**JANUARY 2, 2022**

**Keys to Financial Health and Joy Investing for Life**

**Proverbs 21:5a, 21:20, 22:7, Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:15**

 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance**.** Precious treasure remains in the house of the wise, but the fool devours it. The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. [Then Jesus taught them saying,] Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [And Jesus said,] “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

**Joseph helped Egypt be wise as…ants!**

**MONDAY 01/3/2022 Genesis 41:25-36, Proverbs 6:6-11 Genesis 41**

Showed a memory shared by generations in Israel. The wise originality of Joseph’s “save for the future” idea so impressed Egypt’s Pharaoh that he hired this former prisoner to run Egypt’s economy. When the famine arrived, “the first recorded rationing in history was a hit.” \* Israel’s sages saw wisdom similar to Joseph’s as they watched ants “planning” and saving—unlike some humans.

 • Joseph led Egypt to save 20% of seven straight good harvests as a reserve for a future famine. This was seriously “living beneath your means.” What commercial and peer pressures encourage you to spend “as if there is no tomorrow”? Who (if anyone) has influenced you to make your financial choices with a longer view in mind, rather than simply immediate gratification?

• Proverbs contrasted ants with a “lazy person.” Scholar John Goldingay said Hebrew Torah (“instruction”) and prophets stressed helping the poor. “Proverbs makes the complementary point. Not every person who loses his family farm can blame bad luck or injustice. It can be laziness…. an example of stupidity, while ants are an embodiment of wisdom.”

\*\* Is Biblical wisdom guiding you to wise choices? In what ways?

 **Prayer: Lord God, you guided Joseph to a long view that dazzled the absolute ruler of Egypt, that day’s world superpower. I’m no superpower, but please guide me to greater wisdom in my financial choices too. Amen.**

\* From Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, a musical comedy with lyrics by Tim Rice and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. \*\* John Goldingay, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs for Everyone. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, p. 28.

**Life wisdom considers finances**

**TUESDAY 01/4/2022 Proverbs 3:5-11, 13:7-11, 21:2-7**

Proverbs pictured divine wisdom(the “speaker” in Proverbs 3) as a woman teaching in the public square (cf. Proverbs 1:20-21).Scholar John Walton saw this theme in the wisdom of Proverbs: “While wealth is considered a good thing, and even a gift of Yahweh when acquired honestly, it is not the most important thing by far. If a decision must be made between wealth or a right relationship with God, or between having much or having love and peace, then the latter of each pair is far better.” \*

• Proverbs noted that, as a general rule, steadily working toward financial goals is far wiser than any “get rich quick” scheme. Have you ever worked steadily toward a goal, and felt the inner satisfaction when your disciplined pursuit paid off? On the other hand, have you ever had a financial windfall, and then regretted impulsively “blowing it”?

• Scholar Paul Koptak wrote, “[Proverbs] 3:5 should not be used to support the notion that this confidence is a sort of blind trust that suspends critical judgment….3:5-6 speak more about guidance in ethical behavior than particular choices such as career or mate.”

\*\* Why would God invite us to partner with him in deciding specific life choices, rather than simply telling us exactly what to do in all cases?

**Prayer: O God, as we just studied, when I’m open to your Spirit, you grow fruit like patience and self-control in me. Guide me as I apply that fruit in the financial area of life as well. Amen.**

\* NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook (Kindle Locations 141096-141098). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. \*\* Paul E. Koptak, Proverbs in The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003, p. 120.

**Concerns, riches can stop God’s word from bearing fruit**

**WEDNESDAY 01/05/2022 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15**

 Jesus told this parable, which drew on a common sight in agricultural Palestine, to show that priorities matter. His images of various states of heart and mind (soil) showed how each one affects our ability to hear and follow God’s word (seed). When we cultivate an open, “good soil” heart, he said, then “concerns, riches, and pleasures of life” won’t be able to crowd out the good fruit God is at work to bear in us.

