

Live Within Your Means and Slowly Save Big (Don't Spend Quickly, Reserve Resources)

By Grant Van Leuven

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Bible Text: Proverbs 21:20; Proverbs 22:7

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Puritan Reformed Presbyterian Church

6374 Potomac St.
San Diego, CA 92139

Website: puritanchurch.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch

Beloved, please open your Bibles to Proverbs 21:20. Hear now the word of the Lord.

20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Again, "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up." I chose this Scripture this evening thinking of the need to have a topical sermon as I juggle the balls and, again, I thank you for your patience and understanding, and I was praying about what to preach on and I felt compelled to preach on some Proverbs tonight that deal with money and budgeting and saving money, and a couple of reasons. First of all, three of our eldest children recently got debit cards and checkbooks and we're planning to sit down and teach them how to balance them, how to work with a checkbook, create a budget, working also the account online, paying a little more attention and recognizing, you know, the real goal of keeping track of your spending and making sure that you are in the black and not in the red, and other kinds of planning and developments that come with that, sometimes saving ahead to take a trip or get something that is important, but looking to build the money towards it rather than not having the money for it or going into debt to get it.

Also, my wife and I have been getting financial advice from our financial advisor for the last few weeks as we're looking to get our affairs in order. We are talking about how to pay off some debts and maximize investments and have come up with a plan with him to do so looking at compounding interest and different ways of working with it. We've been given some homework for next Friday when we meet again. They sent us three different budget templates, you know, I think like Excel sheets. Fernanda is going to pick the one she prefers best, she's going to take over the leadership of this as a tax lawyer, as definitely her gifts and not mine, and start to work with it. We've been feeling like we're flying blind a little bit with our monthly purchases and expenses because we just haven't been able to sit down in our quick marriage and developments with lots of babies to do it. And I've had a budget I had a financial advisor put together for me a few years ago on my own as a parent but it was difficult to stay on top of it and maintain with just all the extra responsibilities. So we're looking at get everything in order and one of the things for

homework is once she picks the template, is we're going to go through and just recognize whatever our guaranteed monthly draws are from the account, what are our expenses, what is our income, and working through and looking at things online. There are these amazing tools that just show us all that we've been spending and helping us to see what our standard regular things are and where we can cut and where we can live within our means. And also having an aggressive plan to move some debt with 0% and pay it off at a certain time while allowing our interest on our investment to grow. And we needed some help to think through that, it's definitely not a gift of mine but I know generally that this is the kind of wise thing we should be doing, having a plan, having a budget just like we do in any business, just like we do with the church so that we can maximize our resources, be responsible not only to save and not go in the red but also to invest and grow.

So we're going to come up with a budget and we're going to submit that for him to look at and we'll have a plan moving forward and then we're going to continue to have his guidance to help as we adjust and get used to it. We want to control how we spend so we can save, so we always have what we need and build for the future, and this is our motivation, our guidance tonight as we come to this Scripture, but I trust that this is good review for all and I'm not naïve enough to think that there aren't some in their more golden years that may not have ever really done a lot of this kind of careful budgeting or planning or investing. I have learned that there are plenty in their more golden years that have never put a will together, for instance, and don't have a plan for where things will go once they're gone. So I'm sure this will still be an advantage to everyone, and if nothing else just to affirm us in trying to be biblical about how we handle our money, how we work with our resources.

Here's what the Proverb is teaching us: it is wise to carefully reserve your resources so you don't spend them up and have no savings. Let me repeat, it is wise to carefully reserve your resources so you don't spend them up and have no savings, you might also say have no investments. Now it's not just that you saved the money to make ends meet but you let the savings build by leaving them alone with interest to invest and grow and give because you'll be surprised what God can do with your money when you follow his financial advice. And God talks about money a lot in the Bible. Certainly the love of money is the root of all evil but the love of it is, not money itself. Jesus often gives us examples of Scriptures of how we are to be investing to grow for the Lord and saving. Of course, we are not to store up things in the barn with things we can't take with us to heaven and we're to have our treasure be in heaven and not on earth and should be willing to sell everything to follow after him and give to the poor, there are all those other scriptures but generally for life wisdom in general life, Proverbs is there for us about how to live a wise life and the proverb say a lot about money, in particular saving and not spending into debt, and as you make investments, and we'll see there are scriptures that talk about making interest on your money, you'll be surprised following God's financial advice that if you live within your means you will slowly save big. You have to be patient, you have to be diligent, you have to trust the Lord and you have to not live like the world with immediate gratification, you have to have delayed gratification, thinking ahead to be responsible to always do all you can to set yourself up to support your family and serve the church; this doesn't mean you have to necessarily be wealthy, in fact, a lot

of people who are millionaires are those who live like this and you'd never know they're millionaires; there are others who pretend they're millionaires and have nothing in the bank and don't own most of the things that they like to play with and show off with. But if you can take care of yourself and be secure, trusting God's providence along the way, it's amazing what can happen with these basic financial principles from the Bible we'll look at today.

So I want to encourage our young people, I want to encourage my own family as we're preparing to get things in order or set things up in order to be more responsible moving forward, that the Bible is here to guide us. And it's a great encouragement, live within your means and slowly save big, that's the message for you this evening. Live within your means and slowly save big. Now first, don't foolishly spend away all your money and have nothing when you really need it. That's the first part of two parts of the Proverb that we look at. Don't foolishly spend away all your money and have nothing when you really need it. Do you want to be a slave all your life? Do you want to feel like you're in prison all your life? If not, don't spend everything you have as soon you have it. Don't go into debt because you couldn't save and be responsible.

