

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

**September 11 – Proverbs 10:15-16; 11:1, 4, 24, 26; 13:21, 23;
30:8-9**

So often in church we equate money and wealth with sinfulness. But we wrongly do that with a lot of things. We put the wickedness on the things rather than on our own hearts and what our hearts do with the thing. It's a lot easier to call money wicked than it is to call ourselves and our hearts wicked. Wealth has a tremendous ability to bring healing and good to the world we live in. In fact, the very reason why God blesses us materially is so that we can be a blessing to others. He doesn't give it to us to indulge ourselves or to make us feel safe and secure. He gives it to us to build the world we live in and make it better.

When the Bible talks about feeding the hungry and caring for the poor you have to understand it takes money to do that. It takes money and hard work to lift people out of poverty. Words alone won't get it done.

But money and wealth also have incredibly dangerous power to destroy our lives if our hearts aren't right. Look at Proverbs 11:1. It says the Lord abhors dishonest scales. What the writer of Proverbs is talking about here is wealth that is gained dishonestly. At the time Proverbs was written merchants would sometimes mark a one pound weight as being two pounds so they could get the price of two pounds of grain but only sell one.

It's not the gain that's the problem. It's not the money that's the problem—it's the dishonest gain. It's the heart. If our hearts aren't right money has the power to corrupt our hearts.

But money has other incredibly dangerous powers as well. Look at Proverbs 11:26. In this verse the man is doing nothing illegal. There is no law that he has to sell his grain, but he is cursed if he won't. Why is that so? Well in this instance there is a food shortage and the man who has grain is refusing to sell it probably because he wants to drive up the price even further. He doesn't care about the community that he lives in all he cares about is the bottom line. He is so wrapped up in himself that he forgets his community. That is what

has happened to so many businesses in America today—All that matters is the bottom line and doing whatever it takes to have as much profit as possible.

You see money not only has the power to corrupt our hearts it also has the power to make us so self absorbed that we stop caring about the lives of those around us. We don't care if others are hurt as long as we get rich. But money also has the power to distract us from what's really important in life. Look at Proverbs 11:4. "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath"

As good as wealth can be it has no value when judgment day comes. God is not going to judge you on how much you have in your bank account, or even how much you gave to church.

But so often rather than living for God knowing that we will have to give an account of our lives one day we get distracted and live for money. We try to earn more so we can spend more which means we have to earn more and on and on it goes. The money we save may help us in a rainy day but it won't help us on judgment day. The evil in our hearts combined with the power of money work together to convince us that we never have enough and we always need more. Money becomes a relentless master over our lives and it is why you can't serve both God and money.

September 12 – Proverbs 10:15-16; 11:1, 4, 24, 26; 13:21, 23; 30:8-9

Proverbs 30:8-9 give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. ⁹ Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

Do you see what the writer of Proverbs is saying there? If I have too much wealth, too much money it might make me so proud that I say who is the Lord?

Why does money have this power? Look at Proverbs 10:15 "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor."

At the time Proverbs was written only the rich lived in the fortified cities. Fortified cities were places of security. The lower classes lived out in the country where you were prey to everything—robbers, windstorms, wild animals, but in the city, behind those fortified walls you were safe and secure.

But in order to live in the city you had to have money, so living in the city not only made you feel secure it also gave you significance. You were somebody if you lived in the city.

Money has the power to give us a false sense of the two things our hearts are desperately looking for—security and significance. Having money can give you the illusion of security—it can make you feel like you are safe from the storms of life. If money is your shelter—if it is the thing you are trusting to take care of you more than you are trusting God you are trusting money.

And at the same time money can also give you the illusion that if you have money your life has significance, because if you have money you feel successful.

The feeling of security that money can give us and the feeling of significance that money can give us both feed our pride. When it is money that makes us feel secure we begin to feel independent from God and when money gives us our significance we begin to feel like we are better than other people and we stop caring about them.

The power of money is so deceptive in our lives that most of the time we don't even realize its effect on us. Other sins are so obvious, but money and materialism are so deceptive that none of us realize that we are falling prey to Satan in the way we view our wealth and our money—none of us see what he is doing in our hearts. But it is our materialism, our greed, that leads us to worship money in place of God. Money becomes the source of our significance and security. It becomes what we live for.

Jesus spent more time talking about money and possessions and their hold on our lives than he did anything else. Jesus knew the deceptive power of money. Jesus understood that nobody ever thinks they are guilty of sin when it comes to money. But he also knew that it is an easy trap for us to fall into.