 • What’s most important in your life? Who or what first planted "the seed" of God's Word in the soil of your life? Can you identify concerns or interests that have become less prominent in your life when you’ve made God your top priority? Which of the four types of soil in Jesus' parable (path beaten hard, rocky, full of thorns, or good—receptive) best describes how well you can accept the seed right now?

• What are the concerns or interests that most often compete with God’s kingdom for the top priority spot in your life? What key choices have you made (or could you make) that open you to God’s work in helping you cultivate a “good soil” heart? What attitudes, actions, and values most affect to what extent you are “good soil” for God’s Word to grow in?

**Prayer: Lord God, the fruit you bear in my life is wonderful, and I want to be good soil for it. Give me clear vision as to what gets in the way of letting that fruit grow. Amen.**

**Choose well in what you serve**

**THURSDAY 01/06/2022 Matthew 6:19-24**
Jesus said that making the pursuit of wealth (no matter how you want to use it) the center of your life inevitably conflicts with loyalty to God. He stated the clear, common-sense principle that “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” and then pointedly added, “You cannot serve God and wealth.” Treasure in heaven, treasure by God’s standards, is the most precious item we can “collect.” • Conduct a simple life audit. Review your calendar and your checkbook. Based on the time, energy and resources reflected in those two sources, what “master(s)” would you say you are serving? Can you see your loyalties shifting as you choose to invest in heavenly treasure? What kinds of changes could you make to give you greater freedom to fully serve God as Lord of your life?

 • Pastor Rick Warren wrote, “Your heart is wherever you put your money and time. For some of you, your heart is in your home—because that’s where you put your money. Maybe your heart is in your boat. Or your cabin. Or the sport you spend your time and money on….Where is your heart today? Where do you want it to be?”

\* How do you answer—where do your priority choices tend to focus your heart’s affections?

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, calling you “Lord” isn’t just a nice, polite title. It means that you rule over my life and my priorities. Give me the courage and devotion to really mean it when I call you “Lord.” Amen.**

 \* From <https://pastorrick.com/your-heart-is-where-your-time-and-money-are/>.

**A life “free from the love of money”**

**FRIDAY 01/07/2022 Hebrews 13:2-6**

The letter to the Hebrews emphasized that contentment is not just possible but highly desirable for all of God’s people. That’s true whether life’s circumstances bring them much money, or not so much. The writer quoted Psalm 118, and also alluded to stories in Genesis about God’s faithful care for God’s people. To Christians facing financial pressures from the hostile Roman Empire (cf. Hebrews 10:34), the message was that we can trust that God will never, ever abandon us.

• Scholar N. T. Wright noted a helpful rule of thumb about money in Hebrews 13: “When you love something or someone, you make sacrifices for them. When you find yourself making a sacrifice of something else in your life, simply so that you can follow where money is beckoning you, regard that as a danger signal.”

\* What relationships, activities or values would you never give up, never sacrifice just to be able to pursue more money?

• Wright further observed that Hebrews 13 was not talking about random “topics.” All of its wisdom connected to our faith: “Those who trust in God to be with them forever, to help them and defend them in and through all circumstances, will be far less likely to fall for the temptations of sexual immorality or love of money, both of which so often attack those who are personally insecure.”

 \*\* How can trust in God, and the contentment that brings, ripple through all the other parts of life?

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are creative and dynamic, yet your steadfast love, the core of your character, never changes. Teach me day by day how to anchor all my hope more firmly in you. Amen.**

\* Wright, N.T., Hebrews for Everyone (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 170-171). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition. \*\* Wright, N.T., Hebrews for Everyone (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 171). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

**“Eternal life”—the treasure worth “grabbing”**

**SATURDAY 01/08/2022 1 Timothy 6:5-12**

Paul wrote ironically to his younger friend and ministry partner Timothy about some people who saw “godliness” as just a way to make money. Then he added in verse 6, “Actually, godliness is a great source of profit when it is combined with being happy with what you already have.” The inner “profit,” the truest measure of any person’s wealth, is not on their bank statement but in the state of their soul. Paul knew the pleasures of material wealth are often temporary. He didn’t want those pleasures to blind Timothy, or the members of the church he led, to God. “They need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment,” he wrote (1 Timothy 6:17). After noting that spiritual dangers go with a lust for money, Paul told Timothy forcefully, “Run away from all these things” (verse 11).