Proverbs 22:7, the second part says this, if you'd like to turn there with me, Proverbs 22:7, the second part, "the borrower is slave to the lender." The borrower is slave to the lender. If you owe people money, they own you, they own your things they are lending you the money for, and compounding interest works against you in this case. Compounding interest is something you really need to write down, underline and learn about. Compounding interest when you are in debt works against you because the company, the credit card, the bank will charge you a fee monthly and it keeps adding up with your debt and it just multiplies. It's not just addition, it's multiplication and so if you're not paying off more than your minimum payment and you're not paying off a significant amount, not only does your money keep growing but a percentage is charged on the entire amount of your money and that just keeps multiplying and it's almost impossible to get out of that without a really aggressive plan. It's hard to ever pay it off thus it's hard to not live month to month with fear and worry the slavery and prison of fear and worry that comes with spending things quickly and having nothing in savings, nothing to invest.

Proverbs 21:20, back to our verse, the second part, "a foolish man spendeth it up." A foolish man spendeth it up. They go into debt because they spend up what they have. They spend up the treasure in oil they begin with. Notice connected to the first part of the verse, they have some kind of treasure in oil, it's just not to be found in their house. Why? Because they don't know how to manage it. They don't know how to spend it wisely. They don't know how to save and maximize it so there is nothing left, very quickly it's gone. They spend too freely and then they need to borrow and that is slavery, the Bible says. And that Hebrew word for "spendeth" it really could be translated literally "swallow or devour." So that's the idea of a fool, to get something, oh, maybe they got a bonus or maybe they just got an inheritance and the first thing they do is think about, "What can I spend this all on?" And they think of expensive things and the biggest things and they don't think about first tithing and they don't think about first setting an amount of this

away for savings or paying off a debt, just like too many folks use their annual tax return on playthings when they should be paying off something they still owe for, and that's what it is devouring, swallowing just an appetite for immediate gratification, not thinking about the fact that they'll be sick later and there won't be any leftovers.

Proverbs 21:5, the second part, "everyone that is hasty only ends up in want." The whole verse is, "thoughts of the diligent," those who are careful and think and plan and have self-control towards a long-term goal, they "only have plenteous," they're going to have plenty just like the righteous in our verse in verse 20, they have treasure and oil, those who are wise. But the second part of 21:5 says those who are hasty, you know, they devour and swallow it all up, they're quick to spend without thinking through, wait a minute, let's look at everything I have, debt and needs for saving, I'm going to need to fix the car next year, significant, or, you know, pretty soon that heater is probably going to go, but they don't think about anything like that, they just spend it as soon as they have it. That's why, you know, a lot of people who win the lottery in a few years they are in debt and in trouble. A lot of NFL players, national football players, they make a ton of money even if they're only in it for a short period of time, more money than we could imagine making in just one year, but many of them end up in great debt including some of the heroes you can't imagine. Why? Because they don't know how to save their money, they don't know how to invest it, they just spend it all as soon as they have and we don't want to end up like that, we don't want to act like that's all we'll get and live today because you know tomorrow you may die. No, people have said, "Oh well, money is meant to be spent. You have to enjoy it in life, you know, you don't want to die with having not spent it and enjoy it." Well, you don't know when you're going to die. You may live a long time, especially in our day and age and in our nation, and you are going to need the money to make it that long. Money is meant to preserve and serve, not be spent frivolously with nothing to take care of later. It's a tool. Don't act like that's all you have and just use it up quick and never know what's going to happen. Live like the Lord might allow you to live for a while and your duty is to work to preserve your life and provide for you and others.

Psalm 37:25 says, "I have seen that the righteous, they are not forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." You've got to live trusting the Lord is going to take care of you and that's not an excuse to spend, it's a reason to be careful and to keep working, trusting that the Lord will use the little bit you have and he'll keep growing it, he'll keep working with it.

Psalm 81:10 says, "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Indeed, open your mouth wide, trust the Lord is going to fill you with daily bread. Remember we know from the Shorter Catechism when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are asking for a competent portion of the good things of this life but also to enjoy his blessing with it. But it's fine to be asking and seeking the Lord to give you plenty and he will but you just have to be careful how fast you will eat it so you have leftovers to take home. You stretch it out. You keep adding to the stew a little extra water, a little extra beets, you keep making it last just to be ready for a rainy day, just because you don't know what's going to happen, not because you don't have faith but that you do when you trust what God's word says and he says people

who spend what they have quickly, use up what they have quickly without being careful, are going to end up in poverty and debt and unhappiness therefore, prison of worry and fear, the chains and shackles of a lack of being able to provide for yourself and others.

I want to emphasize the word "budget," have a budget so that you spend less than you make, that you pay attention, that you plan for this and adjust accordingly. Live within your means. Do not spend more than you make and a budget will help you pay attention to do that, to adjust, including saving so you can get things, sometimes playthings at the proper times. Hebrews 13:5 tells us to be content with such things as we have, and the main reason why because Jesus has said he will never leave us nor forsake us. We have Jesus so we don't need all the playthings, we don't need to keep up with the Joneses, but isn't that really one of the biggest reasons people go into debt, we're just never content, we're not content with what we have, we always need more, we always need the newest shiny thing. We're not willing to let the one thing we have get old. You know, things are going to rust, things are going to fade away for sure, but it doesn't mean it's going to happen overnight. We are to use them as long as we can but too many times we're just not content with what we have. While we have so many things we bring to Goodwill to make space for the new things that we will not use and then bring to Goodwill and want a tax return for them, you know, instead of paying them to help take things out of our house. You know, we're just not good at being content, not in America especially. We always have to have new shiny things, the bigger, the newest, the latest. We have so much of all people in the world and Americans ought to be able to be content and save, but instead I suspect that we are some of the least content and the worst at saving and working with what we have. Be content with what you have.

