

Series: Ecclesiastes

Sermon #4: Servant ... not Master

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- February 28, 2021

All right, we're looking at Ecclesiastes 5 in our series together. And most of the book is built around this paradox of man, of his nature, and the predicament of mankind.

Man is just a reed. And the universe need not expend or stress to kill all of us. But man separates himself from all creation in that he's a thinking reed, and he knows and contemplates his death.

--Blaise Pascal

Pascal said it many different ways. Here's one way that I'm particularly fond of. He said, "Man is just a reed." He's just a reed. "And the universe need not expend or stress to kill all of us. But man separates himself from all creation in that he's a thinking reed, and he knows and contemplates his death."

Man is but a reed. It doesn't take much to kill all of us—I think we are all pretty aware of that—we're just a germ away. But we're a thinking reed. We know and we contemplate our death.

The nature of mankind is between earth and heaven. We're a reed, but we're a thinking reed. We have our feet in clay and our head in heaven. And that's our lot—to stay in that place. The nature of man is in between those two. Man is dirt. In Hebrew, the word for dirt—if it were English, it would be a-d-a-m-a-h, *adamah*. That's why Adam is named "Adam." His name is "dirt." And God breathed into his nostrils and gave him spirit. And that's why he's made in the image of God. But here's what it looks like in the garden. Adam walks up and says, "Hello, Yahweh," and Yahweh says, "Hello, dirt." Because that's what we are. We're in this strange place.

And our temptation, mind you, is to go where we do not belong. Sometimes we want to go down and become earthy like animals and just be pampered and pacified and lazy and be taken care of. And other times we want to climb and become something we were not meant to be and define what is right and real. We want to live with this illusion of power and control and—here's the one—independence. *I don't need anyone, even God.* That's the teasing, the temptation, that we're called to. But our lot is to live somewhere between apes and angels.

Now today in Ecclesiastes we're going to look at chapter 5 at how wealth causes us to be tempted in one of those directions. Wealth teases us to go up or to go down. And we have to understand its power.

A Scenario with Solomon

But today, here's what I want you to picture in our story of Solomon. Just pretend that Solomon has been transported to our current time and now he is at this exclusive hotel in the ballroom where they're having this graduation ceremony. And he's there every Saturday night during graduation season, just to see if there's anyone there wanting to learn a little wisdom.

And this graduation ceremony is from an elite school and it's the elite students. And they're just dancing around and couldn't be any happier. Every one of them has a little envelope in their vest pocket that is from some great prominent firm with a great offer of all the wealth they're going to have. They're just singing along with Pink Floyd,

*Come on, boy, come on in, have a cigar.
You're going to go far, you're going to fly high,
you're never going to die.*

Everybody's singing along,
We're going to fly high, we're never going to die.

And then one of the phenoms, a nineteen-year-old MBA graduate, looks over in the corner and he sees Solomon tucked away in the corner, right there by the grand piano. He brought his own scotch. And he's just sitting and watching. And so, the nineteen-year-old goes over there and says, "You are Solomon. You're the wisest, richest, and most powerful man. What are you doing here?"

He says, “I’m just here to give advice to anyone who’s taking it.”

The boy says, “I’m a learner. That’s how I got into this room. I’m good at learning.”

And Solomon says, “You want to be rich?”

The boy says, “Yes, of course. That’s why I’ve worked so hard.”

“Here’s your first bit of advice. Why? Why do you want to be wealthy? Why? What difference does it make? Because that can’t feed your soul. Wealth cannot feed your soul. Here, let me give you some advice. There’s an old Italian saying—memorize this and you’ll go far, young man.” Here’s what he says. **“Money is a good servant, but a bad master.”** Money has a way of—I don’t know—pulling you into the dirt where you’re going to live like an animal because you can afford to. Or sometimes, even worse, it’s going to pull you upward, and you’re going to thrive and get drunk on the power or the idea that you have control or influence or independence or safety, or whatever it might be. But you’re going to think you can make your own rules, and here’s the thing. It will kill you. It’s addictive. **Money is a good servant, but a terrible master.”**

Five Principles of Wealth

Solomon said, “I’ll give you five principles of wealth. And if we have time, I’ll tell you two things about God that are true that will help you out.”

