

SESSION 6

GIVE MONEY GENEROUSLY

▶ **The Point**

Use what you have to invest in the lives of others.

▶ **The Passage**

Proverbs 11:23-29

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

You may have heard this story. A little boy had two dollars; one was for the offering at church and the other was for buying candy after church. As he approached the church building, the boy dropped one of the dollar bills and watched, helpless, as it wafted straight into a storm drain. The boy looked up to heaven and said, “Lord, there goes Your dollar!”

We may laugh at this story. Unfortunately, many Christians dole out their giving with much the same attitude. We’re often guilty of taking our “fair share” before we even think of giving back to the Lord or to others. By nature we are takers, not givers. That’s because our sin nature leans toward greed, not generosity.

Thankfully, we don’t have to remain in our natural state. The Holy Spirit can transform us from the inside out, opening our hearts—and our wallets—to be a channel of God’s grace to the world around us.

▶ **The Setting**

Proverbs 11:23-27 focuses on generosity and selfishness. Verses 23 and 27 serve as the framework for the rest of the passage, noting that in life a person reaps exactly what is sown in terms of how he or she behaves. Verses 24-26 explore this idea in terms of giving versus hoarding. Proverbs 11:28–12:4 form another unit, again focusing on the relationship of one’s actions and their repercussions. Verses 11:28-29 and 12:3-4 teach that the true foundation of providing for one’s family’s wellbeing is righteousness.

What does the Bible say?

Grain (v. 26)—In an agrarian society, hoarding wealth involved food and other tangible possessions, rather than cash or currency.

Proverbs 11:23-29

23 The desire of the righteous turns out well, but the hope of the wicked leads to wrath.

24 One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor.

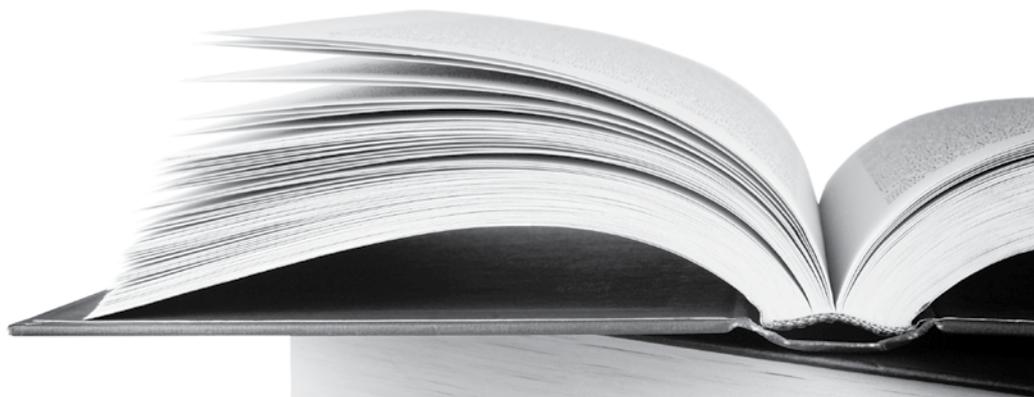
25 A generous person will be enriched, and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water.

26 People will curse anyone who hoards grain, but a blessing will come to the one who sells it.

27 The one who searches for what is good finds favor, but if someone looks for trouble, it will come to him.

28 Anyone trusting in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage.

29 The one who brings ruin on his household will inherit the wind, and a fool will be a slave to someone whose heart is wise.



GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 107 of the PSG: **“What’s the most generous act you’ve witnessed?”**

Note: Remind your group members that generosity doesn’t always involve money or finances.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): If you have the time, take several minutes to help your group members experience the joy of being generous. Bring a few bags of candy or small toys to the group

gathering. Work as a group to distribute those surprises to a group of children.

Note: If there are no children’s groups meeting close to yours, consider leading another act of generosity that would be appropriate for your group’s meeting time and setting.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 108 of the PSG. Introduce the topic of generosity by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” at the top of page 108 of the PSG: **“Use what you have to invest in the lives of others.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by praising God for His example of generous giving. Thank Him for such wonderful gifts as salvation, eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, and the ability to contribute as members of His kingdom.

TIP: Get expert insights on weekly studies through the Ministry Grid. Visit ministrygrid.com/web/biblestudiesforlife.

Proverbs 11:23-26

[Verse 23] At first glance, Proverbs 11:23 doesn't refer directly to financial matters, as verses 24-26 do. However, verse 23 contrasts the **righteous** character of people and this outcome with the **wicked** character of other people and that outcome. Finances are neither good nor bad. Money, possessions, and all we have are gifts from God. We are to be good stewards of all that God graciously gives us, including our finances. Therefore, how people deal with their finances (their motives, their plans, and their actions) is either good or bad.

[Verse 24] In verses 24-26 the general topic is generosity versus selfishness (hoarding); this is expressed positively in this section's focus on being generous in what we have. Verse 24 continues the comparisons we saw in verse 23. **One person gives freely, yet gains more.** This is reflected in Jesus' statement, "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). The second half of verse 24 contrasts with the first half: **another withholds what is right, only to become poor.** The point of verse 24 is that generosity produces a reward; likewise, stinginess (hoarding, selfishness) produces a punishment. Did Solomon intend for this verse to apply to our money? Certainly. But does it also apply to our possessions? Our time? Our talents? Our work? Our service at church? Yes.

[Verse 25] This verse carries on the main idea of the previous verse: doing what is right brings blessings. The meaning of the first line of verse 25, **a generous person will be enriched**, is reflected in the second line, **and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water.** Water is refreshing because it is essential for life. In arid or semi-arid regions (found in both ancient and modern Israel), water is sometimes difficult to get. Therefore, water is frequently mentioned as a blessing (see especially John 4:14; Rev. 21:6).