I highly advise Dave Ramsey's resources. He has a lot of books about particularly getting out of debt. He was a millionaire, lost it all, learned how to get it back and keep it that way, and he just gives some really wonderful help about how to get out of debt, how to build savings and never be in danger of not being in debt, and he'll teach you, you want to act like most millionaires, live like them. They don't live like Hollywood. When I worked in development and would visit with the President of the seminary, those who supported the seminary often farmers, different places, you'd be in their homes and they live fine but they didn't live extravagantly. Well, how is that they can give that kind of money and do certain things? Because they saved most of their money and they don't waste their money on things that they don't even have time to play with because they are working hard. This doesn't mean they don't have nice things but you'd be surprised at the kind of homes and places you go to, nothing to be ashamed of but not what you would expect because they know how to save. And he teaches that's how most millionaires are, they drive the used cars, they never buy a car off the lot brand-new, for example. That's not saying if you have the money but if you have the money you ought to be able to talk down the price a lot if you can pay cash, by the way, you don't have to pay full price.

And that's the kind of things these folks will do and he teaches in a book that he has for children, Dollar Bill is the superhero, we've read it with our children and he teaches the children to do three things: give, save and spend. Give, save, spend, and in that order. If you reverse the order, you can't likely do the rest. Tithe to the Lord first. Cheerfully give

where you can. Save to pay off your bills and to keep building for expenses that are surely going to come but you can't always be ready for. And then spend beyond your bills, go ahead and have some enjoyment with different things but in that order. So you first give in priority to Jesus and his kingdom and you show who is your Lord, that it's not money, and then secondly, that you have saved and prepared for your family and you're not putting yourself at risk by not thinking ahead. You know, I know that every year, for instance, I'm going to have to put some significant money into fixing my cars so I need to plan and budget for that, not just act surprised when it comes every year. It's going to come. Have a budget that builds a savings for that, as well as he points out, an emergency saving so that if you lost your job you'd have a reserve to be able to handle whatever your monthly expenses are for a few months while you need to find something else. There's no reason we can't do that if we're not spending it away quickly on toys thinking hard times will never come. They will come. We can prepare for them. This is not a guilt trip for when we're not prepared or just wasn't able to prepare as much as we think, it's not a shaming and an inability to ever ask support from the church or others and seek help in different ways, but we should try to not put ourselves into that place unnecessarily.

I love to hear in the past people will call Dave Ramsey's radio program and they will celebrate that they have just paid a lot of debt off and I'm telling you, some of these amounts are just incredible. He'll teach people that you sell everything you have, you know, even the children should be afraid you might be selling them, you know, anything you don't need you sell, pay off anything you can. He has a way of paying first debts off first, pay the smallest ones first so you have the psychological sense of achievement and start attacking the big ones. He has just a lot, you know, go get that extra job selling pizzas at night, whatever it is. Get out of debt. You have to be aggressive about it. That means you have to stop spending carelessly but people will call in to celebrate paying off a big debt finally following his advice and he always plays from the movie "Braveheart" where the character yells out, "Freedom!" It's so funny, he'll play it couple of times, "Freedom!" And I think he'll even call on them to yell it and it's just this great rejoicing because now we're free from the shackles of spending all our money away quickly and being in debt. We're free to do what we want. We are free to be managing our money rather than our money managing us. We're free to cheerfully seek out ways to bless others as well as ourselves in need and that's the happy thing. You know, Fernanda and I talk about it as we get things more and more in order and build up, our goal is wouldn't it be exciting later to be able to say, "Hey, who can we bless? Who in the church could use a surprise anonymous donation towards something we know they need? A down payment on a house or I don't know, you know, wouldn't it be exciting just to be able to support and help the pantry and to be able to give to those we know are in need, to support more charities and ministries and missions." When you are free to manage your money, you are free to look for those kinds of things proactively rather than each month dread can you make it.

So beloved, wisely build up your resources to be a blessing to you and others always. Don't foolishly spend away all of your money and have nothing when you really need it. Instead wisely build up your resources to be a blessing to you and others always. Think

about Joseph. I'll summarize for you, don't worry about turning there but Genesis 41:34 to 36, he explains what's coming from God, a famine of seven years but first there will be seven years of plenty and Pharaoh says, "What should we do?" He says, "You should get somebody to manage and save up a lot of the plenty so that when the seven years of famine come we have stored up a lot and we're ready to make it through." Pharaoh says, "Great idea, you do it." And so he did and God sent him there and used him, we understand now and he understood to do good and save many lives by what? By managing resources, reserving them, preserving them, growing and being ready to meet the needs when there is a time of drought and famine, to plan ahead to be ready for it. And we know that he saved not only souls but many nations, many nations came to Egypt for this help during the famine, including his family, and that means including the church. God used Joseph to save not only his family but obviously thus the church. They came down, he gave them Goshen, he provided for them because he saved, he saved in significant ways, he budgeted the use of the resources in the time of plenty.

