



# abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on January 10-11, 2009

## this week's coreverse

*Better a meal of vegetables where  
there is love than a fattened calf  
with hatred. Proverbs 15.17*

*Better a little with righteousness  
than much gain with injustice.*

*Proverbs 16.8*

## usingabclinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabile.org>smallgroups](http://adabile.org>smallgroups).

See [adabile.org>message](http://adabile.org>message) recaps & Links for ABCLinks archives.



## Part One of a Four Part Sermon Series

### "What Matters Most"

**Y**ou've heard the old saying, "Money can't buy happiness." Do you think people really believe that? Researchers have tried for years to find out what people really want. According to the Atlantic Business Chronicle, as labor markets become tighter and tighter, the answer to the question, "What do you really want out of your life?" becomes more and more serious. The answer that more than 75 percent of people actually will give is simple; money, more money, a lot of money.

Recently, I stumbled on some interesting results of a high school debate. The students were asked this question, "Is money the most important thing?" Look at the arguments for and against.

#### Arguments in Favor:

1. As the saying goes, money makes the world go around.
2. Many people marry for money rather than love. Security is more important than happiness.
3. Students acquire knowledge not for its own sake, but for a bigger wage.
4. Financial rewards for pop stars make many people envy them.
5. Being poor is not very much fun.
6. Being rich allows you to do what you want.
7. If you are rich, many people want you for a friend.
8. The man who has the money makes the rules.

#### Arguments Against:

1. Some people reject materialistic values. They are motivated by their interest in work.
2. Wealth often brings out the worst in people.
3. Wealthy people are not always the happiest.
4. When you are rich it is hard to tell who is your real friend.
5. You must spend a lot of time to protect your wealth.
6. With much wealth simple things lose their pleasure.
7. The pursuit of money causes some to neglect their children.
8. Money corrupts. The more money you have, the more you want.

As a follower of God, I want to be a person who debates against money being the most important thing in life. However, some of the points for money being the highest priority are certainly tempting to adopt. It's true, money brings tension to our lives. We need it, don't we? But, how much? How important should it be and what are the things that are more important than money? For the next four weeks, we'll examine some wisdom sayings from the book of Proverbs that will help us understand God's perspective on money. God wants us to be wise in this matter.



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# personal bible studies

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## Proverbs' Place in Scripture

As you flip through the pages of your Bible, it may appear that it's all the same type of writing. A closer look, however, shows us that the Bible has a variety of styles of literature. Understanding the uniqueness of each book will not only help you understand Scripture better but it will reveal the richness and beauty of this timeless book.

Much of Scripture is historic or narrative in nature. Writers such as Moses, Samuel, Mark and Luke tell the story of God and humankind over the centuries. Exodus, 1 & 2 Samuel and Matthew are examples of historical books. Other books are called epistles which are letters. Paul, John and Peter were ones who wrote letters recorded in Scripture. Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy and 1-3 John are all letters to churches or specific people. Prophetic books are a large part of the Old Testament. These books were written in historical context but give warnings, guidance or predictions to God's work in the future. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel and Haggai are examples of prophetic books. Revelation, written by John, can be considered prophetic but is in a class by itself called apocalyptic writing.

Our series for the next four weeks will be looking at a book from a category of writing called poetry. Psalms, Proverbs and Song of Solomon are in this style of writing. Psalms, the largest book in the Bible, is a collection of songs mostly written to give God praise and glory. Song of Solomon is a romantic love song. Our focus will be Proverbs, a collection of quotations or wisdom sayings. The writers of Proverbs give quick, concise pieces of advice, like bullet points, on a broad variety of topics on life such as anger, sexuality, business, marriage, children and integrity. The writers, however, didn't group them by topic. These wisdom sayings are scattered like a collage throughout the book.

We are going to pull from this collage a handful of wise sayings on the subject of money. This week, we'll examine proverbs that will help us gain a healthy perspective on money. What matters most? From these proverbs we'll see four things that are more important than money.

## dayone

### *Harmony (atmosphere of peace and love)*

Muse on these proverbs for the few moments. What do they have in common? What advice is given?

*Proverbs 15:17 Better a meal of vegetables where there is love  
than a fattened calf with hatred*

*Proverbs 17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet  
than a house full of feasting, with strife*

*Proverbs 21:9 Better to live on a corner of the roof  
than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.*

Rewrite each of these proverbs using some images and language of today. I'll get you started on the first one.

"Better to eat mac and cheese than...."

"Better to enjoy frozen pizza than...."

"Better to live in a small apartment than...."

Think about your home life for a moment. Has the pursuit of material things, better wages or lifestyle ever caused strife in your home? Explain.

What are you bringing to the table right now? What are you bringing to your home that is more important than money? What changes do you need to make?

## daytwo

### **Honesty (personal integrity)**

Muse on these proverbs for a moment. What theme of advice comes out of these sayings?

*Proverbs 16:8     Better a little with righteousness  
                                 than much gain with injustice*

*Proverbs 19:22    What a man desires is unfailing love;  
                                 better to be poor than a liar.*

*Proverbs 28:6     Better a poor man whose walk is blameless  
                                 than a rich man whose ways are perverse.*

Rewrite these proverbs using illustrations from today. Here's an example: *"Better to have an old car and small house than to get rich from ripping people off."*

Has your quest for money and material things negatively influenced your integrity? Explain.

## daythree

### **Goodness (a good name is better...)**

Think about this proverb a moment. What is the importance of a good name?

*Proverbs 22:1     A good name is more desirable than great riches;  
                                 and to be esteemed is better than silver or gold*

Do an honest evaluation of your reputation. When it comes to money and business dealings, is your name honorable? You may need to have some honest and vulnerable conversations with friends and colleagues to know for sure how you are viewed in your community.

## dayfour

### **Wisdom (how much better wisdom than gold)**

*Proverbs 16:16    How much better wisdom than gold,  
                                 to choose understanding rather than silver.*

Spend some time thinking about what you are pursuing in life. Are you more interested in gaining wisdom, common sense, knowledge and understanding, or is your focus on gaining more money and possessions?

How you spend your disposable time and who you hang out with are good indicators of what you are pursuing.

Which proverb from this study spoke most deeply to you and your life situation? Take a minute to memorize it today.



# small group discussion

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## leanin

Who is the wisest person you know? What makes them wise in your eyes?

Define wisdom. How is it different from knowledge?

## lookdown

What's a proverb? How does the book of Proverbs fit into the whole of Scripture?

Flip open to the inside of this *ABCLink*. There are eight proverbs throughout the study. Go around the room and read each proverb. Take a minute in each section to discuss the advice or wisdom in each saying. What does each teach? You may want to try to rewrite each of the proverbs using language and images of our everyday life.

Example: *"Better to live in a mobile home than fight with your spouse in a mansion."*

## lookout

The economic news has been very dismal over the last few months. Have you seen people's perception of money change? How?

Thinking about the proverbs you've read, how could financial struggles impact people's view of money in a positive way?

## lookin

This study focused on proverbs addressing four things that matter more than money. Are money and materials fighting to destroy any of these in your life? Explain.

Harmony

Honesty

Goodness

Wisdom

What piece of wisdom are you willing to adopt to change your perspective on money?

What do you hope to gain or learn from this sermon series and study? What fears or anxiety do you have in wrestling with this material?