Solomon is the wisest, most powerful, and the richest person in the Ancient Near East. And if nothing, he’s just observant. You don’t have to be smart. You just kind of have to be old. These things are so obvious to people who have lived long. And that’s the nature of this book, by the way. It’s an old guy telling young guys, *You don’t have to do it the hard way. You could just listen. But you know, we’ll see.*

Principle #1: The More We Have, the More We Want

Here’s the first of his five principles. He says this. The more we have, the more we’re going to want.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.

Chapter 5, verse 10 says, “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.” It doesn’t make sense. It’s meaningless.

Look, I’m going to make this obvious. He says it two times. I think I put it in all caps. It doesn’t say “whoever HAS money.” He says, “whoever LOVES money.” That’s the problem—loving money. In the New Testament, the most misquoted verse is quoted as “Money is the root of all evil.” No, it’s “The LOVE of money” that “is the root of all evil.”

And money makes a terrible lover. The more you love it, the less you’re satisfied with it. And so, he’s talking about the love of money or the love of wealth. And I want you to hear it at the beginning and the end. Wealth and money are okay. I have lived on Hamburger Helper for a long time—without the hamburger. I drove salvaged cars on used tires for over a decade. I ate so many Sam’s burritos. I am either going to live forever or die immanently. That’s bad stuff. I’ve been rich and I’ve been poor. Poor is not as fun, I’ll tell you that.

But what he’s saying here is that the love of money is what leads to all kind of problems. And why? Why do you love the money? That’s how you solve the problem that you will have with money. Why do you love it? Because here’s the thing—it takes you to places you’re not supposed to go in the context of your lot as a human. It can take you to places of power and status, the illusion of safety, independence (*I just want to be left alone*). It can take you to pleasure and laziness (*I just want to be a cat where people care for me and let me sleep a lot. I want that.*) And here’s the thing. You’re always going to want more, because those things don’t satisfy the soul. You’re in love with things that are temporal, not eternal.

Is it any wonder that when someone interviewed John D. Rockefeller, America’s first billionaire, and they said, “Well, how much is enough?”, he said, “I just need a little bit more.” Of course, he does.

And Solomon says, “Look, take it from me. I didn’t start off that way, but I ended that way, because it’s an addiction. It makes you want more if it doesn’t know its place.”

Do you know the number one cause of divorce in marriages? Money problems. In secular and church surveys, they come up with the exact same data. The word is “materialism.” Couples that are materialistic, that want to buy and buy and need stuff, are the ones under the most stress because they put themselves in financial places that put them in a category of a forty percent higher rate of divorce because of their financial choices. Contentment will save a marriage.

Application: Look at Your Debt

We have five principles that are true. If you want to apply them, the first application on doing diagnostic work on “Do you love money, do you love wealth?”—here’s a way of knowing. What’s your debt ratio, especially credit card debt? I mean, the nature of debt and almost the definition of debt is *I want that thing. I love that thing. I can’t afford that thing. I’m going to buy that thing anyway.* That’s the nature of debt. *I’m just going to buy that thing anyway. I shouldn’t have it, but I’m going to have it.* And that ought to tell you something. And it should tell you something. It means that you’ve already gone on the entrance ramp to the highway of destruction. And I would suggest that you turn around as soon as you possibly can, because the more you have, the more you’re going to want. That doesn’t end until you get this under control.

How do you get it under control? One way is two words: Dave Ramsey. Just go to daveramsey.com. I’m sure it’s daveramsey.com. Go on there, he’ll teach you how to get out of debt. If you don’t want to do it that way, just e-mail the church and say, “I want to get my finances under control.” We’ll figure it out. We have multiple people that help our congregation members learn how to balance their budgets. It’s one of those life skills that sometimes you’re not taught. Learn how to balance your budget. Learn how to live within your means. Learn how not to be enslaved by wealth.

Because here’s the thing—this is true. Let’s read it aloud together—everyone. **“Wealth is a good servant, but a bad master.”** The more you have, the more you’re going to want.

Principle #2: The More We Have, the More We Need to Spend

The more you have, the more you're going to need to spend to keep it.

Ecclesiastes 5:11

As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?

The next sentence, verse 11, says, “As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except they feast their eyes upon them?” Do you know what he’s saying here? The more stuff you have, the more people it’s going to take to keep the whole thing working.