He didn't carelessly devour and swallow them down, he wisely carefully saved and he had, again, a budget. I want to keep emphasizing the word "budget," including adding a monthly portion of your savings, excuse me, of your paycheck to your savings every month so that you build it up, so that you are ready to spend it in the near and distant future. Now there's only a small percentage of interest you make on that, it's an immediate reserve for general cash flow needs that come up unusually or a little less predictably than your annual checking that you would normally be working with, you know, we're talking about a short-term savings you can grab immediately without difficulty. It's not going to make much for interest but it's there so you don't have to go into debt and then pay that kind of interest to pay it off. Let your savings grow with interest so that you have more to work with than before.

Now as you start to build and accumulate wealth, you need to be looking likely for a wealth manager, someone to help you invest and manage your money because you can get so much higher percentages, 6, 7, we've been enjoying 10% and if you have a decent amount of money that you can leave alone with that kind of interest, it is unbelievable how it multiplies so that you have something for retirement, you have something maybe to invest for your children's schooling in college, for instance, different things you can do if you let your money grow with good interest. That takes diligence and patience. It takes delayed gratification instead of immediate gratification. It has a big picture vision in view of life and being responsible stewards. The word "stewardship" is very important because ultimately these are all things God has given us. They are on loan to us from God and he wants to see that we've used them wisely and invested them properly, and when we do so it brings cheerfulness, it brings blessing. God loves a cheerful giver and when you have multitude that you can give from, although what we see, like the church in Philippi, they gave out of their poverty and they were happy to do it; and by the way, when you look at the statistics the people who give the most statistically are those who don't have a lot of money. The wealthy don't tend to, that's too bad, that is not always the case, of course, but it brings cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. When you have the ability to give even if it's out of your lack, it's a cheerful thing to give to support others. It's a

blessing. Jesus says it is better to give than to receive but you have to have something to be able to give it.

Proverbs 21:20, the first part, "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise." Wise people spend carefully so they always have something left for a rainy day and to be able to play and be hospitable. You're at a wise person's house, they always have resources. Why? They work hard. Never covet, remember the 10th commandment, and appreciate these people have worked hard and they know how to save. If it's honest, good, hard work, they should be respected for it. Their oil, their treasure, they still have something. They didn't spend it carelessly, they saved and invested it, they reserved some of it so it's still there. They always have, they can always share. They always have something to work with because they work hard and they save smart.

Look at Proverbs 21:5, the first part, "The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness." The diligent, diligence. God says those who diligently seek him will be rewarded. Diligence means thinking, using your brain, deliberately considering and contemplating, thinking ahead, having a plan, budgeting, having a plan beyond the month, beyond the year, looking toward the future, knowing the Lord is in charge of it but he uses means and he, the chief financial advisor, advises us to save and invest our money.

Look at Proverbs 13:11, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase." Notice quick money, as quick as you get it you're likely to lose it. This is why those who are wealthy don't often pass on their money to their children if they do not show that they appreciate work and they appreciate the value of a dollar because they're going to waste it as soon as they get it on frivolous living, like the prodigal son, you could say, for instance, until he wised up. This Proverb says those who are careful and wise and diligent, those who don't get it by vanity but work hard slowly, this is why you don't have to have a high paying job to be secure, you just have to live within your means, know how to save and invest. There are plenty of people who have a lure of lots of money but they don't because they may make more money but they have less of it because they spend it so fast and they don't own what they have. I appreciate what my mother used to say, people would brag about their brand-new cars and she would say, "Well, our older cars, they're not as nice but we own them." You see, that's the truth. If you're taking out a loan for a car or many other things, now the issue with the house is a little bit different, Dave Ramsey would give some allowing of that, but now think about a car or something, if you buy something you don't have the money for then it's not yours. You do not own it. It's the banks and they'll take it back if you can't keep paying them. Not only that, the interest that you pay on these loans are incredible over time if you stop and actually look at it. You're throwing so much of your savings out the door that could be building toward saving buying a nice car like that maybe later and owning it. But if you're laboring little by little, you just have this increase, if you know the value of the dollar, we could say, learn to value a dollar and how to develop it. This is what we need to teach our children. We need to want them to go and work simply for the experience of working and getting money. We don't want to just give them everything. They don't learn life lessons that way. Life isn't going to give you things. You have to go

and work and save and protect and take care of yourself and we're not always going to be there. We may not be able to pass anything on and if we can and they don't know how to use it, it'll be gone so fast. That's why Solomon says, you know, life is vanity. One of the reasons, because all that you work hard and build up you do not know what the next generation is going to do with it. But let's try to train and prepare them so they're taking care of themselves and know the value of a dollar and thus to save it and stretch it.

Now also an important thing that comes up in the scriptures I think is valuable to point out is diversify your assets. As you develop your wealth and look to invest it and it's wise to say how can I maximize interest on my investments. There's nothing wrong with that. It's diligence, it's the kind of thing the scriptures are saying is wise. Well, diversify your assets as you grow. Ecclesiastes 11:2 says, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." Or we have a phrase, we say, don't put all your eggs in one basket, something could fall on that basket and everything you have is gone. It's good to diversify as you have ownership in the things, good to have them in different places; as you might have mutual funds and different things in the market, it's important not to have everything in one place, especially if it's an aggressive kind of thing to save, it's important to have other things that are much more safe to make it through the long-term in the market so you can leave it alone. But you want to have a diversified, a good portfolio is always going to diversify your assets so if one thing takes a plunge, the others cover and then you recover. Have a balanced investment portfolio that manages risk while maximizing returns. Budget. Once again, budget, have a plan, know what you're looking to save for.

