous blossoming like foliage naturally reminds one of the description of the righteous person in Ps. 1:2-3” (Longman, 265).

Other Texts to Consider

1 Timothy 6:17-19

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Beware of the tendency to hold on to your wealth *too tightly!* You will be richer than you can imagine if you pursue wealth as an overflow to the benefit of others.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Our family has lived on PBS Kids, Netflix or Amazon Prime and we have gotten by quite fine, contrary to what most people believe. Several summers ago, we traveled with my husband quite frequently and the kids got to experience the joys of cable TV. So many channels filled with so many commercials about so many things that could help them live their best life! Thanks, Cable TV. It was helpful for my kids to realize exactly what their parents are not providing to make them happy in life. No wonder they're bored! If they just had that "As seen on TV" toy, everything would be much better. Greed breeds discontent, dissatisfaction and disillusion. It causes kids to have a lack of appreciation for what they do have and increases resentment because of what they don't have. So how do we foster an attitude of contentment in our children? Gratitude and generosity are the antidote to greed. It's impossible to be a greedy giver. When we recognize all we have is from the Lord, it's easier to hold loosely our possessions and even easier to share His blessings with others. Consider this season making a family list of things you are thankful for. Or, help your kids spearhead a neighborhood canned food or coat drive. When we give freely we extend God's kindness and blessings to others, but we gain even more (Proverbs 11:24). More peace, more contentment, more delight in the Lord. We are praying for your family!

What Does The Bible Say?	What Do You Think?	What Do You Do?
<p>Read Proverbs 11:24.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What happens to the person who gives freely? 2. What happens to the person who withholds? 3. What are the two attitudes in this proverb? 	<p>What is the "more" people gain when giving freely?</p>	<p>What do you have extra? Do you have a closet filled with clothes or toys you aren't using? Do you have household items or blankets that others might need? Go through your room and find 10 things that would be a blessing to someone else and donate these items.</p>

CORE COMPETENCY: Generosity

I give away my faith, life, money, and time to help with God's work.

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 11:25

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

KidPIX COUPON

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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