So the first step in breaking the power of money is stop making excuses and admit that money might be taking place of God in our lives. If money makes you feel secure, if money makes you feel significant than money has corrupted your heart. Money has become your God.

September 13 – Proverbs 10:15-16; 11:1, 4, 24, 26; 13:21, 23; 30:8-9

Look at Proverbs 11:24-25. “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. ²⁵ A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

You won't find this principle in too many wealth management books. They would say just the opposite. They would say if you want wealth you have to hold onto it you don't give it away. But the Bible says just the opposite. It says if you scatter your wealth you will gain even more.

You think how can that be so? Because as you open your hands and let go of your money your hands become free to receive even greater blessings.

It's amazing how many beans you can grow from one handful of seeds. That handful wouldn't even make one meal but if you scatter that handful in your garden you'll have meals for months to come. Because God takes that seed and causes it to grow. But it takes faith to do that. It takes faith to take your food, those seeds, and scatter them on the ground. The Bible teaches us the same is true with our wealth if we scatter it if we give it away freely we will gather even more, because God will bless it.

To really break the power of money and its hold on your life you have to see something that is more valuable than even your money. You have to see the cross. On the cross Jesus didn't tithe his blood he freely gave it all, and he didn't give his blood to gain for himself he gave it so we could gain his righteousness. On the cross Jesus gave up his security and his significance so that we could gain ours. As he freely gave we become spiritually rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

Christ sacrificed everything becoming poor so that we could become rich. His blood bought us out of spiritual poverty and spiritual bankruptcy. His loss was our gain.

It is at the cross that you can find all the security you will ever need. When the day of wrath comes money will be worthless, but what Christ has done for you will be priceless. Knowing that, why would we let money rule our lives in place of Jesus? Why would we hold on to money rather than Jesus' nail scarred hands?

At the cross you will find the ultimate significance for your life. To know that Jesus gave up everything for you gives you a significance that money can never match. Knowing that why would we look for significance anywhere but in Jesus?

September 14 – Proverbs 11:2, 12; 15:25, 33; 16:18; 28:26

Proverbs has a lot to say about pride, and man-centered wisdom.

Proverbs 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Do you understand what that verse is saying? In your pride if you think you have all the answers, if you think you control your life and have it all figured out—you are really a fool. How many times has that been true in your own life? How many times have you thought you had it all figured out only to find out later that you could not have been more wrong? Pride is such a dangerous thing because it leads us away from the true and living God and leads us to ourselves and that is a recipe for disaster.

Proverbs 11: 12 tells us that when pride rears its ugly head in our lives it causes us to constantly compare ourselves to others.

C.S. Lewis said that pride takes no pleasure in having something, it takes pleasure in having more of that something than your neighbor does. In other words we don't feel proud because we have money,

we feel proud because we have more money than other people. We don't feel proud because we have great kids, we feel proud because our kids are better than their kids, at least in our eyes. We are constantly trying to prove our worth, to validate ourselves, to point to things in our lives that will somehow make us worthy, that we are better than other people.

It doesn't matter if we are religious people or irreligious people we are trying to prove ourselves. If we are irreligious we try to earn a good verdict in the world's eyes. If we are religious we still try to earn a good verdict but instead of it being in the world's eyes it's in God's eyes.

It is really easy to see the sin of pride at work in other people's lives but it is really hard to see it in our own. Even though we don't see it all of the time our pride is constantly at work in our hearts trying to convince us and whoever is watching that somehow we are better than they are.

Why do we as Christians feel that we are somehow morally superior to others who struggle with certain types of sin in their lives? Why does every Christian denomination think that they are the only ones who could possibly have the right doctrine, and everybody else just plain has it wrong? In each of these cases we are busy trying to prove ourselves both to the world around us and to God. We do this by padding our resume and building ourselves up, while at the same time tearing others down, trying to win a favorable verdict for our lives. We are trying to prove that somehow we are more worthy than the next guy.

In our pride we become the judge and we take God's place. Look at Proverbs 15:25 and 16:18 The Hebrew word for pride in both of these verses is the word ga'own and in Hebrew it means supreme majesty.

So what both of these verses are saying is that we can become filled with a pride that causes us to think that we are the supreme majesty, the supreme ruler of our lives. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned that is the problem that each of us has the need to be the supreme ruler of our lives. It's the battle we face every day. Pride is a refusal to let God be God, we try to grab God's status and try to make it our own.