Let's look at another proverb that's important, Proverbs 6, beginning with verse 6. Now we've been there before, this is a well-known Proverb and we've preached on it. We want to focus on something more than we have in it, Proverbs 6:6 to 8, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise," notice the idea of wisdom again, don't be a fool, don't be the foolish grasshopper, be the wise ant, "Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." Notice the grasshopper, we know the other kind of general proverbial story of the grasshopper and the ant, the grasshopper wants to play all summer, doesn't want to work, doesn't want to reserve and gather, and then winter comes and he has nothing, while the ant is working over the summer and is building up and saving and gathering in the harvest so that it has everything it needs.

Now it's interesting as I walked from one of these buildings back to my office, I'm sure the renters have noticed this recently, they're often dealing with it, a lot of ants out right now, and I noticed along this crease between two segments of the sidewalk cement, I noticed ants going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, but what struck me was the time of day. It was like 10 or 11 o'clock at night. Now we know other Proverbs or the Psalms, Psalm 127 says don't work late at night and get up early, that's vanity, you know, you need to trust the Lord to provide, but you do work but if we're going to look at the ants, I looked at them and they were working like it was the middle of the day. They don't get distracted. They are working to save up and store which is probably why they are just amazingly versatile creatures that survives and thrives just about anywhere. So that's

what we want to be paying attention to, work hard, store up what you're earning and save it for later and use it as it is needed and have it there to be available.

Now the first thing you do with your money is tithe 10% of your income and that needs to be gross not net. It needs to be before the government takes its tithe you are tithing to the Lord of all of it trusting he will provide. Let's look at another Proverb that talks about that, Proverbs 3, beginning with verse 9. Proverbs 3:9 through 10, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Notice he's saying give God the firstfruits before you do anything for yourself, before the government taps it even though it's taken out of your paycheck, you do the math of 10% of the gross and you give it to the Lord and you're recognizing who is your God and you're saying it's not money. As I've read, you are worshiping God with your wealth, you are not worshiping your wealth, or as scripture says you don't let the love of money consume you, you love the Lord and you use the money including serving God first. But notice in the Proverb if you do that he says he's going to bless you, he's going to bless your increase if you give of the first of your increase to him, bursting he's going to provide for you.

So if you are struggling, one thing you need to consider is are you faithfully tithing. I want to point out to you, I won't quote it but in Malachi 3:10 God actually dares you to tithe. He says, "You watch me. Watch what happens. You will never out-give me. If you tithe to me, to the church, you watch what I do for you, let alone for the church you're in." So be a careful saver and invest so you can be a cheerful giver, first tithing to the church but then giving to the needs of people in the church and ministries and missionaries. There are so many wonderful charities and mission works and different kinds of Christian schools that we can be supporting if we develop, we could be developing our diaconate to be deliberate and, dare I say the word, aggressive, proactive, and we're building because of some of your generosity building that pantry that's been growing. We want to go out again and try to find those who really need it out there in all these apartment complexes and homes around us. You want to be able to tithe and give cheerfully and as you are a careful saver, invest so you can be a cheerful giver, it is a sign that you fear the Lord and that you obey his commands.

Psalm 112:3 that you sang, it begins with talking about a man who fears the Lord, a man who fears the Lord and keeps his commandments. Verse 3 says here's what he'll look like, "Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever." I want to say this is not the prosperity gospel. We're not told that God is necessarily going to make us all millionaires. We're not told that God is going to give us an easy life. We are taught to be faithful to him and trust that he'll take care of us but he is teaching us how to manage our money as he prospers us, and generally speaking whatever it looks like for each of our homes, we can take care of our families even if it does mean we have to ask humbly for support sometimes to get to a new place. That happens by trusting the Lord and by listening to him and obeying him with what he is saying about managing your money and reinvesting and investing your resources. Once again, God should be your financial advisor, he speaks about money so much in scripture and especially in the Proverbs which is particularly about how to live a wise life and enjoy a good life by that

wisdom. It includes a lot of advice about money and it's not just so you have but so you can give. Saving allows you to support the service of others including in the church.

1 Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Paul's saying, "Look, I'm not looking to have a love offering taken up when I'm there." You know, frankly a lot of times that can be kind of some quick stuff you have in your wallet. Before I come, I want you all to be storing up, laying aside, saving money which is probably going to end up being more deliberate and probably therefore developing a lot more for the money he's going to bring to another church. Again, it's striking to me that Philippi is actually a church that's usually struggling but is one of the most faithful givers, cheerful givers. But nonetheless, Paul actually says, "Store up, save up so that when I come you already done in offering; instead of one quick kind of thing while I'm here, you have built it up, you've planned for it, it's ready when I come to take it with me to give to the other church."

Ephesians 4:28 has a similar idea, "let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Now the beginning of the verse says don't be stealing anymore, instead work. If you don't work, you shouldn't eat. And that's one thing you have to have with wisdom and discernment as a church with a diaconate, we can't be giving money to people who are really just looking to go stick a needle in their arm or a bottle in their mouth, and you know that's usually the case. We've had places like the East County Transitional Living Center here giving teaching to us to understand generally what's out there. If you really want to help somebody, you don't throw five dollars at them when they're clearly going to use it for something they shouldn't be, you go deliberately seek out and find charities that know how to work with them and others and you give a lot of money to them because often otherwise the go away check is just to make our conscience feel less guilty. It isn't cheerful giving and it doesn't accomplish much other than allow people to continue to maintain a lifestyle of addiction and loss, not just for them but for many others.