• By the measure Paul suggested to Timothy, how rich or poor are you? Spend some time doing an honest assessment of your “contentment quotient.” If it is high, reflect on whether it has always been that way, or what has raised it. What could happen that might disrupt your contentment, and for what reasons? If your “contentment quotient” is lower, ask God to help you raise it. Consider asking the most contented person you know what values and choices led them toward their current state of contentment. In a culture flooded with messages meant to make you want “more” no matter how much you have, how do you intentionally “run away” from those pressures? How can you avoid either pride or shame related solely to your material “success”?

**Prayer: Dear God, help me to be a faithful steward of the money and things I have, to use them for your glory. May I never allow them to turn into a spiritually deadly trap that hides you from me. Amen.**

**January 9, 2022**

**Investing for a Meaningful and Joyful Life Investing for Life: Christianity and Wealth**

**Proverbs 13:22 (CEB), Proverbs 3:9-10 (CEB) and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10-11a, 13 (NRSV)**

 Good people leave their grandchildren an inheritance, but the wealth of sinners is stored up for the righteous. Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first of all your crops. Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will burst with wine. The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work…He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity…Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others.

**A proper perspective on prosperity**

**MONDAY 01/10/2022 Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

Deuteronomy, set just before Israel entered the Promised Land, warned about how humans tend to view prosperity. We’re tempted to believe that everything we have or achieve came solely from us— our hard work and innate talent. But when Israel forgot that “the LORD your God” (verse 18) is the ultimate source of human talent and energy, spiritual (and then military) failures followed. Not just Israel, but all of us, need to always “remember the LORD your God!”

• “Bless the LORD your God in the wonderful land that he’s given you,” said the text. Yet the Promised Land didn’t fall magically from the heavens (in the same way that Resurrection’s varied ministries didn’t “just happen” without any human effort). How can you keep a healthy balance, praising God while thanking God for giving you a responsible part to play in doing God’s work?

• Deuteronomy looked forward based on God’s actions in the past. In the desert, God gave Israel manna for food (see Exodus 16:13-21), water from a rock (see Exodus 17:1-7) and everything else they had to have in order to reach Canaan. In what ways has God provided for your needs? (You may need to reflect on the difference between “needs” and “wants.” For example, the Lord’s Prayer asked for “our daily bread,” not “our daily luxurious 5-course meal.”)

**Prayer: Creator God, let my giving grow from my inner recognition of your creating and sustaining power in my life. Thank you for life, for strength and for talents. Amen.**

**The wisdom of generosity**

**TUESDAY 01/11/2022 Proverbs 11:24-28, Proverbs 22:9, 16**

Proverbs gave varied views on money, which take some work to find. “The words ‘wealth,’ ‘wealthy,’ ‘riches’ and ‘rich’ occur 45 times in the book of Proverbs…, and the words ‘poor’ and ‘poverty’ occur the same number of times.”

\* We can’t just pick one or two favorite proverbs. “A single proverb isn’t appropriate for every circumstance. According to the book of Proverbs, neither poverty nor wealth is given high status in God’s eyes, except as they have to do with one’s pursuit of wisdom.” \*

• In Proverbs 11:25, “A liberal man [or ‘generous persons’] is literally ‘a soul of blessing’….‘Will be enriched’ is literally ‘will be made fat,’ which is an idiom for ‘grow rich’ or ‘become prosperous.’ The sense of this line is that the generous person will be rewarded with wealth.”

\*\* Does life always work that way, money-wise, for generous people? When you give generously of yourself (your time, means, love, spiritual gifts), what non-financial rewards have you received?

• Proverbs 22:16 sounds rather cryptic. After analyzing various ways of understanding the Hebrew, scholars Reyburn and Fry call the Contemporary English Version’s rendering “a good expression of it in colloquial English: ‘Cheat the poor to make profit or give gifts to the rich—either way you lose.’”

