

Your Toxic Relationship With Your Money

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[0 : 0 0] So how's your relationship with your money? And you probably have some money maybe even on you now, or in the bank, or wherever, under your pillow.

But how is your relationship with that money? How is your relationship with your money? If you had to rank it on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is great, really healthy relationship, and 1 is really dysfunctional, we don't even talk to each other, relationship.

Where would your relationship with your money be on that scale? How healthy is it? Because like it or not, we all have a relationship with our money.

Your money elicits certain feelings in you. Your money has the ability to make you happy or sad. Your money, you have certain hopes for it, that it might get you something that you want or you need.

Whether or not you like the idea, the truth is you have a relationship with your money. No matter how pious you think you are, and how material things don't matter to me, they actually do, and you do have a relationship with your money.

[1 : 1 7] And it's a relationship that Ecclesiastes actually talks a lot about in his book. If you've been with us the past few weeks, you would have realized that this topic of money and wealth, and our relationship, how we interact with our money, comes up quite a lot, especially in chapter 5 of Ecclesiastes, which we looked at last week.

If you were perceptive, you would have noticed that we're covering the same passage as we did last week. But there's a reason for that.

So I invite you to turn, if you haven't yet, to Ecclesiastes, and chapter 5 again. Because this topic of our relationship with our money, I haven't really delved into, but it's worth diving into.

It's worth actually spending a Sunday thinking about it, because it's something that is universal. It's something we all have. We don't often talk about it. Pastors don't like talking about money.

We, as Christians, don't often like talking about money, but it's important to talk about. And it's so important that I thought it would be useful this Sunday just to pause here at chapter 5 and go deeper into this particular topic, because the rest of the Bible also has a lot to say about your relationship and my relationship with our money, Jesus himself spent a disproportionate amount of time in his teachings talking about money.

[2 : 4 3] If you go through all his teachings and you count up how much he's talking about wealth or money, you'd be surprised. Why? Why is it such a big topic in the Bible? Why does Ecclesiastes talk about it so much?

Why does Jesus talk about it so much? Well, I'll tell you why. Because your relationship with your money actually tells you a lot about your relationship with your Creator.

How you relate, how you think about, how you handle your money actually says a lot about the state of your relationship with God.

But here in Ecclesiastes, what we discover is that our natural relationship with money is not a healthy one.

By nature, the way we relate to our money is not healthy. In fact, it is quite toxic. That's how Ecclesiastes would put it, at least.

[3 : 40] Have a look at verse 13. Verse 13 of Ecclesiastes 5, he says this, I have seen a grievous evil under the sun.

I just want to pause there because that phrase, grievous evil, is not often used. But it's a particular phrase which is, you know, English translators have tried their best to translate it as grievous evil.

And it's not often used in the Old Testament. And whenever it's used in Ecclesiastes, that phrase, it's used in relation with money. So, there's a lot of evil things that Ecclesiastes talks about, but there's only one grievously evil thing.

And that is how humans relate with money. It literally, the word literally means sickening. The Hebrew word means sickening or toxic, something that makes you sick.

And so, what he's saying here is money tends to have a toxic effect on us. Now, we often use that word, toxic, to describe maybe a relationship or a person at the office or a work environment.

[4 : 56] You know, you've often heard that? That's toxic work environment or it's a toxic relationship. And what we mean by that, what do we mean by that? We mean that it's something where there's always tension.

Something, or a relationship where there's always conflict and it always brings you down rather than lifts you up. that's what we refer to as a toxic relationship in modern vernacular. But that's, that's what Ecclesiastes is saying about what money does to us.

Money tends to always bring this conflict and tension into your life. And it always tends to bring you down rather than lift you up.

And he says that is the result of money. That is our natural relationship with money whether or not you have a lot or a little. It's something we can't escape.

So first of all he says it's toxic if you have too much of it. Have a look at verse 13. He continues, I've seen a grievous evil under the sun, wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner.

[6 : 05] So what he's saying there is when money is hoarded when you keep it just to have it when you keep it so that you can say I have a lot of money or I am rich and that is the thing that you want to have a lot of money that ends up harming you.

That's what he's saying here. Wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner. Now what he's not talking about is saving for future needs. You know the Bible doesn't say that saving for future needs is wrong.