I won't burden that further but if you are working, it says in Ephesians 4:20, with your hands, that is, good hard work, and that which is good and honorable, do that so you can save up so that you can give to him that needs. Let us indeed be looking to be charitable and, frankly, the place you start with whether it's individual or in the diaconate is the church. We first look to support our own, our brethren. We need to know what are the needs out there, our officers need to know and then others who want to know because these things can be delicate and private, it could be an anonymous gift or private ways of supporting to help our brethren in our times of need. And on that note, we need to not only be a gracious giver but a gracious receiver. If there's a time in your life where you need help, you should be asking for it and the goal is to get you back on track whatever the cause, to help you get a budget, to give you advice, that's what we're saying, people who need help especially if they're not in the church, we want to sit down and find out what's going on, get a budget together so we could help you keep from having this happen too often, living hand to mouth, paycheck to paycheck. There's a lot of great lessons on this in Tim Keller's books and lectures on the diaconate. But the goal is that

you earn money and save it and grow it so that you can help other people not just yourself. Keep and invest your money so you can build up more to invest in the kingdom.

I also highly advise Larry Burkett's resources as well. He has more of a focus on living in a budget, not going into debt and building and growing wealth to serve the kingdom, although he does have resources on debt as well. Ultimately I still say the main thing to remember is make a budget so you can build with it, so you can be deliberate and thoughtful and careful, that is as the Proverbs say, wise. Then you have the benefit of the resources instead of the foolish who don't want to be bothered to work hard and think ahead and then are always stressed and feeling like prisoners because they devour up what they have sometimes before they even haven't. I mean, isn't that what some people do? They're anticipating getting a bonus, they spend on it and then they don't get the bonus. You don't spend what you don't have until you have it. Make a budget. Plan ahead and let your budget, just like the church, never be built on unusual gifts, unusual, unpredictable bonuses and a high sale that isn't normal. You build on your normal income. Everything else is extra special and you can save it in special ways and give in special ways but build a budget based on your normal income, average planned income.

Luke 19:23, Jesus gives a parable where he talks about the different servants who he entrusts, the manager entrusts with some money, some talents and he says, "I'm going to come back and I want to see how you've invested, how you've used them and grown." And when he comes back, one of the servants says, "Oh, I've earned you this much." And he says, "Well done." The other one, "I've earned you this much." "Not the same amount but still you've increased it, you've been good and faithful with it, you didn't waste it, you didn't lose it. Good job." But then there's the one servant who says, "Master, I buried your talents and they're all here. I didn't lose anything." And he says, "What? What? You could have at least invested it in the bank and made interest for me." So you see, here's one of many scriptures that teach and demonstrate that investing money to make interest is considered biblical, is considered wise and good. Now Jesus is using it for a different example, "What did you do with the resources of my people and church and the gospel? Did you try to get it out there? Did you try to reach other people or did you just not do anything with it?" Nonetheless the illustration is important for our discussion.

We don't just save our money, we need to be looking to grow and build it and we can build and grow a lot if we're wise about it, surprisingly so. But you've got to save to be in a place where you can invest and interest can be made. The thing is the law of compounding interest we want to revisit again, it's bad for you if it's debt, it's good for you if it's for your savings and you are not borrowing money but the bank is borrowing money from you so they can invest it and they pay you a nice interest on it, amazingly so. Now you have to start somewhere, start building your resources, and particularly you young people, I want to encourage you as soon as you have an opportunity to open something like an IRA and put money away that you leave alone and you don't touch because there will be a significant fee from the government to discourage you from doing that; put it in there, leave it alone, it will build and grow surprisingly. By the time you're retired, you'll be surprised all the money you have. Make your money work for you so that you don't have to work to get money when it's time to retire or you're less able to.

Compounding interest. I went to a website called inc.com because I was looking to get and confirm a quote by Einstein related to compounding interest and I want to share that with you now. inc.com writes, "There is an often-told story that when Albert Einstein was once asked what mankind's greatest invention was, he replied: 'Compound interest.'" That multiplication of money that you save, leave alone and you have some kind of a decent percentage of interest they will pay you to borrow and use your money, he says it's the greatest invention. They go on to write, "There's even one claim that Einstein called compound interest the '8th Wonder of the World.' While there is some debate about whether Einstein really said any of this or not, there's no question that the compounding of interest is a brilliant thing. As another great American," they continue to write, "As another great American, Benjamin Franklin, described it: 'money makes money. And the money that money makes, makes money.' That is probably the simplest explanation of compound interest you'll ever hear."

Now before I continue quoting then, I would say that it's not that we are to be Scrooges, it's not that we're just to store it all away and hoard it and not use it to make interest and invest in the kingdom and in life and serve and bless others with cheerful giving, but still this idea of just holding on, not just spending it all frivolously, holding on to some and investing it wisely to make interest, multiplying, not just adding, adding the money you make and letting the interest upon it in such savings accounts, especially wealth management accounts, IRAs for retirement. The multiplication of the interest just is incredible if you're just okay to take money out of your paycheck every week, put it there immediately and leave it alone.

