

**PROVERBS 11:24-26**  
**THE GIVER GETS EVEN MORE**

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more;  
 And there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.*

*The generous soul will be made rich,  
 And he who waters will also be watered himself.*

*The people will curse him who withholds grain,  
 But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.*

It's good to be wise. Wise advice is always helpful. (How useful is stupid advice?) Wise use of time is crucial, especially when there are lots of things to get done. Wise exercise habits, wise eating habits, wise spending habits, are all part of staying ahead of the game.

The Book of Proverbs is full of good advice—wisdom—for vast areas of life. The book contains “wise sayings”---or proverbs. An American “proverb” is “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” or “The early bird gets the worm.” Much of the Book of Proverbs was written by Solomon. God made him the wisest man ever (I Kings 3:12). Have you read about his judgment regarding which mother's baby was alive and which mother's baby was dead? The Bible tells us two women were living in the same house; each had a newborn son. One mother accidentally, as she slept, smothered her baby boy in the bed with her. She cleverly switched babies with the other mother, figuring no one would be the wiser. The other mother knew! Now both claimed the living child. They went to King Solomon. In short order Solomon determined the truth of the matter. He ordered that the living baby be cut in half, and each mother be given half. The real mother said, “No, don't! Let her keep the baby.” The false mother coldly said, “Good idea.” Thus Solomon knew. Such wisdom! (I Kings 3:16-28).

The book of Proverbs isn't just talking about earthly wisdom—valuable as it is. (Maybe for you wisdom means figuring out what's wrong with the dog or the baler.) Proverbs is talking about a wisdom that affects every phase of a person's life and life-to-come. How to stay out of trouble, how to raise children, how to control one's mouth. Where does a person get such wisdom? (Note: Wisdom isn't the same as knowledge. Wisdom is the skill of applying the knowledge one has. A person can know all the math theory there is to know, but lacks the wisdom to keep a checkbook.) Where does one get this wisdom? The Book of Proverbs says, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom!*” (Proverbs 9:10). To go forward in life successfully and with wisdom means the LORD is leading the way. Wisdom begins with the “fear” of the Lord—this fear is not “terror” of God, but “respect, awe, reverence” for God. To look to Him, the number one resource for every step and need in life, is the very beginning of wisdom. He is the one who made you. He is the one who sets expectations for you. He is the one who knows all too well every misstep and sin in your life. He is the one who has rescued you from sin and its self-destruction.. He has sent God the Son to be your Savior from sin. In the crucified and risen Jesus, forgiveness is yours and resurrection from the inevitable grave leading to life forever in paradise! The Lord is the one who leads you safely through this life to the next. With Him as the backdrop in life, with love and trust in Him, you are walking a secure and certain path each day. Thus all the proverbs of the Book of Proverbs speaks are speaking of more than just earthly common sense and advice, but a wisdom that springs from one believing in Christ the Savior from sin.

Sample: *A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother (Proverbs 10:1). A son who stands with the Savior is a joy to his father, but a foolish son--a son who turns away from the Lord in heart, and words, and actions—brings tears to his dear mother's heart. Other Scriptures agree. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God! (Psalm 14:1). We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men.” (I Corinthians 1: 23-25).*

The unbeliever who practices the physical advice and wise sayings of the Book of Proverbs will reap earthly benefits, but nevertheless be condemned to hell. The wise sayings of Proverbs bear their full fruit in the heart and life a Christian—blessings for this earth through Christ, and in the big picture life forever in heaven! The Book of Proverbs is not just presenting mechanical head knowledge, but heart knowledge, bearing fruit to eternal life.

We have taken the long way around, but now we have the background and foundation to understand the beauty, wisdom, and blessings of the verses of Proverbs for today.: *There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. --- The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself. ----- The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.*

These verses are talking about Christian generosity—being willing to give and to share with others out of love--love for our Savior God. Such giving never yields a deficit. *There is one who scatters, yet increases more.* It seems counter-intuitive, doesn't it? To have a sack full of wheat and to give much of it away means less for you, right? Your old Adam says, "This is mine! I worked for it, I will profit from it, others can get their own." That self-centered concept is actually backwards. If the farmer planted his field with that attitude, how much crop would he get? Little! The Lord who gives to you will return to you even more in all that you give to Him and those around you. ---- On the other hand, *There is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.* Do you remember the Gospel reading for today? The stingy rich man who fared sumptuously every day, but ignored the needs of Lazarus withholding even the crumbs of his table which poor Lazarus desired while lying there right at the gate of the rich man's house. The rich man, ignored all that the Savior God had done for him, ignored Lazarus, and came upon real disaster and poverty. He died and went to hell. The parable is not simply talking about civic righteousness, about civic do-good-ism—"If you help others it will be to your benefit, even in the eyes of God." It's talking about Christian giving and sharing. The Christian loves his Savior-God above all things and is led to love his neighbor as himself. Love for God and love for neighbor is not our "accomplishment" to climb the ladder to heaven. Nor is it a bargaining chip to get love and forgiveness from God. God's mercy and forgiveness to you through Jesus produces love in your hearts for Him and others—like a tree bearing fruit. *No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Luke 16:13).*

*The generous soul will be made rich.* Generosity is a much appreciated commodity. A child who has a bag of cookies and with warmth and love shares them with others. A café owner who opens up his cafe to feed travelers stranded in a blizzard at no charge. A congregation member who shares with the pastor's family—be it meat, or honey, or time, or labor. The congregation who shares with it's pastor a monthly check. That check does not come by way of a business deal, contract or legal obligation—it comes as a generous gift of love. Actually the word "generous" does not describe size or amount. We usually think of a "generous" gift as being a large gift. "Generous" actually means "coming from a noble-heart, from excellence of heart and mind, from willingness," not compulsion. The generous soul freely and willingly grants help to those needing help, without fear of coming up short or without greed and self-centeredness. *He who waters will also be watered himself.* Water needs to be used wisely. God wants us to be good stewards and managers of that which is His and which He has entrusted to us—that is, all things. It is a waste to be generous with water on the driveway or parking lot. On the other hand to be generous with water for the cattle and livestock or for the garden actually is watering self. The profit comes back to the giver. Christian generosity will never leave one short. It's the other way around. Greediness and stingy-ness will lead one to come up short, if not in this life, than in the life to come.

*The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.* . Christian generosity has a great effect upon others. It reflects well upon, not just you, but on the Lord Himself! To be stingy does not sit well with others. If you were out of food, and went to a St. Luke's member who had plenty, offering to buy it, not just get it for free, but your St. Luke's member refused to sell it to you because he was greedy and self-centered, how well would that sit with you? The text says, *The people will curse him who withholds grain.*

On the other hand, *Blessing will be on the head of him who sells it* When someone has been generous to you, does a blessing come from your lips upon their head? Do you say Thank You? It is so easy to take for granted the help others give, to expect it, to think you are entitled to it. Remember to say Thank You. A gift is a gift, not a right.

Who is the most generous "person" with whom you have dealt? Is it not the Lord Himself? *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).* The Father in heaven parted with His own Son for you. *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 136:1).* Be generous with your thanks too.

Life in Christ is wisdom—and Christian generosity is part of that wisdom!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---