There's nothing wrong with having a pension fund. There's nothing wrong with having health insurance. But what he's talking about here is keeping more than you need just for the sake of keeping it of getting rich.

and what's interesting is that that is exactly what our society encourages. In fact in free market economics that is encouraged that you that you pursue wealth and that you you aim to get rich and in the movies and all around that is the assumed thing that people do with their lives and their energies is if you can get rich do it because it's great.

That's what the world is telling you. The world encourages you to hoard to keep your money to get more money surely because the more money you have the better.

[7 : 29] Wouldn't you like a lot of money? Hey? Wouldn't we all? Isn't that our natural inclination? If I came and offered you a million rand would you say no thanks I'm not in the mood? Of course not.

We would all like a lot of money because we think surely the more money we have the better it is for us right? The more security we can have the more money we have the more control over our lives we can have the more we can get what we want the more we can head in the direction of our lives we want to head surely that's a good thing.

Well Ecclesiastes begs to differ. Now remember Ecclesiastes is the pen name of King Solomon one of the richest people who's ever lived and what he's saying to us in chapter 5 here is the opposite is actually true the more money you have the worse it is for you because the more worries you have.

Look at verse 12 he puts it so well in verse 12 the sleep of a laborer is sweet whether he eats little or much but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep in other words the more money you have the less good your sleep is the more worries you have and it makes sense because the more you have to worry about the more money you have the more you have to lose so the more stuff the more responsibilities and typically people with more money will have a higher standard of living and with a higher standard of living comes more worries and more responsibility mortgages car payments business loans all of those things and so as you get more money you get more worries you get more stuff that's going to weigh on you that's what he's saying here and I think anybody who's been rich can testify to this one famous rich person is John D. Rockefeller

I don't know if you've ever heard of him but he was the world's first US dollar billionaire in the early 1900s the first billionaire in terms of US dollars at least the thing about John D. Rockefeller if you read about his life is that he was quite a sickly man when he was rich he had a lot of troubles and it weighed on him and apparently for years he lived on a diet of crackers and milk that's all he had even though he had all this money because he was so sickly and so plagued with anxiety and it was only when he started giving his money away that his health started to improve and he started to sleep better and he actually because he started giving his money away he lived to a ripe old age in his 90s but you see it's the same it's what Ecclesiastes is saying here the more money the more worries money is toxic if you have too much of it and you keep too much of it for yourself but he goes on and he says you know it's just as toxic if you have too little of it so have a look at verse 14 the next verse so he's talking about these grievous evils he sees the first we've seen is when wealth is hoarded to the harm of its owner the second verse 14 or wealth lost through some misfortune so that when the person has a son there is nothing left for him wealth lost is just as toxic as wealth hoarded have you ever been broke have you ever experienced the feeling of going to check your balance at the ATM and seeing zero or having your credit card maxed out and realizing you have nothing or maybe you're just in debt and that if you've been there that sick feeling in the pit of your stomach when you see that zero bore through your soul from the ATM screen have you ever experienced that

[11:50] I as some of you may know worked in London for a couple of years and what I was doing there is paying off my student loan my varsity student loan but also I was earning money to pay off the student loan and get some savings that I could take back to South Africa and kind of start a life and a few weeks before I left London I went to the bank to check my balance and I put the card and I put in my pin and click balance statement and it came up and I had nothing in the bank and I stared at the screen this is like two years of work and I had nothing and I had this just sick feeling in the pit of my stomach turned out it had been stolen by hackers who had hacked into my account and taken all the money cleaned me out fortunately Barclays Bank who I was with investigated and they managed to get all the money back so I didn't lose it all at the end of the day well I ended up spending it all on

Gene's engagement ring anyway but that was worth it I'm glad I had the money the thing is I was lucky I got it back but there are so many people who don't so many people lose all their money through crime or disaster you know and in middle class we think okay well you know we got insurance but so many people who don't have the luxury of insurance and lose everything there's many people in our country who don't have anything and it is sickening it is a sickening feeling to have nothing especially if you have dependents like this guy in verse 14 so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him it is a sickening feeling for a father who has children to have nothing to give them and yet there are millions of people in that situation in our country and that is why if a person has too little it also causes the same as if they have too much worry anxiety sleeplessness and that is exactly what