When you start off in some kind of business or career, you do what you’ve got to do. And life is somewhat simple, right? And then, let’s just say that you continue to gain wealth and income and those sorts of things, and the next thing you know—*I’m going to need an accountant. My taxes are getting pretty complicated here. And then I’m going to need a lawyer, because people want my stuff. And then I’m going to need a wealth manager to keep it all straight. I need a yard guy now. I used to be the yard guy. And now I need a pool guy. I didn’t even have a pool before.*

What he’s saying here is to look what it takes as you grow wealthy. It takes more to run the place. That’s just the legitimate people, he says. It says “to those who consume them.” Those are legitimate consumers of your wealth. What about when people find out you have money and suddenly they’re your friends? And how about that long lost relative? And the next thing you know, you’ve got this entourage of people. And what Solomon is saying here is this. He’s looking at this guy and saying, “Listen, grasshopper. Before you start living your life for wealth, you might want to consider this truth. The more you have, the more you’re going to want. But also, the more you have, the more you make, you might not have as much to show for it, because of all the people consuming it.”

This is true. Say it with me. **“Wealth is a good servant, but it’s a bad master.”**

Principle #3: The More We Own, the More We Worry

Now there's a crowd starting to form around this piano, and he's starting to tell some more little truths. The guys says, "Hey, that's two. I want a third one. You promised me five."

He says, "Fine. The more you have, the more you want. The more you have, the more it takes to keep it running. And the more you have, the more you're going to worry."

Ecclesiastes 5:12

The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.

Look at verse 12, the next sentence. "The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much. But as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep."

Wealth is not the cure for insomnia; wealth is the cause of insomnia. The number one cause of sleep deprivation in America today is worry. Worry about what? Worry about wealth.

So, if you join the story with me, Solomon says, "Look, let me just tell you a story. It happened just this week. I haven't slept all week long. I'm building this house. I own one of the Virgin Islands, so I was down there and I was on the deck and I was watching some of the new security stuff go in, because I have to keep everything safe. And I'm watching the new cameras being put in, and the guy welding the fence. I'm getting a bigger and a stronger fence. And I'm watching him weld this fence. He's there right when the sun comes up. He works all the way to noon as hard as he can. And it's so hot down there. And he has his son by his side the whole time, and they're laughing and enjoying it. He's teaching him a new trade. They break for lunch and all they eat is a baloney sandwich. It's kind of soggy. They're laughing and "yukking it up." They keep going until three, they share an apple together, they get off when the sun goes down. I'm watching them go all the way into their little hut by the ocean, and his wife greets them at the door. They go out to the end of the dock, they split a bowl of popcorn. That's it. He comes inside and he's asleep before he even hits the pillow." Solomon is saying, "Man, I envy that guy's sweet sleep. Because I was up all night and all those camera lights were flashing and security, and I was wondering if all those welds took. I better go down there and make sure the

welds are good on my safety fence. Can I trust my safety guard working the front gate? I don't know. I don't like the way he's looking at me. I don't know."

The point is that he's the one doing all the worrying and he's the one with all the money.

Henry Ford, in the height of running his entire empire of Ford production, said this: "**I was happier when I was a mechanic**"—*because I wasn't worrying about stuff.*

When I was growing up, we never locked the front door to the house. We didn't lock any doors. I didn't know that was different until I started dating Melinda, and she said, "Why don't you guys ever lock your doors?"

And so, I said, "Let's ask Dad. Dad, why don't we ever lock the doors?"

And he said, "What are they going to steal?"

Andrew Carnegie said, "**Millionaires seldom smile.**" Yeah, because they're worrying.

Money and wealth can't feed your soul. It doesn't have that potential. But it does have the potential to bring you sorrow because of the fighting and the lawsuits and all the joy that goes with that. It has the potential of giving you sickness because of ulcers and worrying. It has all the potential to bring you anger and resentment. Wait until the neighbor finds out how much you're worth, or a co-worker. It has that potential.

This is true. **Wealth is a good servant, but a bad master.** That's what Solomon is trying to tell us.

Principle #4: The More We Worry, the More We Hoard

So, he goes on with this thing ... the more you have, the more you want. The more you have, the more it takes to keep the thing running. The more you have, the more worrying it's going to involve. And then, fourth, he says, "The more you have, the more you're going to hoard it." That seems contradictory, but this is what he says.

Ecclesiastes 5:13, 14

I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit.

He says, “I have seen a grievous evil.” He’s going to talk about two things. “I’ve seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, or wealth that’s lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there’s nothing left for the children to inherit.”

Pink Floyd sarcastically writes a song called, “Money.” And he sings about hoarding. It says,

Money, it’s a gas.