\*\* Given that it often seems to pay off financially, what kind of poverty or loss do you think the Israelite sages were saying resulted from kowtowing to the wealthy?

**Prayer: Lord God, you care about my money, not so much because of what it says about my bank account as because of what it says about my heart. Keep my heart growing more generous. Amen.**

 \* Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, sidebar article “The Wealthy and the Poor” in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 1021OT. \*\* William D. Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, A Handbook on Proverbs. New York: United Bible Societies, p. 256.

\*\* William D. Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, A Handbook on Proverbs. New York: United Bible Societies, p. 471.

**The origins of one-tenth as a giving guide**

**WEDNESDAY 01/12/2022 Genesis 28:20-22, Malachi 3:10**

God met tired, scared Jacob in a dream, and Jacob (like his ancestor Abram—cf. Genesis 14:18-20) pledged to return 10% of everything he gained to God. The prophet Malachi urged later Israelites to use the same guideline. Figuring a tenth was different in Genesis’ and Malachi’s more cash-free times. But returning 10% of what God gives us is still a wise Biblical guide for how to respond to God. Many Christ-followers make it a spiritual practice to give 10% of their increase to their local church.

• Do you calculate what you give to your local church as a percentage of your increase (not just what’s handy in your purse or wallet), with 10% as a baseline goal? If yes, great. Reflect on why you choose your tithing practice. If not, what percentage of your income can you begin to give to the congregation that nurtures your relationship with God? If you give, can you increase the percentage? What could you do differently, if necessary, to enter into this practice?

• In 1897, Johnson Oatman wrote a hymn whose chorus said, “Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done.”

\* What are some meaningful blessings in your life? (Even as we near the end—we hope—of a disruptive pandemic, almost all of us can find some if we think hard.) After you count the blessings one by one, write them down. Put the list where you can see it (and maybe add to it) daily. Offer God your thanks. **Prayer: O God, it’s easy for me to thank and praise you for the obvious blessings I enjoy. Give me the vision to value what one writer called the blessings brilliantly disguised as problems or challenges. Amen.**

\* “Count Your Blessings”—words by Johnson Oatman, 1897 – published in 226 hymnals according to <https://hymnary.org/text/when_upon_lifes_billows_you_are_tempest#:~:text=%201%20When%20upon%20life%27s%20billows%20you%20are,Count%20your%20blessings%2C%20name%20them%20one%20by%20one%3B>

**Earthly retirement ends—don’t only plan for that**

**THURSDAY 01/13/2022 Luke 12:13-21,32-34**

 Jesus used this parable to get his listeners (and us) to think about how far ahead our saving plans reach. For the rich man storing his large crop, the sad answer was, “Not nearly far enough.” That was why Jesus included the startling statement that “one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions.” Yes, age changes our working life, and may end it—but God’s reality goes well beyond that. This life, and whatever material goods we enjoy in it, will end. Only God can (and does) offer us eternity.

• A man asked Jesus to tell his brother to give him a bigger share of an inheritance. But Jesus spoke sadly of “those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.” His wry story said what we work (and maybe fight) so hard for does us no good when we die. Has your desire for material goods ever blotted out relational or spiritual concerns? What helps you make sensible provisions for material needs without letting the stuff you think you “own” actually “own” you?

• When Jesus called his followers a “little flock,” they were. That was no reason to fear. God generously “delights” in giving them (and us, who are a much larger “flock”) the gift of God’s kingdom. In Matthew 6:27, Jesus added that worry doesn’t help. Have you ever spent time and energy worrying about things that never happened, as it turned out? How does worry differ from wise foresight or planning? Instead of worrying, what are more practical ways to meet life’s tasks?

**Prayer: Loving God, in fall foliage or spring flowers, every morning and every evening, you delight in giving to me. Keep my generosity growing, even though it will never match the scale of yours. Amen.**

**God can end our captivity to “stuff”**

**FRIDAY 01/14/2022 Matthew 19:16-26**

Jesus called a rich young man to reset his priorities. He couldn’t do it. He went away sad. He seemed to want to follow Jesus, but he didn’t do it because he wanted all his earthly possessions even more. Like many people then (and now), Jesus' disciples thought earthly riches always meant God had blessed the owner. Jesus shocked them when he said, “It will be very hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.” Very hard, but not impossible: “All things are possible for God” (verse 26).