Without God at the center of our lives fear and anxiety take over and we constantly are afraid we won't measure up. So we go through life faking it. We go through life acting like we have it all together, and expecting everyone else to have it all together too. The reason why we constantly compare ourselves to others is because we have made ourselves our own God, and we sit in judgment of ourselves and those around us.

If you want get over your pride you have to cut off its ugly head. Look at Proverbs 15:33.

What a strange concept "Humility comes before honor." The word honor in this verse is another interesting Hebrew word it is the word kabowd, and what you need to know about this word is that typically this word is used in Scripture to talk God's glory. It's a weighty glory, a heavenly glory, a supreme glory, and notice that the writer of Proverbs is telling us we can have that kind of honor, we can have that kind of glory, but it only comes to the humble.

Our pride is really just a form of self-glorification, it's an earthly glory, a second rate glory. The kind of glory that demands we go into the courtroom and defend our record and our honor every day.

This heavenly glory that the writer of Proverbs is talking about is a glory that can't come from us it can only come from God, and it doesn't come by way of our padded resume it comes by way of humility.

September 15 – Proverbs 11:2, 12; 15:25, 33; 16:18; 28:26

What the Bible teaches is that only people who are sure they are not important can get eternal glory. It only comes to the humble. The Bible goes against the grain of everything we have been taught by our culture and turns it upside down. Throughout the Bible who do we see God lifting up? Over and over again it is the second born son, the boy that everyone else forgot that God uses. Abel was born second to Cain, Isaac was born second to Ishmael, Jacob was born second to Esau, Moses was born second to Aaron, and David was born second to all his brothers. But God lifted each of these men up and gave them the glory their brothers so coveted.

And it isn't just the forgotten boys that God worked through, how about the girls that no one wanted. Leah was second best to Rachel in Jacob's eyes but through Leah came Judah, the tribe of Jesus' lineage. Rehab and Tamar were prostitutes but you will find them in the genealogy of Jesus. Over and over again in the Old Testament you see God lift up the forgotten, lift up the humble and single them out for glory.

God turned everything upside when he sent Jesus into the world. Jesus was born in a feeding trough to a poor family, he was homeless, he was betrayed, he was lynched and he died a criminal's death. But without a doubt Jesus is the most influential person who ever lived. Out of his humility God brought eternal glory not just to Jesus but to us.

Why did Jesus have to come in such humility? Because humility is the only common denominator that everyone can have. Jesus was a great philosopher, but what if that was all he was? Only great thinkers could receive him. That would leave me out. Jesus lived a perfectly moral life, but what if that was all he was? Only the perfectly moral could get him. That would leave me out again. Above everything else that Jesus was, he was humble and that means that anyone who is willing to be humble can receive him. It doesn't matter who you are or what you have done.

You no longer have to prove yourself. The verdict has been decided. You don't have to do things just to pad your resume, because you through faith in what Jesus has done at the cross you have Jesus' resume. Jesus ended up with our resume so we could have his. Jesus was found guilty for our sake so we could be found righteous for his.

September 16 – Proverbs 18:10-11; 23:19-21; 25:28

As we continue our study of Proverbs this week we are going to be looking at the subject of self-control. In Galatians 5:23 self control is listed as one of the fruits of the spirit. So self control is one of those things that ought to mark our lives as Christians, but self-control is something we all struggle with.

Look at Proverbs 23:19-21 that very problem of over indulgence is addressed. Look what it says “Don’t join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat.” And then look what it says next “drunkards and gluttons become poor and drowsiness clothes them in rags.” People who over indulge in food or drink lose control of their lives, they are unable to do anything and lie around all day and as a result become poor. Full of wine or full of food they can’t do anything, and they can’t focus on what’s really important.

Food and drink are the illustration but they are not the only things we need to have control over. What happens if your tongue is out of control and you lie, or gossip, or brag all the time.

James 3:5-6 *Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

James is pretty clear isn’t he? If we can’t control our tongues we are going to burn up everything around us. How many relationships can you think of that have been ruined because someone couldn’t control their tongue. The issue of self control extends to all parts of our lives and is something in our own ways each of us struggles with.