He means it’s a drug.

Money, it’s a gas,

grab that cash with both hands and make a stash.

Look, I’m all right, Jack, you just keep your hands off of my stack.

What happens when a person gathers more and more wealth? They start hoarding it. And what he’s saying here, the grievous evil, is that the person that is hurt by the hoarding is the hoarder.

This is a truth. You show what you love by what you do with what you have. You show what you love by doing towards that thing with what you have. If you’re hoarding, it means you love money. That’s the thing you’re loving. That’s what you’re using your resources to do, is just make it worse.

And so, Solomon is saying, “Look....” He’s got this bigger audience, and he says, “Look, if it happened to me” (and it did happen to Solomon), “it can happen to you. When I started out, I had wealth wrapped around my finger. I was the boss of wealth. I told it what to do. I told it when to do it. And then somehow, somewhere along the line, I’m just holding its hand and maybe we’re just equals. By the end of my life, I was wrapped around its finger. It was telling me what to do. So, wipe that smug look”—he’s three drinks in at this point, he’s getting a little edgy—“wipe the smug look off your face. When I’m drunk, when I’m hungover, I’m smarter than your best day after your best exam. And this is what happened to me. I’m telling you, it goes like this. Addictions are not these stairs down. It’s just this gradual slope. The stepping

down is almost indistinguishable. And then, here's what happened to me. I started up there, I ended up down here, and I woke up one morning saying, 'It's my precious, it's my precious'—hoarding it. I couldn't stop hoarding it."

The other thing that grieves him is that these people that hoard—not only is it a misfortune to them, but they lose it like that, and the kids get nothing. All it takes is a dramatic stock change or some kind of fraud. Or here's what happens most of the time. No matter how much you have you want more? *One more deal. Let's just put it down one more time. All bets down, hands off the table, let's go. This time we're going to have enough. Let's bet it all.* And they lose it all. That's the nature of wealth. It is addictive. And it will destroy you, like all addictions.

Wealth is a good servant. It's a bad master. Let's say that together. **Wealth is a good servant, it is a bad master.**

Principle #5: The More We Hoard, the More We Leave

"Okay, that's four. You promised us five."

And he said, "Fine. You want five? Here's five. All of you, look at you in the prime of your life. You'll be dead and forgotten soon."

"Say what?"

"Yeah. You'll be dead and it won't matter. It won't matter if you're rich or poor."

Ecclesiastes 5:15, 16

Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. ¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind?

They're loving this lesson, right? Look at verse 15. It says, "Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry with them in their hands."

Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul? No. Have you ever seen a guy in a casket with his arms full of stuff? No. That's what he's saying.

"This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart. So, what do they gain, since they toil their whole lives in the wind?"

Do you know the dress code for death? Naked. The baby's screaming right there. Naked they come, naked they go.

Alexander the Great was naked when he died. So was his horse. Caesar and his slaves—the way you come is the way you go. I can't remember the exact amount—how much did Steve Jobs leave behind when he died? Anyone? All of it. Yeah, he left all of it. He went naked—everything. That's the problem.

Wealth is a good servant, it's a terrible master. It's a good servant, it's a bad master.

Two Insights About God

And so, Solomon has officially killed this party. The band is going home. There are a few people still standing around, and he gets up to leave and says, "Okay, I'm done here."

And the nineteen-year-old kid, the phenom, the smartest one in the group, says, "Whoa. You promised us two insights into the nature of God. You've got to get us out of here. You've got to give us the prescription. You gave us five things that are true about wealth. Give us two things that are true about God, because I need something to get satisfaction and significance and security, because you can't have it in everything I've been living for and hoping for."

He says, "Okay, fine, I'm going to say this, if you have time. I'm going to tell you four times in two verses. Four times in two verses I'm going to say the same thing. So, get this."

Insight #1: God Gives Work As His Gift

He says this: "Happiness comes as a gift from Yahweh." Happiness comes, and it's just a gift from Yahweh. It comes in two forms, know this. One, God gives work as a gift.

Ecclesiastes 5:18

This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has give them—for this is their lot.

Look what he says in verse 18: “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat and to drink and to find satisfaction in the toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life that God has given them, for this is their lot.”

He saying, *Look, the toil of work is a gift, thank you very much.* Understand this about work. It was part of God’s gift before the fall of mankind. It will happen after our transition to heaven. We will work there too. The word for work in Hebrew is so close to the word for worship that some scholars believe it’s the same word. It has to do with vowel markings that were added later. It might be the same word. Work is worship, worship is work. Our lot as humans is to work.