Ecclesiastes goes on to say in verse 17 talks about this guy lost all his money and he says verse 17 all his days he eats in darkness with great frustration affliction and anger that actually could describe most people in South Africa during load shedding actually darkness and anger and frustration but all the more so it's talking about the person who has no money they're just angry they're afflicted they're full of troubles they can never rest it's toxic and so you see the point that Ecclesiastes is making here in chapter 5 is money tends to have this toxic effect on us whether we have a lot of it or whether we have a little or not any at all just the want of money whatever it is our relationship with money is by default quite toxic and why is this why is our relationship with money so unhealthy so toxic well remember the key to reading

Ecclesiastes is that he is looking at life under the sun remember that we covered that in a previous sermon but the basic idea is Ecclesiastes is limiting his view of life to what you can see what you can experience under the sun he's not considering what is above the sun he's not considering God in this picture of life he paints on earth he's looking at life under the sun and that's how he starts here in verse 13 I've seen a grievous evil under the sun outside of relationship with God this is what happens he's saying and if you don't have a relationship with God if you don't have any reference to what's above the sun if you are living just for this world if you have no relationship with God it will always be the case that you have this toxic relationship with money this unhealthy relationship with money because the reason is because if you don't have a relationship with God you will always tend to look to your money to do the things in your life that you should be trusting

God for your provision your security but shockingly and sadly many people with a relationship with God still look to their money to do the things they should be looking to God for but it is unhealthy and it is toxic to do that because we were never created to provide for ourselves I need to say this because it should be obvious reading the Bible but it's not we think we are our providers we put pressure on ourselves to provide and to set up our lives and to create security in our lives but we were never made to do that we were created to be dependent creatures always we were created to be dependent on our creator for our needs but since our separation from God as a species we have forgotten that and we make ourselves our providers but we were never created to do that in

[17:30] Eden the first humans in right relationship with God before the fall relied totally on God and were provided for totally by God they had everything they needed there in the garden so that they could do the job God had given them on earth because all of their needs were taken care of by their creator and provider and it was a beautiful relationship but we lost that in the fall but we have to remember providing for ourselves with our money is unnatural we weren't meant to do that that's not what we were created for to be our own providers that's why we have this toxic relationship with money because we're looking to it to do the thing that we were never meant to do in our lives and that is also why when people started to come back into relationship with God as we read the story of the Bible and we see

God taking the initiative to reach out to a fallen humanity and to bring relationship to restore relationship between him and us which is really the whole story of the Bible starts with Abraham but then it culminates in Christ and in the new creation which Revelation talks about the whole story of the Bible is actually the story of God reaching out to reestablish relationship between us dependent creatures and our creator but when that started Genesis and Exodus especially when God called the nation of Israel out of Egypt to come into relationship with him and he came down and met them on Mount Sinai remember that we studied Exodus the first lesson he teaches them you remember what it is is how to rely on him when they're in the wilderness the first lesson as he's drawing humans back into relationship with himself the first thing he does he says guys if this relationship is going to continue if this relationship is going to go somewhere you need to learn to rely on me again you need to learn to rely on my provision rather than yourself so he takes them out into the wilderness where there's no possibility of them providing for themselves and he miraculously provides them manna from heaven but you know what he says he says you're only allowed to gather what you need for that day not what you need for tomorrow you remember that in Exodus and he does that deliberately because he's training his people to trust him for tomorrow not to trust themselves if you hoard more than you need because you want to make sure it's tomorrow gathered too much then by the next morning it's rotten they can't use it because he's trying to train them he's not playing a trick on them he's not having a laugh he's trying to train them to get out of this self reliance that humans are so caught up in and to get back into

God reliance but it's a long lesson it takes them a long time to learn it's hard to really believe that God is going to do what he says when he says seek first the kingdom and all these things will be given to you and I will give you what you need it's hard for us to believe that we always default back no matter how long we've been Christians we always default back into that instinct of but I've got to get a little bit more just a person adopted a dog off the street sometimes they're these dogs that they find on the street they've been living for years on the street and they clean them up and then they adopt them into a loving home it's beautiful when that happens but you know it takes a long time for that dog to adjust to being provided for because for its whole life it's been scrounging and scrapping around in the streets hunting little rodents and stuff to survive and so when it comes into a loving home that provides it meals twice a day it doesn't change overnight that dog is still going outside and trying to hunt and scrap around for food because it hasn't got used to this fact that it's got a provider now it doesn't have to worry it can just be a dog because it still thinks it's got this instinct to hunt and provide for itself well you know what we're all like that dog when we come into relationship with