How about time management and over committing yourself? Making promises of your time that you just can’t keep without damaging some other aspect of your life. How about our thoughts? Wow this one can go in a lot of different directions from worrying, to lust, to envy and jealousy. Our thought life has to be kept under control. Do you realize the toll that runaway lust or runaway worry can exact on your life if you have no self control? How about doing things we are supposed to do like have devotions or exercise? Many of us struggle with self control to do the things we ought to do as well as not do the things we shouldn’t do.

It is so frustrating to realize how little self control we have. But more than frustrating it is damaging to your life.

Look at Proverbs 25:28. Because we don’t live in cities with walls anymore we have to stop and think about what this verse really

means. Clearly it is dealing with the issue of self control, but what about the image of a city whose walls are broken down. Cities were the places that were the centers of civilizations. They were the places where commerce took place. Without walls chaos would ensue. Without walls raiders could come in and plunder a city robbing it of the goods that were needed for commerce to take place. What the writer of Proverbs is saying is that without the walls of self-control we are in trouble. Without self control we are in danger—chaos will soon take over our lives. Without self control we can't carry on the normal business of our lives.

Without self control the really important things in our lives are going to get squeezed out by the urgent things in our lives.

Self control is a failure to have the desires of our lives properly ordered.

September 17 – Proverbs 18:10-11; 23:19-21; 25:28

Look again at Proverbs 18:10-11. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. Again to understand this phrase we need to understand life at the time Proverbs was written. When trouble would come people would first run to the safety of walls of the city, but if those walls were breeched by the attacker then people would run and try to find safety in a tower. The tower was the last refuge inside of the city.

Every one of us has a tower that we run to when trouble comes. Some of us run to the safety of our reputation, others to money, others to worry, there is a whole host of things that we can run to rather than to God. But anytime we run to a tower that is not God it will never be strong enough or high enough to protect us from the storms of life.

Self control means that we learn to run to the Lord rather than to ourselves when trouble comes, because the Lord is the only thing that we can ever get enough of to have real security. What these verses really teach us is that the important thing is to run to the Lord, but so often we do the urgent thing and run to the wrong towers.

In Proverbs 18: 10, why does the writer of Proverbs say the name of the Lord is a strong tower, rather than just the Lord is a strong tower? What is so special about the name of the Lord?

When the Bible was written your name revealed your character. Your name revealed who you were and what kind of person you were. When the writer of Proverbs is telling us to run into the name of the Lord he is telling us to run into God's character—to run in to who God is.

Learning self control—learning to run to the right tower starts by reminding yourself of the truth of who God is. Self control starts by reminding yourself that God is sovereign and in control, he is all powerful, all knowing, loving, compassionate, merciful, strong and able to save. Self control starts by reminding yourself of all the things that God is and why you should trust him as your strong tower rather than something else.

But we if we really want to learn self control we have not only know what the name of the Lord means, we also have to convert that knowledge to love. What do I mean by that? Well the fact that God has a name means that we can have a personal relationship with him. Rather than just knowing a bunch of facts about God we can really know God. And the deeper our relationship is with God the more self control we will have, because the depths of your love control what you desire.

Do you remember the story of Jacob and Rachel. In Genesis Jacob took one look at Rachel and he was smitten by her beauty and he loved her and desired her more than anything else. He loved her so much that he agreed to work for her father Laban for 7 years in order to get Rachel for his wife. But here is the really interesting thing.

The seven years Jacob worked for Rachel seemed like absolutely nothing to him because he loved her so much. Because he loved her all of his other desires faded into that one desire to have a relationship with her as his wife. If we could get to that point with God, we could learn self control. If we could get to the point where we loved God so much that our only desire was to do his will, we would have self control, because nothing else would matter.

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

What Jesus did for us on the cross teaches us over and over again how much God loves us. Think how much self control Jesus needed to allow him go to the cross for us. Do you realize that right before Judas came to betray him Jesus was alone in the garden of Gethsemane? There were no soldiers to hold him there. His disciples were sleeping and Jesus was alone. He could have gotten up and walked right out of the Garden. But he didn't. He went to the cross.

We were Jesus' Rachel. Because of his great love for us Jesus had the self control to go through the agony of the cross so that we could be his forever. The better you understand that you are Jesus' Rachel, the better you understand how deeply Jesus loves you the more you will be able to love Jesus.

The more you can teach yourself over and over again everyday how much Jesus loves you; the more you will want to live a life that pleases him. Not out of fear, but out of love. And when you begin to love Jesus like that you'll begin to learn how to be self controlled. Fear will never get you there, but the love of Christ will.