So, Solomon is saying here, “Look. Find the work that you would love to do as an expression of how God made you. Find a place to express that gift. And then enjoy. Enjoy. Let that joy be worship.”

You get to wake up in the morning, thank God that so far everything is still working. You go to that place and you say, *I’m doing this for You.* You thank God for your health, for your ability to do that job and a place to do it. That’s a gift from God.

Insight #2: God Gives Wealth As His Gift

The second gift that he talks about—here’s the other thing—is that wealth is a gift from God. This is further evidence that it’s not about wealth; it’s about making it a love affair.

Ecclesiastes 5:19, 20

Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

So, he's going to give four expressions of gifts in chapter 5, verses 19 and 20. "Moreover, when God gives someone wealth," two, "possessions," three, "the ability to enjoy them," four, "the acceptance of their lot and to be happy with their toil--this is a gift from God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with the gladness of their heart."

They don't have time to be moping around and considering the fact that they're just a reed, but a thinking reed; they just enjoy life. Why? Because God's given them pleasure. God gives them wealth—that's a gift. He gave them possessions. He gave them the ability to enjoy those possessions; He gave them the ability to accept their lot. *This is how God made me, I'm fine with that. Now I'm just going to enjoy it.*

So, in summary, the two points are that God gives us work and God gives us the ability to enjoy the work plus enjoy wealth. Happiness—that's where it's found. That's an expression of the generosity of God. Let your wealth serve God in worship. Let your wealth that you got by working serve God in worship.

How Do You Know If Wealth Is a Servant or a Master?

How do you know if the whole big idea is—if wealth is a great servant and a terrible master—how do you know if wealth is a servant or a master? There's a thermometer to help you know how. The first thing we already talked about is to know your level of indebtedness. That will tell you for sure. On the other extreme, the other measurement is generosity. Your generosity is an expression of you being the master of wealth, and wealth not being the master of you. Generosity is proof that money is a slave to you.

I just have attitude issues in my soul, mostly anger, and I try to channel it in the right way. When I give money away, I say, *You know what? Get out of my house. Get out of my soul. I*

own you, money. You don't own me. You think you can take over my world and my soul? No. See, I'm going to throw you out, I'm going to give you away.

I guess in prison, it's just establishing dominance. My days in jail, maybe that's what happened to me those two times. But each time, I established dominance. So, this is, *You know what? Money doesn't own me. I own money. Watch this—I'm going to give it away.* That's how you prove it.

So, when I talk about generosity, I don't mean talking about generosity. That's a thing to do today. I don't mean me telling you that you need to be generous. That's not generosity. Generosity is when you take your stuff and you give it away.

And here's the thing. Studies have shown this over and over again. It doesn't matter how high your income level is. If you're waiting to make more, that day will never happen, because, again, you're going to want more. Here's what happens if someone does this over and over again. Someone making \$20,000: if they can't give away \$2,000, then when they make \$200,000, they can't give away \$20,000 because they get in more debt. They loved money before, they love it more now. They're working their way through the four to five steps. So, now is a great time, whatever your level is.

And here's what is strange about generosity—very strange and maybe even unique about generosity. It is not only a diagnostic tool to determine if you're a slave to money; it's also a cure for being enslaved by money. In other words, if you are enslaved by money, how do you get out and give it away?

John D. Rockefeller—I talked about him earlier—he was America's first billionaire. He nearly died when he was fifty-three years old. He nearly died of malnutrition because his stomach was so upset because he was working his way. The more he had, the more he wanted. The more he had, the more people he had to have to run it. The more he had, the more he worried. The more he worried, the more he hoarded. And he was compulsively worried about his great wealth. And all he could digest was milk and saltine crackers. And so, he was going to die from malnutrition. He brought counselors in, secular as the day is long, and they just said, "Give it away. Start giving your wealth away."

And when John D. Rockefeller started giving his wealth away, the burden was lifted and he enjoyed life until he was ninety-eight years old.

What would have been great is if he had had a Christian worldview. They probably would have said, “Pay your employees more.” Because one of the reasons he made so much money was because he kept his employees in poverty. That’s kind of a different subject, but it was a way of being generous, it was a way of giving away. And so, now you see all these Rockefeller Centers, and it’s based on his survival. He did it for his cure.

How Do You Get Contentment?