Now I'm thankful that, you know, finally I stupidly didn't listen to many people from different jobs, kind of had some philosophical problems for a while I've gotten over and some of it just lack of seriousness, but I was encouraged often to take advantage of the company, a lot of companies have programs where to encourage you they will double, like, whatever to a certain extent whatever you put into your savings account for your IRA, they'll take it out of your paycheck for you in advance therefore it will not be taxed, and they will add to it as a benefit of working for them. Now you've got somebody that's adding to what you're putting in to keep growing. Listen and take advantage of that. I finally did at one job briefly and took it with me, carried it on and I'm thankful that the church encourages me to do that. So part of my income is earmarked toward an IRA retirement fund but because they don't have a company that they're a part of, something larger to work with the portfolio of options, they simply earmark it for me and I'm responsible to actually use it for that. So the certain amount of money that is budgeted every month in my paycheck for me, I take that money and I have it taken out automatically by my investment company. I don't want to look at it. I don't want to think about it. I don't want to touch it because as soon as as you start thinking, "Oh, well, I'll do it this month, this month I won't," next thing you know you're never putting it away and you're spending it away and you're never making any interest that you could for incredible compounding interest over time that makes it so much easier for you later on. So I just have that taken out automatically and I don't touch it and it builds up, and just as

we were looking at things with our financial advisor, not what it could have been if I'd started earlier but I was thankful to see how it's been building and building itself.

I go on to quote inc.com, "To be fair, compounding interest is a wonderful thing when you are earning it. When you are racking up interest on credit card debt, you'll probably agree with Einstein about it being the most powerful force in the universe," but that being a strong taskmaster over your life. They go on to write this, "As an example, let's say that you are 30 years old and that you have already socked away \$500,000 in an 401(k) account that generates a 10% annual return." Now just so you know, go look at your bank accounts for your savings. It's not going to be anywhere near 10%. Similarly, go look at the percentage on the credit card debt that you're paying off. It's often way over 10%. Save your money. Don't live with credit card debt and as you build your money, look at things like 401(k) and other wealth investment management so that you can get something like 10% or even 7% is an amazing return on investment.

Now this person obviously at 30 years old would have already known how to save. They've built their savings. They didn't just go spend all their money once they paid off their college debt and got a big bonus or a big raise, they didn't just go and spend it all, they saved and they saved. And so they have \$500,000. He says, let's say that you put that in a 401(k) at 10% annual interest, what they pay you, multiplying your money. And they say, "But you plan on working until you're 65. If you leave your money in that account until you retire, how much will you have?" They say, "If you use the Rule of 72," and that's generally if you save and you work with something that can invest at these kinds of percentages come about 7.2 years, every 7.2 years your money will double if you leave it alone growing on its own by the multiple compounding interest rate of your income. "If you use the Rule of 72, you learn that you will double your money every seven years (actually 7.2). That means your money will double in value around five times over the next 35 years you're working, which means you'll have \$1 million after seven years; \$2 million after 14; \$4 million after 21; \$8 million after 28; and finally, you'll have a whopping \$16 million when you retire in 35 years."

Now imagine \$500,000, you might think about all the kind of things you could do, oh, get a house, that's a good investment, this and that. Well, it could be but, you know, of course, houses have all their expenses. If you just put it in an account and let it grow at 10% in some kind of an investment, 35 years later \$500,000 would be \$16 million. What kinds of numbers and houses could you buy for that then at retirement? Then think about renting them and investing it, raising for future generations. Who knows, it's incredible, isn't it? Incredible. "That's the kind of math," the article closes, "That's the kind of math that astounded Einstein and Franklin--and shows you the power of saving as much money as you can early in your career in a retirement vehicle like a 401(k), so that it can compound over time."

Now \$500,000 is a lot of money so let me give just a more humble example still to be a great encouragement especially for our young people to start early, or for anyone to start at any time because it's still better than you'll have if you don't. CNBC article shares about a 21-year-old lady, Jane McPartlin, I think I'm saying that right. She started saving

money at \$200 a month at 21 years old in a retirement account. So that would mean you would have a special percentage earning on it. \$200 a month, most people could figure that out if they'd stop spending on other silly things that require that kind of money. How about buy a used car and don't have a monthly car payment, it would be much more than that. \$200 a month at 21 years old she started to invest for a retirement fund. When she is 65 with only a 6.5% annual interest rate of compounding interest paid to her on that money to grow it, when she is 65, that \$200 a year savings in a retirement fund that she starts at 21 years old, at 65 shall have \$570,000 to work with. If she waits until she's 37 to start, when she retires at 65 she'll have only \$180,000 which still would be well worth starting then, but the earlier you start, the sooner you start with whatever you have, the longer it has to multiply year-over-year and therefore it's so much bigger at the end when you get there.

Hensley Financial gives another example. Let's say you're 25 years old and you have \$5,000. If you invest it in one of these kinds of examples of a savings retirement kind of account, if you invest \$5,000 at 25 years old, they don't state the percentage but it would be in that line of 6.5 to 10%, when you are 60 years old that \$5,000 you invested at 25 would be \$140,000, \$140,512. If you're in the range of 20-29 and you give \$5,000 a year which would mean you'd invest about \$417 every month, if you did that, \$417 every month, \$5,000 a year that you put away, you know, monthly towards that end probably, when you are 60 you would have \$1,682,496. Again, that's the kind of math that astounded Einstein and Franklin and shows you the power of saving as much money as you can early in your career in a retirement vehicle like a 401(k) so that it can compound over time again, writes inc.com.