God he says I'm your provider now you've come into relationship you can trust me as your father and I love you and I want to give you what you need and I want to teach you how to really find the freedom of trusting me but it takes a long time for us to lose that instinct to scrap around and gather for ourselves and secure our own future get our own provision and that is why when Jesus comes not just to try to restore Israel's lost relationship with God by that stage but to bring the possibility of having a relationship with God to the Gentiles to all of us around the world when Jesus comes because that is why he came right what he does over and over in his teaching is he challenges our relationship with our money over and over he he he wants us to think about how we relate to money because he came and he gave up everything and he died so that you and

I can enter back into a relationship with our creator he took sins on the cross of those who trust in him so that we can have those sins cleared off the record and come back into a relationship with the holy God and he rose to give us the power to have new life by the Holy Spirit so that we can have a real relationship with God that is what Jesus came to this earth to do but if that happens if you have you can't separate the two if you're going to have a real relationship with God it's going to change your relationship with your money it has to and Jesus makes that point in Matthew chapter 6 a famous passage in Jesus teaching on money and we read it earlier and basically his message his refrain in Matthew 6 is stop worrying about your money if

[24 : 32] I'm bringing you back into relationship with your heavenly father you don't need to worry about your money anymore and for most of us we read that and just goes over our head we say that sounds nice and then tomorrow what are we doing we're worrying about our money again but Jesus is adamant here that we stop worrying look at what he says Matthew 6 32 you can just listen if you're not turned there yet he's saying things in their life but your heavenly father knows that you need them so seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well Jesus is saying these words he's actually saying that and he actually means it you don't need to run after money if you're in a relationship with God he will give you what you need if you stop chasing what you will provide for you trust me

Jesus is saying and in the Lord's prayer which is just a bit earlier you know the Lord's prayer Jesus teaches us what's so great about the Lord's prayer well I mean it's from Jesus but God will always say yes to it you know that the Lord's prayer is one of the few prayers you can pray that you know God will always say yes prayer is a guaranteed God will answer this prayer you know hallowed be your name God's okay God's name will be hallowed forgive us our sins through Christ God says okay yes your sins are forgiven lead us not into temptation deliver us from the evil one these prayers God delights to say yes but you know what Jesus includes in the Lord's prayer verse 11 of chapter 6 give us today our daily bread we pray that prayer God delights to say yes to it it's one of the prayers that

God will always say yes to do you believe that and that's what Jesus wants you to believe by teaching it here and in Matthew 6 he says you know what God wants is to train you not to have to worry about tomorrow because you can only live a flourishing life for him if you are not worried about tomorrow and so he lets us pray and know that God will answer in the affirmative give us today our daily bread he wants us to be like those Israelites in the wilderness that actually just rely on God for today and don't worry about tomorrow knowing that he's got it in his hands so he says like the birds of the air he uses that illustration in Matthew 6 have you ever seen a bird sitting in a tree trying to balance its accounts because it's worried about whether it can make ends meet have you ever seen a bird doing that no I woke up this morning I looked outside the birds were singing at the sunrise they didn't know where their next meal was going to come from but they didn't care instinctively they know the one the being who put them here is obviously going to give them what they need that's the kind of relationship

Jesus is calling us back into with our God that kind of relationship it's a radical new relationship if you read Matthew 6 slowly what you'll realize is Jesus is calling us into a radical new relationship with money that most Christians don't yet have I'm convinced especially in the West when we're in this culture that is just programming us to chase money and think we need money in order to get security and I've met a few missionaries who have this Matthew 6 radical relationship with money but very few who actually don't worry who actually are so joyful in God because they're so focused on the work God has given them and they're not worried about money and it's beautiful to see but I don't often see it most Christians especially in the West we don't yet we're not yet there and so what it's important to do and what I want to do just for the rest of our time this morning is list a few ways that the