How do you become content? How do you have a sense of stability in all this? He says in this book, and Jesus says it in a sentence. He says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the other stuff—that will be added.” This is the sentence that I’m speaking of—this verse. It is the punchline of several paragraphs of a long sermon about worrying that Jesus gives in the Sermon on the Mount. And at the end of His sermon on worrying, He says, *Just seek first the salvation that comes with Jesus Christ and the peace you have with God through that. Seek first the power of the Holy Spirit living in your life, having the ability to change you, literally from the inside out. Could you just seek first the glory of the Father ruling all of creation? And all these other things will be added unto you.*

You see? First things first—do that.

Solomon is saying, “Know this. This is true. This is your lot, the way you are designed, the way you were made. Before the fall of man, you were built to love the Lord your God with your heart foremost, with your soul, strength, and mind. You were designed to love your neighbor as yourself. That’s how it works. That’s our lot. That’s what you do. You do that and you will enjoy life.”

I like the simple life. That’s a great song. My dad sang it. He never knew the song—I don’t know. But he taught all of us, his children, the song. One of the things that I love that I inherited from my father was the simple life. And I especially like it because he had to earn it. My father came from great wealth—old New England wealth. Every meal the men had to wear dinner jackets; linen tablecloths, china, crystal—every dinner, all the time.



When they were growing up, they would summer in their house on Block Island. They did it when they children all the way into adulthood.





All six of them went to exclusive preparatory schools. The one my father and his brothers went to, almost sixty percent of the student body went to Yale. Yale isn't a Catholic school. So, they all went to Georgetown. Think about how much that must have cost—four boys in Georgetown, not including three other African American young men that my grandfather helped get through school. He was on the board of directors.



My uncles and my dad helped start the Georgetown hockey team. They were in *Collier's Magazine* and were even written up in the *LA Times*. They were a big deal.

Somewhere around twenty to twenty-one years old, my dad thought, *I want to be happy, not necessarily wealthy*. And so, he wanted to fly jets. And so, he joined the Air Force. And he did that for twenty years. He lived a simple life. We went on simple vacations. He married a woman that goes along with the song: "Life could be thrillin' with one who is willin' to be a pilot's wife."

He didn't leave us very much money. He left us enough for me to trade in my sixteen-year-old Acura for an eight-year-old convertible. But what we inherited from my father was the idea that we didn't have to have money to be happy. We could just enjoy what we had.

And I found out later—I connected the dots—that no wonder in one of the pivotal conversations I’ve had in my life, when I went to my parents around age twenty or twenty-one and I told them I was going to go to seminary instead of law school—I’d been talking about going to law school since sixth grade. And my mom wept bitterly and got up and had to leave the meeting, she was so afraid for me. And my dad looked at me, and I think when I said I needed to go to seminary, he heard me say, “I need to fly jets.” And he knew happiness was not contingent on my income. So, he told me that day, “If you don’t go to seminary, you’ll be looking back over your shoulder for the rest of your life. So, just go. You can be content.”

And so, you know, years later when I’m driving salvaged cars on used tires, eating entirely too many Sam’s burritos, it didn’t hurt. Because at that time money wasn’t a master. It was a slave. And today, every time I make the roof go back I thank my dad. I love that little convertible because it’s a gift from my dad—contentment.

Solomon is telling us this: the purpose of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever; to know God by enjoying Him forever; to understand our lot; to stay away from the addiction of wealth. Wealth is salt water, guys. It will not quench your thirst. It will only make you thirstier and then kill you.

The answer: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the other things will be added. And you won’t care.

Let me pray Paul’s prayer for us, if you’ll join me. This is out of 1 Timothy chapter 6. It’s the Word of God. It’s God’s prayer for us. Listen to what he says.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” And everyone said ... Amen. Godliness with contentment is great gain. **“For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, then we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into all kinds of temptations and traps and into foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”**

Lord, these are warnings in the older and the newer Testaments, and the message hasn't changed. Lord, I'd ask that Your Spirit would speak to ours and tell us the truth. Do we love money? Do we worship wealth? Are we the master of this?

Lord, I'd ask that You would not only convict us, if that is the case, but help us to change. Give us the courage to pick up the phone and ask for help, to do what's necessary to get out of debt if that's the case, or learn how to be generous if that's the case.

Lord, I'd ask that we could celebrate the gift of work and toil, the gift of wealth and money, and that we would use those as worship. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