Beloved, let that be motivation to work hard, save carefully and invest wisely. Let all of that advice from the chief financial advisor, God Almighty himself, encourage you to do so because it will amount to a lot of important life opportunities and choices and influencing the lives of others that you will otherwise sacrifice in slavery. Don't be a slave. Be free. Make an impact. Live within your means and slowly save big. That is the message for you this evening, beloved. Live within your means and slowly save big.

Let us pray.

God Almighty, we do acknowledge you to be the giver of all good things and to have the right to tell us how to invest them for indeed they are not our things, they are yours on loan to us to use wisely and save and invest and make an impact in the lives of others, especially your church and for the work of the kingdom and the gospel. Forgive us, Lord, that we are too often addicted to the toys of this world and too often so discontent that we try to fill it with things that rust and are eaten by moths and don't last, and they don't satisfy and we quickly throw them away as our children play with boxes more than the toys we've gotten them in. O Lord, teach us to be content with such things as we have, especially as we always have more food and clothes than we need and we have Jesus who will never leave us nor forsake us. But we do confess this sin of avarice and pride, the sin of wanting to devour what we have even before we get it, or to eat it as they ate the quail and be unthankful toward you.

Lord, please forgive us that we would not make you angry. Lord, let us be good stewards of what you entrust with us that you would see fit to give more, that you would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with little, now I'll make you faithful of much as you manage things in my Father's kingdom." We don't know what that will look like but surely it even has a reality for us now that as we proved to be wise in managing what you give us, you'll trust us with more to be able to give and invest more for your kingdom and to cheerfully live without the shackles of debt.

O Lord, we ask that you help us to live within our means, to have a budget, to follow your clear Proverbs that say to work hard, to store up and invest, and that we know it doesn't mean we can't enjoy things, that we're not allowed to have some things just for fun but, Lord, never at the expense of our security and the security of our family and our church, never at the point of needing to just be in danger of even seeking to steal as we are warned in the scriptures. Lord, we do pray that you would give us a heart for the poor and those who truly need our support, and as a family especially with our diaconate, that you would help us to keep giving and growing that our church could cheerfully give to other churches in need as you may see fit to prosper and grow us, that we could be supporting our Presbytery, missions work, Christian schools, just supporting people in our church that will have need as well as other churches, just as a church not far from here has a diaconate with a lot to work with because their people are good workers, good savers and faithful tithers and they're looking for proper ministries to support.

Let us get to that place, we pray, Lord, and let us invest our money because not all of it should be saved, some of it is invested best when we put it into things like outreach with radio programs, when we make an effort to reach the lost, when we don't test you but step out in faith and invest some of our resources in outreach and evangelism and growth trusting that you would bring it back. Yet we still recognize, Lord, we can do everything right but if you do not bless it it will not grow. All increase is of you. But let us do what we're supposed to do as you've taught us, the means that you generally normatively work with, O Lord. Let us do what we can do with it just the ordinary things of life as ordinary Christians in an ordinary church, trusting if we just do these little, diligent, practical management things over time you can sustain us and you can cause us to have great influence.

Lord, I want to thank you also that this church though we are small and struggling, continues to do well because of the many years of your people understanding these things and faithfully tithing and even now you've provided for us in unusual ways. Help us always to be looking at how to invest wisely and save and even enjoy. We thank you over the years we've been able to invest in a better sound system so all can hear properly. Lord, we thank you we've been able to get our wifi going and be able to do webcasting now. We pray, Lord, you'll help us to be looking ahead when we have the opportunity for the lot to be sold that some money might even come in soon as a down payment that we would carefully plan how to use it, tithing perhaps to missions, saving for things that could break down, but also investing, spending on things to reach people and draw them to you here. But help us to be wise. Some of us will want to be too frugal, some of us will

want to be too careless. Help us to be wise, Lord, that you would always have oil and treasure in this place to do ministry, to go without feeling shackled and in slavery. We thank you we have this amazing property and the manse that is all paid off so we don't have those drains on us and we can manage to live very simply to continue on to better days.

We pray, Lord, as you would prosper us and grow our opportunities financially that we would be wise and would continue to live simply, invest in places we should and with faith and not weakly but also, Lord, always being a wise manager of it all. And bless our young people, Lord, to start out well, better than some of us, better than myself. Give them a desire and an interest to work hard and save and invest, to be ready for the future so that they are free to be supportive of the church and of their brethren and of other important things in this world. Lord, let the church have its influence by working hard to have such resources and let us remember they are gifts from you to be used and invested wisely that we would develop an increase for you in various ways but not according to the ways and desires of the world, not according to the programs and the pomp and circumstance of the world but of real things, of real needs. We pray more than having lots of programs that we'd have a thriving, abounding diaconate, Lord. We pray your blessing over it. We ask that you would help us to be meeting the needs of our immediate neighborhoods and broader and an incredibly biblical example, holding people accountable, helping families with budgets, getting people on their feet. O Lord, we thank you that we've had all these different resources given to us. We pray you would help us find the right people to connect and as Tim Keller teaches in his book about such things with the diaconate, that you would give us an incredible connection with the community and that many would be drawn to you here just as they were as you fed them, and we pray, Lord, that they would stay for your words as well for you are the bread of life. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life. Let these words sink deeply in our heart now. Make us faithful stewards that you would say, "Well done." And we do praise you who do all things well. In Jesus' name. Amen.