New Testament teaches us that the gospel should change our relationship with our money if we really believe it how it should fundamentally change how we see our money and there's just three ways that I want to pick up from various teachings in the that if we truly believe the gospel the way it should change our relationship with money and you can actually use these as a way of diagnosing how much you believe the gospel how healthy your current relationship with God is how much you trust him the first way is that a Christian no longer relies on money anymore a Christian who's truly a Christian I'm not talking about a nominal Christian who just comes to church and calls himself a Christian I'm talking about a person who believes Jesus is their Lord and Savior and they have a living active relationship with God and they are filled with the Holy Spirit that a Christian no longer relies on money so 1

[29 : 57] Timothy 6 Paul is writing these letters to the young minister Timothy and he ends by saying this he's in Ephesus which is quite a wealthy city and he says this to Timothy 1 Timothy 6 verse 17 he says command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment you see Paul is telling Timothy to challenge the people who have money in his congregation to radically change their view on their money and start using it in a very different way to what they're used to because the reason is Jesus brings us back into relationship with our original provider who delights to give us daily bread when we pray for it because he is our father have you met a father who does not delight to give his children what they need no do you think do you think

God doesn't do you really think God doesn't delight to give you what you need if you're his child do you still not trust him do you still worry about tomorrow Jesus came to bring us into that relationship with our original provider who has not just the desire to provide for his children but the ability to do you believe that about God do you really ask yourself because if you worry about money you don't believe that about God and you need you need to repent you need to go to God and say father I still don't trust you I'm sorry help me to trust you second a Christian is to invest their excess money in the age to come rather than in this age

Paul goes on in 1 Timothy 6 to say this command these people with money to do good to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share in this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life that they may lay up treasure for themselves for the coming age it's exactly what Jesus says do not store up treasure for yourself on earth that moth and rust destroy but store up treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy where thieves do not break in and steal Jesus is teaching this to us he's saying there is a way you can invest in the age to come because Jesus connects our lives with eternity right that's what he does Jesus comes down to connect our lives under the sun with what's above the sun he comes to connect our lives with the coming age and so what he does is he makes it possible get this for us to transfer wealth from this passing age to the coming age you know sometimes you've got rich people in a country that's going down the toilet because it's got a bad government or a dictator maybe in various places but what rich people tend to do when they got a lot of wealth and the country is not going in a very good place they what do they do they transfer it to an overseas bank account so that it's safe

Jesus is saying that about this age and the age to come he's saying okay this age is going down the toilet okay nothing that you invest in here is going to last but because of what Jesus does and connects our lives with the coming age he gives us a safe bank account offshore in heaven so that we can invest in the coming age of this earth where we will dwell one day in eternity when heaven and earth come together and then the money we've saved will actually mean something in eternity it won't be wasted Jesus is giving us very wise investment advice here and saying whatever you have you can invest you can transfer it from this age to the coming age and you do that by using it generously in this age for God's because when you invest in a bank account overseas to keep it safe you can't use that money right now right it's the same when you invest in the age to come you have to let go of it you can't use it right now you have to use it generously for

God's work but every rand you do for that is actually going to be invested in something that lasts and so Jesus is giving us this investment opportunity here he's not saying you know like a duty you have to now give a tithe to the church you have to give money to mission he's saying you get to invest money in something that lasts why wouldn't you do that and the more a person grows as a Christian the more they realize that not doing that is actually just throwing your money down the toilet investing in stuff on this earth it's just going to be lost it's so temporary it's such a waste a Christian gets to invest their money in the age to come Jesus makes this point as well in Luke 16 you may have heard the parable of the the the shrewd manager anyway Luke 16 verse 9 he concludes that parable and gives the lesson and he says I use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings you know what Jesus is saying he's basically saying the more you're willing to let go of your excess wealth and be generous to people the more you'll invest in relationships for the coming age and then in verse 11 he says so if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth who will trust you with true riches you know if you've not been if you've not used wisely the little bit of wealth or the little bit of wealth or the little bit of wealth or the little bit of wealth or the little bit of extra that God gave you on this earth is he going to entrust you with anything in the future in the future in the age to come because what he's trying to get us to realize here and this is an important point any extra resource or money that you have that God gives to a Christian is a test to see whether you can spend it on things that matter for eternity that's why God gives God will give a little bit let's see how he goes.

