



Theme: Summer Wisdom in Proverbs and James

"Financial Wisdom"

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Weekly Memory Verse:

***²⁴ Give freely and become more wealthy;
be stingy and lose everything.*** – Proverbs 11:24

Meditation Moments for Monday, August 17 – Our memory verse for the week is **Proverbs 11:24**: *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* Pray this verse as you begin time with God today. Is there a word in this proverb that grabs your heart? What is that word and why does it speak to you today? Now read **Proverbs 11:23-31**. The section contains our memory verse for this week, but is there another proverb that speaks to you from this list today? What about it speaks to you?

 Today's verses contain the memory verse for this week. There are several passages in this section which speak about wisdom in finances. Considering these were written by one of the wealthiest men to ever live, king Solomon, it's clear that he learned that wealth by itself doesn't bring happiness. When have you found it true that giving freely brings true wealth? Have you ever experienced that holding on to something like money or another object too tightly leads to losing that very thing that you valued? How might you give more freely this week of your resources, whether that might be time or wealth?

 Verse 28 gives another perspective on this idea of wealth or money. The core issue is trust. When have you trusted in the wrong thing? Have there been times in your life when something has grabbed your heart and it has led to pain and hurt? Notice that in this verse the term "godly" is not capitalized. That is done on purpose by the author most likely to have us recognize that being godly is not about being God or even being like God, but instead putting God first. When we do that the promise is for something like spring where new life is blooming.

But in order for spring to come, there must be a winter. How might you trust God during times that feel like winter, holding on to the truth that when we keep our faith in the right things spring will eventually come?

Prayer: *Gracious God, I sometimes struggle with giving freely. Help me to realize that true wealth comes from a willingness to give. Jesus promised us that in giving we will receive. May I trust that truth today, knowing that even if I'm going through a winter season, spring will come because of your promise of new life and resurrection. Amen.*

Tuesday, August 18 – Read aloud our memory verse for the week, **Proverbs 11:24:** *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* Read **Proverbs 27:18-23**. What proverb grabs your heart as you read them?

 Let's focus on verse 18 which talks about how we treat workers and even family members who might be entrusted to us. This last weekend we heard the story of Sol Price, the son of Jewish immigrants from Belarus. This proverb informed his business model which would lead to things like Costco and Walmart as he is often considered the “father” of the “warehouse store” retail model. He believed in putting the customer first but a close second was what he called “social responsibility” towards employees, providing a working wage, housing, and healthcare, believing they were his most important asset. How have you been viewed by others when you've worked for them? Have you felt like an asset or something to be used? How have you treated others who may have worked for you? Can you see a connection between our faith and our work as either a boss or an employee? Why or why not?

 Verse 20 is striking as it compares Death and Destruction to human desire and satisfaction? Notice that Death and Destruction are capitalized. This was a way for the author to personify them in a way that we might talk about the devil or Satan, two words which we do not find in the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament. The idea is that death and destruction might whisper in our ear in ways that lead to death and destruction in our lives and they are never satisfied if we listen to those voices saying we need more or we need to be in charge or have more power or more money or wealth. When have you found those voices leading you astray? How might you listen to God's voice instead of those voices of death and destruction?

Prayer: *Loving God, help me to listen to your voice so I don't objectify others but instead see them as your children in need of care and compassion. As I do that, lead me in ways that lead to life instead of death and destruction. Amen.*

Wednesday, August 19 – Read aloud **Proverbs 11:24:** *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* Now read **Proverbs 28:1-28**. If there is one that speaks to you off this list, read it out loud two times and see what it is that grabs you.

 Let's look at verse 6 more closely today. Do you REALLY believe it is better to be poor and honest than to be dishonest and rich? Why or why not? How do you feel when you see someone who is dishonest become rich? What do you do with those feelings?

 Verse 18 captures an idea throughout the Proverbs that ultimate justice and righteousness belong to God and that eventually, when people are dishonest or cruel to others, God will take care of that. This proverb states the blameless will be rescued from harm, but the crooked will suddenly be destroyed. Do you believe this to be true? How we answer these questions will often determine whether we get bitter in life or decide to be better and give to God what belongs to God. Pray that you might do that today.