• This story poses a question many of us would rather not wrestle with: “Are any of my possessions so precious to me that, if I had to, I’d choose them over Jesus?” But bravely facing that question can set you free! How will you strengthen your trust in God, and let God guide you in accurately valuing God’s gift of eternal life, and faithfully using your earthly possessions for God’s purposes?

• God did NOT tell many affluent Bible characters (e.g. Abraham in the Old Testament, Lydia the seller of royal purple cloth in the New Testament—see Acts 16:11-15) to sell all they had. What do you believe was the heart issue Jesus knew the wealthy young man needed to address? What was the central obstacle that kept him from responding to Jesus' call?

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, you offer me heaven’s riches. Give me a heart that can accurately assess the treasure of your kingdom, and value it properly against all other claims. Amen.**

**“Rich generosity” = “a work of grace”**

**SATURDAY 01/15/2022 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

Due to persecution (and probably local conditions like drought), Christians in Jerusalem faced severe poverty. Paul had invited the Christians in the cities of Greece to give to an offering he would deliver to the Jerusalem Christians (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Romans 15:25-26). Clearly the specific “work of grace” Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to “be the best in” was generous giving to the offering for Christians in Jerusalem. “The Greek word translated as ‘grace’ …is used with a variety of meanings in 2 Corinthians 8-9.”

\* So, Paul ultimately focused on Jesus, who gave us a transcendent model of self-giving to bless others. He reported that believers in other places found it a “privilege” to join in giving. He was confident the Corinthians would feel the same way.

• Few of Paul’s readers could just take their offerings from “petty cash.” “Although the financial position of the Corinthians (at least some of them) appears to have been relatively more secure than that of the believers in Jerusalem….according to some estimates, more than 90% of the general population of the Roman Empire lived at, near, or below subsistence level.”

\*\* Paul saw having more than others as a reason to share, not as cause for hoarding. Whatever your situation, do you see giving as a privilege that moves you to be as generous as possible? Scholar William Barclay wrote, “The New Testament is extremely practical….It never forgets that something new and wonderful enters the life of the [person] who accepts God’s command as his law. But the rewards the New Testament envisages are…not the wealth of things, but the wealth of the heart and the spirit.”

 \*\*\* When has being generous enriched your heart and spirit?

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, you gave yourself to change me for the better. I want that change to include counting it a privilege to join in giving for others, echoing your work of grace. Amen.**

\* David J. Downs, study note on 2 Corinthians 8:1-6 in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 345NT. \*\* David J. Downs, study note on 2 Corinthians 8:2 in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 345NT. \*\*\* William Barclay, The Letters to the Corinthians (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 234

**JANUARY 16, 2022**

**A Pastor’s Notebook: The Legacy We Leave**

**Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-7, John 13:12-15, 1 Chronicles 22:5c-6, 13-14**

 [Moses, before his death, said to the Israelites], Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. [On the night before Jesus’ crucifixion], after he washed the disciples’ feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, “Do you know what I’ve done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. [Shortly before his death], David made extensive preparations before his death. David sent for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel. [Then David said to Solomon], “If you carefully follow the regulations and case laws that the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel, you’ll prosper. Be strong and brave. Don’t be afraid or lose heart! With great effort I’ve now provided for the LORD’s temple.”

**Disappointment for David**

**MONDAY 01/17/2022 1 Chronicles 17:1-15**

 Israel’s King David already had many historic successes. He united Israel’s 12 tribes (cf. 2 Samuel 5:1-3). He took Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-9), made it their capital city, and praised God by bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 6:12-15). Building a temple to house the ark must have seemed a logical next step. But through the prophet Nathan, God said, “no,” which was surely a disappointment. He said David’s son would succeed him, and he should build the temple.