[37 : 03] let's see if he spends this on things that last for eternity if he does then I'll give him a little bit more and let's see how it goes. God actually does that but he's testing to see if you're going to spend it wisely.

it's like when you give your child a 20-year-old to go buy milk at spa. you know here's some money it's my money but I'm entrusting it to you and I need some milk from spa and you know if there's a little bit left over you can buy yourself a sweet or something.

okay and you want to see if they use that money wisely. They come back and where's the milk? they've just got a bunch of sweets and you go Johnny where's the milk that I asked you to get and Johnny's like I forgot about the milk sorry.

you know that's a test to see whether he can use mom's money. why is he you know what? you don't want to be that guy in eternity. you don't want to be that guy that stands before Jesus and Jesus says to you so I gave you this job. I gave you this opportunity.

I gave you this resource. how did you use it for the coming age? you don't want to stand there and go oh I forgot about the coming age. I just I just bought a big house for myself and a yacht or whatever.

[38 : 20] you don't want to be that guy who is embarrassed because you didn't use the money and the resources and the opportunities God gave you for him. and so whatever money God has given you more than you actually need.

ask yourself how are you planning to use it? are you planning to spend it on treasures? earthly treasures? to hoard it for yourself? on earthly treasures that are going to pass away?

or do you realize that God has given it to you to see how you use his money? and if you use it wisely with kingdom goals. as someone else put it really well Christians are called to be conduits and not containers of God's money.

conduits. where money just flows through us to do useful things for God. not containers where we stop it here and then we keep it. that's what people of the earth do.

they keep it for themselves. so they can build up earthly treasures. Christians do not do that. Christians have a radically different relationship with money where they are conduits of money, not containers.

[39 : 29] they are the means of God's practical blessing and provision to others in the world. because God wants to do stuff practically in people's lives with money, with material possessions.

but the only way he can do that is through his people being conduits rather than containers. to be the means of God's blessing to others. and if they do that, if his people are generous with what he's given them, and they use it for his kingdom, for the gospel, for church, which is how God achieves his kingdom goals through his church, then you know what he does?

he tends to carry on giving them more. because he sees that they invested wisely. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 9. if you don't believe me, I'll just quickly read it. 2 Corinthians 9, 10 to 11.

The Corinthian church are being a little bit tight-fisted in their giving, so he's trying to help them to see why they should give, and amongst other things, he says this, Now he who supplies seeds to the sower, and bread for food, will also supply and increase your store of seed, and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

He's referring to money as seed, in this metaphor. It's something you'll plant and will grow. You don't keep it to yourself. Seed's not going to do anything if you keep it to yourself. You've got to plant it, right?

[40 : 58] He goes on, and he says, if you do this, you will be made rich in every way, so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

He's saying if you use the money that God has given you, even if it's a little bit of extra, and you use it well, well then God will see that that's a good way to invest his money. There's a good conduit.

That's what I'm going to use, to do more. But don't do that. Don't think, oh, well if I give away some money, I can get some more, because you'll just have to give that away as well, to be the conduit. But that is such an amazing thing to be.

And God wants you to be that. And the church needs you to be that, by the way. This church needs you to be a conduit of what God gives you. There's so much we can do if we had more money.

We could hire a children's worker. We could do more outreaches. We could reach more families. We could do more social action projects, and bless more poor people, and bring them to know the gospel if we had more money.

[42 : 01] If everyone here had this attitude to money, we'd be flying. We'd be doing much more for the kingdom. So that's the second thing.

A Christian is to invest their excess money in the age to come. Thirdly, a Christian benefits spiritually by giving money away, rather than keeping it. A Christian benefits spiritually.

I'm almost finished. But Paul encourages, he's encouraging the Philippians to give. You'd be surprised as well how much he talks about giving in his letters to the churches, because it's so important in a Christian's life.

But so interesting, when he's encouraging the Philippians to give, he also at the same time says, oh, by the way, I don't need your money, but you need to give it.

For you. Listen to what he says. Philippians 4 verse 17. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.

[43 : 02] So, Paul is asking the Philippians to give, so that they can benefit from giving. He goes on, actually, to say, by the way, I have what I need.

I don't actually need your money. I'm richly provided right now. I wasn't in the past, but I am now. But I still want you to give, because of how it will benefit you. Giving is a necessary, but really hard, especially if you're not a mature Christian.