Repeatedly throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God shows His concern for the needy and His contempt for the selfish—particularly those who are selfish and rich. A generous person has God's wisdom (through His Holy Spirit) to distinguish between the truly needy and those who are merely lazy.

[Verse 26] The idea behind verse 26 comes from the marketplace. Sometimes wealthy landowners would store their grain (**anyone who hoards grain**) in hopes that the scarcity of grain at a later time would cause the price to rise. This would give the landowners a larger profit but would cause hardship on most people; many people would **curse** the landowners because of this practice. Throughout the Old Testament, and especially in the writings of the prophets, God denounced harmful business practices which may have been legal but often hurt people. Proverbs 11:26b returns our thoughts from hoarding back to generosity: **but a blessing will come to the one who sells it.**

Proverbs 11:27-29

[Verse 27] When we trust our riches, we are more likely to hoard what we have. When we trust in God and seek to live in His righteousness, we recognize that all we have is from Him, and we desire to use our riches to honor Him. This summary points to one of Jesus' focal points in His longest recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5–7). Jesus said: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matt. 6:33).

The first line of verse 27 reads: **The one who searches for what is good finds favor.** The Hebrew word translated *searches* suggests "looking for dawn" and "rising up early to seek." This word implies a repeated, ongoing, diligent, or earnest search. Proverbs 11:27a also reflects the basic idea in verse 25a—that of reaping what you sow. Theologically, this is classified as God's retributive justice, as the second line of verse 27 reflects: **but if someone looks for trouble, it will come to him.** The principle is that we get what we search for.

Like most proverbs that draw their truth from common everyday examples, this is more of a general principle than a specific promise true in every situation. Will God help us find good when we make the effort to search for it? Absolutely. Will every person who looks for good find it every time in every situation? Probably not. Yet when we search for evil, we are much more likely to find it—or to have it find us. So the question becomes, *What do I want to spend my time searching for, good or evil? And what do I want to find, good or evil?* If we want to find good, then we need to spend our time searching for it.

[Verse 28] Both lines of verse 28 continue to express cause and result. However, the second part of the verse stands in contrast with the first. Verse 28a reads, **Anyone trusting in his riches will fall.** Instead of **will fall**, some Hebrew scholars suggest the text should read "will wither," a phrase which correlates with the **foliage** mentioned in the next part of the verse.

Since obviously we shouldn't trust in **riches**, in what or whom should we trust? God points us to the answer in the second part of verse 28. Verse 28b reads **but the righteous will flourish like foliage.** Once again, we refer to Jesus words: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matt. 6:33). The answer to the previous question is rather than trusting in *riches*, we should trust in God as we seek Him and His righteousness, living lives of obedience to God that reflect His character and His ways.

Proverbs 11:27-29 (continued)

What did Solomon mean when he referred to *the righteous*? All Christians are made perfectly righteous at the moment of salvation—meaning they take on Christ’s righteousness. When a person trusts Christ for salvation, he or she is forever justified before God; all the believer’s sins (past, present, and future) are forgiven through the blood of Christ and the believer is clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ (see Rom. 10:4). However, while we have Christ’s righteousness, as believers we must still make the daily choice to resist sin and live out our lives in that righteousness.

Perhaps the righteousness mentioned in this verse refers more to this daily righteousness, acting as God does. The principle in this proverb is *the righteous will flourish like foliage*. Therefore, if we’re not flourishing like green leaves in the spring, what does that indicate about our righteousness?

[Verse 29] Our final focal verse for this study continues the cause/effect we’ve seen in other verses. The first part of the verse reads, **The one who brings ruin on his household will inherit the wind.** The phrase *will inherit the wind* is a poetic way of saying “will get nothing.” The last part of verse 29 reads **and a fool will be a slave to someone whose heart is wise.** The *fool* [who] *will be a slave* is parallel with *the one who brings ruin*.

The phrase *someone whose heart is wise* reflects the theme of the Book of Proverbs in teaching a person how to be wise. Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge (information, facts) in ways that produce the type of life that God wants His people to have. Wisdom has both spiritual and practical components and is characteristic of people who are successful in God’s eyes.

The opposite of the *wise* is the *fool*. When we follow God’s instructions, we become wise and lead successful lives. When we are wise, we use what we have to invest in the lives of others.

Read the article “The Tithe ” in the Summer 2016 issue of Biblical Illustrator. Previous Biblical Illustrator articles “Food Storage and Preservation in the Ancient Near East” (Spring 2014), “Debt in the Ancient Near East” (Summer 2008), “Wealth, Trade, Money, and Coinage in the Biblical World” (Winter 2003-2004), and “Poverty in Ancient Israel” (Summer 1993) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 114 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider the following suggestions for investing in the lives of others throughout the coming week:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Keep focused.** Write Proverbs 11:24 on a card or sturdy piece of paper, then place it in your purse or wallet—somewhere you’re likely to encounter it as you make spending decisions. Allow God’s Word to shape how you respond to the needs of others.
- ▶ **Give back.** Be generous in a tangible way this week by helping someone in need who cannot pay you back. Leave an oversized tip, take a homeless person for a meal, donate something you still use, and so on.
- ▶ **Give together.** Work with the members of your group to pool your resources together and do something big for a family with a need in your church or community.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 114 of the PSG:

We’ve all been that little boy at times—“Lord, I want something for myself more than I want to give back to You.” That’s a childish way of thinking, but there’s good news. The more we intentionally invest our resources in the lives of others, the more we grow into mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

PRAY: Conclude this study by once again thanking God for the many resources He has entrusted to your care. Pray that you and your group members will have the courage to submit your financial lives to the truth and wisdom of God’s Word.