• Scholar John Goldingay saw a key drawback to David’s temple idea. “It reverses the relationship between God and David. God has been the one who has taken responsibility for the big initiatives and achievements in Israel’s story. To put it theologically, what has happened has depended on God’s grace.” \* How can Nathan’s message remind us of the danger of taking credit for even good things we do as our accomplishment, rather than God’s grace working through us?

• Chronicles (written after Israel’s Babylonian exile) echoed 2 Samuel 7:16’s pledge that God would establish David’s dynasty “forever.” But in fact “they had descendants of David in their midst but not on the throne.”

\*\* Had God’s promise failed? Only temporarily, it turned out. Centuries later, an angel told Mary her God-given son would ultimately reign on “the throne of David his father” (Luke 1:32-33). Across centuries, God kept his promise. How can that deepen your trust in God?

**Prayer: Lord God, keep me aware that any good I do, any way I help to build your kingdom, is a testimonial to your grace at work through my life and my God-given gifts. Amen.**

\* John Goldingay, 1 and 2 Chronicles for Everyone. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012, p. 47. \*\* Ibid.

**David focused his energy on the future**

**TUESDAY 01/18/2022 1 Chronicles 28:1-11, 20**

We read yesterday that King David had a dream: to build a Temple to honor his God (cf. 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 1 Chronicles 17:1-15). But when God (through the prophet Nathan) said David was not the person to build the Temple, David didn’t complain or sulk. He turned his attention and energy to the future God’s message outlined. His legacy became, not a building, but a builder, as he trained Solomon to be the king who’d direct the building of the beautiful temple.

• “Okay, Solomon— No pressure! God has chosen you to build a temple for him. Work hard.” In fact, David’s closing words to his son (“Be strong and courageous”) echoed Moses’ support of his successor Joshua (cf. Deuteronomy 31:7-8, 23), and anticipated Paul’s charge to Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:13) and God’s message to Paul as he preached in that large Greek city (cf. Acts 18:9). How can you internalize God’s message to “be strong and courageous” today?

• David spoke of God’s choosing. It didn’t (and doesn’t) mean the chosen get a free pass to heaven, that God chose you because you are better than others, or that you can live any way you please. “God’s choice of Abraham was not a means of excluding other people but of including them…. They were chosen to fulfill a role, not in order to enjoy being chosen.”

\* God has chosen you (cf. Ephesians 3:2,10) to fulfill the role of showing others what God is like. How can you do that?

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep transforming me into a window through which your light can shine, into an instrument of your peace in this angry, contentious world. Amen.**

\* John Goldingay, 1 and 2 Chronicles for Everyone. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012, p. 70.

**David provided resources for his legacy**

**WEDNESDAY 01/19/2022 1 Chronicles 29:1-5, 9**

King David didn’t just talk a good game in support of his son Solomon’s temple-building assignment. He eagerly set out to gather what his son Solomon would need for the building. He started by setting aside a large chunk of his personal fortune as a legacy. But it wasn’t a one-man project—he allowed all of Israel a chance to join in as they chose. David and the people saw the giving as a privilege, not a burden. They were giving back what came from God’s hand for God’s purposes.

• In his praise, David told God, “Since everything comes from you, we have given you that which comes from your own hand.” He described humans as “immigrants without permanent homes” (language that anticipated Hebrews 11:13-16 by centuries). Do you agree that whatever you have ultimately comes from God, or do you see it as something you created or earned? Do you think of any giving you do as “giving back,” or more as having to give up something that is yours?

• 1 Chronicles 29:9 said the people rejoiced, not because they’d reached a fixed financial amount, but because “they had presented their offerings to the Lord so willingly and wholeheartedly.” In your life, do the words “willingly and wholeheartedly” apply to paying for health insurance and/or medical bills? Buying birthday or Christmas gifts? Paying to fix your roof or plumbing? Whatever you give to causes for God’s kingdom?

**Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the gift of life and all that comes with it. Grow in me a heart that fills with joy when I have the privilege of giving back some of what you’ve given me. Amen.**

**Living for “all who are yet to come”**

**THURSDAY 01/20/2022 Psalm 78:1-8, 71:14-19**

God’s people have always valued teaching and learning. In Israel of old, the focus of education was not to satisfy random human curiosity, but to understand and pass on the knowledge of God’s powerful acts to future generations. They clearly believed that God wants us to use our minds regularly, faithfully and well.

• Psalm 78 said that while learning has present benefits, it is strongly future-focused. God’s followers, through the centuries, have played a major role in starting many types of schools. That’s because the faith teaches them to care about future generations, not merely their own comfort and security. How important is it to you that your faith not just make your life better, but reach those who will be here after you’re gone?

• Psalm 71 had a different view from investment ads that picture our older years as a non-stop, selfindulgent vacation. The psalmist saw a lifelong calling to share God’s love and power: “Even in my old age with gray hair, don’t abandon me, God! Not until I tell generations about your mighty arm, tell all who are yet to come about your strength.” Whether you’re 21 or 81, how are you (or how will you start) shaping a legacy focused on telling generations about the God you love and serve?

**Prayer: Lord God, I want to accept the challenge. I want to live a life with the big picture aim of helping present and future generations know your strength and ultimate righteousness. Please help me. Amen.**

**Paul’s Jesus-based “retirement plan”**

**FRIDAY 01/21/2022 Acts 20:22-35**

Acts recorded the Apostle Paul’s final, emotional talk to his friends who led the churches in Ephesus. His words show in clear (and challenging) ways how he defined “success,” and was planning for his “retirement.” He quoted Jesus as his model in verse 35 (the only direct quote from Jesus not in the four gospels). Paul’s “retirement plan” was about serving others. He didn’t believe he would finish his earthly work while still on earth, only when the day arrived that he was in God’s eternal kingdom.

• Paul was going to Jerusalem to deliver a gift of funds he’d collected from Gentile Christians for Jewish Christians facing hardships. Think of a time when you gave something with an open heart (e.g. money, or maybe your time or listening caringly to someone hurting, etc.). Then recall a time when you bought an item you really wanted for yourself. Compare the two experiences. How lasting was the joy and well-being in each case?

• As he left this group of church leaders, Paul said, “I’m turning you over to God, our marvelous God whose gracious Word can make you into what he wants you to be and give you everything you could possibly need” (verse 32, The Message \*). In what ways has your perspective on your “needs” and “wants” changed since you’ve opened your life to Jesus? List, for your own reflection, some examples of ways your values have shifted over time.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, your servant Paul knew that life is not about “silver, gold, or clothing” nearly as much as it’s about “helping the weak.” Infuse my life with that same wisdom and understanding. Amen.**

\* Peterson, Eugene H. The Message Numbered Edition Hardback. Navpress. Kindle Edition.

**Your salvation: a message to “future generations”**

**SATURDAY 01/22/2022 Ephesians 2:4-7**

“God is rich in mercy.” “You are saved by God’s grace.” That was the beating heart of our faith, said the letter to the Ephesians. God saved us FROM a broken, self-seeking way of life. But that wasn’t the end of the story; it was just the beginning. What Jesus called “the kingdom of God” aims to restore not just individuals, but this whole broken world to God-given wholeness. God didn’t save any of us just to do something nice for us. If in fact “God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace,” then a part of our response to God’s grace must surely be to thoughtfully seek to leave a legacy that plays a role in showing future generations how good God has been to us.

• John Wesley, Methodism’s founder, applied Ephesians 2 to everyday life in his “second general rule”: “By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men.” Are there “sorts” of goodness you didn’t used to practice, but do now as a Christ follower? Let Wesley’s phrase “doing good of every possible sort” spark your creativity. What new sorts of goodness, not just for the present but for future generations, might God be nudging you to consider making a part of your life and planning? (There are many ways to prepare your legacy. If you’d like ideas from The Church of the Resurrection, click here.)

 **Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for all that you have saved me from. Guide me day by day into a way of living that honors and carries out the purposes you saved me for, now and in the future. Amen.**