It's really hard to start that discipline. But it's a necessary discipline for Christians. If you're young, as a Christian here, you're a teenager, I would encourage you to start that discipline sooner rather than later, because it's only going to be harder when you have more worries and troubles, when you're an adult.

But it's such a necessary discipline, whether you're rich or poor, to give something to God's work. Because, as Paul is teaching here, it is for our benefit.

It grows us spiritually when we do that. It grows us spiritually when we give. By helping us to become more like Jesus, who is the ultimate giver. You know, Christians often say, I want to be like Jesus.

[44 : 12] Well, look how generous Jesus was. Maybe start with your pattern of generosity. It helps us to become like Jesus, to get into this discipline of giving. But, it also, and this is how so many Christians have found giving so helpful, it breaks our toxic reliance on money when we learn to give.

When we get into the discipline of giving, of investing in the age to come, what it does, is it heals us, of our toxic reliance on money. Because, we become less tight-fisted around it.

We learn to hold it loosely, and that is a freedom in life, that if you have not experienced, you can as a Christian. The freedom of learning to really trust God for our daily bread.

But, you know, we only experience that freedom from the toxicity of money, when we start giving. And, and that's when we stop worrying as well.

That's when we stop worrying. It seems counterintuitive. You know, I'm worried about money. Oh, well, I should give more. That doesn't seem to work in our brains.

[45 : 30] Because, because we think, the more worried about money we are, the more we should keep. You know, the more worried about money we are, well, I'm not going to give as much. I better keep it, just to be sure.

But, Jesus, Paul, the New Testament teaches, the opposite is true. The more you give, the less you worry about your money. And, it really works.

Try it, if you don't believe it. Really. It really works. Because, it breaks, it breaks this toxic, reliance on money, that is causing you to worry, in the first place.

When you get into the discipline, of Christian giving. And, this, this here is what a Christian's relationship, with money, should look like, according to the New Testament.

A Christian, should no longer rely, on their money. A Christian is to invest their money, to be a conduit, rather than a container. And, a Christian benefits, spiritually, from the discipline, of giving.

[46 : 31] Now, is the hard question. How does your relationship, with your money, compare, to this? And, what does that tell you, about your relationship, with God?

Do you really trust, God enough, to give away, your excess, knowing that He's got you? Do you really believe, enough, in the age to come, that it is real, and it is worth, investing in?

And, do you really want, to become like Christ, in every way, including His generosity? Well, I think it's no mistake, that, this came up, in Ecclesiastes, in this week, because Lent, the season, we're going into now, the season, as we prepare, for Easter, is a perfect time, to examine, your relationship, with money, and luxuries, and to practice, the discipline, of giving.

Because, it's really simple, it's easier now, than, than any other time, because, if you're, if you're observing Lent, which Dylan, hopefully, helped us to see, you know, why it's useful, to do that, why Christians, throughout the ages, have observed, this, this period of time, before Easter, where we, meditate, and, really take on board, what Christ gave up, for us, and, we don't find, as much pleasure, in the things of the world, it's such an important, spiritual discipline, so if you observe Lent, what you typically do, is you, you forego a luxury, chocolate, or beer, or something, now you know what, that's a great opportunity, to use the money, you would have spent, on that luxury, and invest it, in God's work, it's going to be, zero loss for you, to do that, it's a really easy way, to get into the discipline, of giving, so Lent is a good time, to do that, use the money, you would have spent, to give, but don't let it stop there, test the theory,

I challenge you, to test the theory, that we read about, in scripture, that the more you give, the less you end up worrying, test it, if you don't believe it, test it, and find, that in giving, not keeping, in being a conduit, not a container, of money, not only, will cause you, to start to enjoy, a much healthier relationship, with your money, but also, a much more joyful, relationship, with the God, who gives it to you, let's pray, oh, oh, Father, God, you, you, have done everything, that we can, know you, and call you, Father, because Jesus, has, died, for our sins, Jesus, has opened the way, back into relationship, with you, and we, we repent, of not trusting you, as our Father, still thinking, that we are our provider, and Lord, we pray, that you would help us, to take your word, on board, and, through obeying it, that you would free us, from this toxic, reliance on money, and, help us to know, the freedom it is, to be a child of God, in Jesus name,

[50 : 03] Amen.