Prayer: *God, help me to work for justice wherever I can AND trust that You are the One that brings about ultimate justice and righteousness, so I can let go of the bitterness I sometimes carry because evil people seem to get away with doing horrible things. I want to hold onto this truth that money and resources are temporary things, but a relationship with you will last forever. Amen.*

Thursday, August 20 – Read aloud **Proverbs 11:24:** *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* Now read **Proverbs 29:1-27**, asking God to reveal a proverb or phrase that you need to hear today.

 Verse 1 contains an important truth if we are to be lifelong learners and lean into the wisdom we find in the Proverbs. While no one likes criticism, and sometimes it's not helpful or correct, there is always something we can learn when we get feedback. It's when we get defensive that sometimes we lose any possibility of gaining wisdom. Are you stubborn when it comes to accepting criticism? Are you open to learning new things? When has your stubbornness gotten you into trouble? When has your open mind and willingness to learn something new helped you take the next best step?

 Verse 20 talks about there being more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking. The idea seems to be that admitting we don't know what we don't know, which is often what a fool is, is better than acting like we know everything by simply filling in the blank spaces in a conversation. Have you ever found this to be true? Are you willing to be seen as someone who doesn't know everything and maybe seems even foolish to learn something new? The core idea is that it is wise to be honest and confess what we don't know because we are not God and it can lead to destruction if we act like we know something that we have no clue about.

Prayer: *Loving God, help me to be honest about what I know and what I don't know so I might receive from you the gift of wisdom. Put people in my life who can give me constructive criticism so I might learn and grow and become more like your son Jesus. Amen.*

Friday, August 21 – Recite this week's memory verse, **Proverbs 11:24:** *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* Read **Proverbs 30:1-33**. Agur, son of Jakeh, was an unknown sage or collector of wisdom who shared his words with humble admissions of his own ignorance and a deep reverence for the perfection of God's word. Agur means "collector" or "gatherer". He addressed his words to Ithiel and Ucal, who may have been his students or friends. Agur is only mentioned in this single chapter of scripture.

-  Verses 1-4 capture the essence of this chapter by recognizing how tiring it is to try to be God or to have all wisdom. Being human often makes us weary and there is this sense that we need God for those moments when we are not sure where to turn or how we are going to get through something in life that is challenging. When have you found it tiring to try and know everything? How might you proceed differently by being curious or admitting when you don't know what you don't know?
-  In verses 7 to 10, Agur asks for two favors. The 1st is to never tell a lie and the second is to not have poverty or riches, but just enough to satisfy his needs. He tells us why in verse 9 he asks for this. Is that a favor you are willing to ask God for? Why or why not? Verse 10 ties into the first favor he asks which is to not tell a lie because slandering a worker to an employer is essentially a lie that we tell to make ourselves look better and to make a fellow worker look worse. Has someone ever slandered you at work or in another setting? How did that feel? Have you ever slandered someone else, or said something about someone that wasn't true? Are you willing to make that right and apologize?
-  As a fun bonus question, which of the four things on earth named as small but unusually wise do you find most compelling in verses 24 to 28; ants, hyraxes (rock badgers), locusts, or lizards? Why?

Prayer: *Lord God, may I be honest and humble in my dealings with others. Amen.*

Saturday, August 22 – Read once again your memory verse, **Proverbs 11:24:** *Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.* How has it felt to read that this week? What word or phrase have you carried with you and why? Read **Proverbs 31:1-31**. These verses contain the wise advice and correction that King Lemuel's mother taught him, beginning with a warning about drinking too much, which flows directly into the famous description of the capable wife, which can be applied to any romantic partner in today's world.

-  Is there a phrase that spoke to you from this final chapter of the book of proverbs? How did it speak to you? How might you pray that verse today? When you read the words of wisdom about a spouse, is there one that you find most compelling? Verse 30 talks about charm being deceptive and beauty not lasting, but someone who fears God will not only be greatly praised but experience reward for following God faithfully. How do you think this would affect any relationship?

Prayer: *God, thank you for the wisdom in the proverbs. May I take them to heart and allow them to soak in, especially the idea of giving freely so I might become wealthier in body and spirit. I commit to honoring you and allowing your will and your wisdom to guide my life. Amen.*

Sunday, August 23 is our all-church picnic and river baptism service. Sign up to renew your baptism or be baptized at www.summitdurango.org/baptism.