

AN ABUNDANT LIFE IS A LOT TO LOSE
PROVERBS 6:1-35

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. BECAUSE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, HE HAS PRESENTED US WITH MANY BLESSINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES. WITH EACH BAD CHOICE WE MAKE, WE LOSE BLESSINGS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND OPTIONS.

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Thank God we made it past last week's sermon. I can't begin to tell you how uncomfortable it was for me to preach that sermon. But you know, last week's theme continues on this week in a different way. Last week we said that part of the abundant life God wants us to have is enjoying an erotic, passionate, and satisfying sex life in marriage and we quickly added that the fullness of this depended on how diligent we were in following God's wisdom concerning sexual purity. Each time we deviate from God's wisdom, we lose a little bit of the promised abundant life that God has offered us. In this morning's text, we are warned that acting foolishly will cause us to lose money, perspective, face, and other valuable things that are included in God's abundant life.

The poet wants us to understand that disaster does not come as a result of one poor choice it comes from a whole string of bad choices along the way. When we make one bad choice, then we have lost God's best. But, then what usually happens is we are presented with other choices and we make a bad choice, then another, and another, until disaster strikes. At any time we could stop the bleeding by making a good choice and getting back on track the Bible calls that true repentance. However, the poet seems to suggest, and my experience backs this up, that once we make a bad choice, it becomes much easier to continue to make bad choices. Why? Because it takes humility to admit we are wrong and to get back on track.

Let me give you an example of how a series of bad choices can lead to a disastrous confrontation. This didn't happen here. It happened at the church I used to pastor, the one that was so tough. (How tough was it?) It was so tough that I was in a constant struggle with the deacons. Maybe some of it was my fault, but I don't think so. You all know how kind, patient, and compassionate I am. One of the things we used to argue about constantly was what was my job,

and what were the deacons' jobs. Well it came to a head one day when I perhaps said some things that I shouldn't have.

One Tuesday morning, I came to church and discovered a dead skunk lying at the bottom of the stairs going into the church. I wasn't going to touch that thing so I called the deacon who was in charge of the building and grounds. When I explained the situation to him he started ranting and raving. Finally he said, "Why did you call me anyway? Isn't it your job to bury the dead?" I responded, "Yes deacon, it is my job to bury the dead, ... but I am first required to notify the next of kin." Now those were clever responses to the situation, however, I'm quite sure that heaven was not the source of that exchange. You see, statements like that come from a history of practice.

The poet has been teaching us about the nature of wisdom. He has told us what wisdom is, putting God's moral law into practical everyday situations, he has told us what the benefits of following wisdom are, and last week he started to paint a real picture of what is at stake, what we have to lose when we do not follow wisdom. This morning he is going to continue with this theme. The main idea is: **BECAUSE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, HE HAS PRESENTED US WITH MANY BLESSINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES. WITH EACH BAD CHOICE WE MAKE, WE LOSE BLESSINGS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND OPTIONS.** Did you catch that? Each time we make a foolish choice, we lose one of the good options we originally had. The more bad choices we make, the more we limit our future options.

During our study through Proverbs, I would like you to learn to notice the patterns of the passages. There are clusters of themes and words that weave throughout the passage. In the first section, animals are portrayed as smarter than foolish human being and hands are another theme in the first 11 verses. Let me quickly point them out. In verse 1, they strike hands. Shake hands in

making a deal. In verse 3, a bad deal is described as falling into you neighbor's hand. In verse 5 the gazelle escapes the hand of the hunter. In verse 10, the lazy person folds his hands to take a nap.

In the second section, verses 12-19, body parts that were meant to praise God -- our mouth, eyes, feet, hands, and heart -- are described here as being used for evil.

All three of these sections spell out some form of disaster for not following wisdom -- being caught in a snare and being overtaken by poverty; disaster and destruction will overtake the scoundrel, losing face, losing health, losing life are results of committing adultery. Let us start with the first loss described.

I. LOSING MONEY (Vs. 1-11)

WORKING HARD, BEING HUMBLE, AND PURSUING WISDOM CAN ASSIST US IN HOLDING ON TO THE FINANCIAL BLESSINGS GOD HAS GIVEN US.

In verses 1-11, the poet warns us about losing money, **WORKING HARD, BEING HUMBLE, AND PURSUING WISDOM CAN ASSIST US IN HOLDING ON TO THE FINANCIAL BLESSINGS GOD HAS GIVEN US.** Now this does not mean that if we are experiencing difficult times that God is punishing us and it does not mean that if we are rich that means that we are holy. It does not mean that if we are poor we are evil. Remember, the Proverbs are poetry. They are generalizations, not always meant to be taken as absolutes. After all, Jesus was poor He did not own a thing, yet He was perfect, holy, and righteous. But the passage does mean this: Even if we have little money, proper management and right attitudes will make a little go a long way, on the other hand, foolish management can squander a lot of money in a short period of time.

A. THROUGH NAIIVETÉ (Vs. 1-5)

Verses 1-5 illustrate that we can lose money through naïveté. The situation is this: a goodhearted person is talked into cosigning a loan for another person. Look at verse 1 in the first

part, the person is described as a neighbor. In the second line the person is referred to as “another” in the NIV. The NASB and the NLT capture the sense better. They describe this person as a stranger or someone you hardly know. The poet wants us to know this deal is not a good one from the start. The word for stranger is the same word we have been using to describe the strange woman in previous sections only here it is in masculine form. The strange woman led us to destruction, ruin, and death so when we see this word, we should be alert. Maybe this young man had a casual acquaintance with this person, and maybe he felt it would be the neighborly thing to do or maybe he felt it was his religious obligation. Maybe he just wanted to come off as being a nice guy or a well-to-do guy. Whatever his motive, he made a serious mistake. He made a verbal pledge to cosign for this guy’s loan and then he shook on it.

The papers had not yet been signed and money had not yet changed hands. Now the teacher is hoping that the student will realize just what happened. He is now enslaved to both the guy he cosigned for and to the creditor. If this guy does not pay the money, this young cosigner will have to pay the money or sell himself into slavery to cover the debt. He is trapped.

Now look at the teacher’s example in verse 5. He says, when a gazelle or a bird realizes it is in danger of being trapped, they immediately try and escape. The student is now in danger. So the teacher says, “Look! Don’t waste a minute! Don’t close your eyes to rest or let your eyelids close in slumber! Swallow your pride! Humble yourself! Go and get yourself out of this agreement before it goes through!

I know some people think they are doing the right thing by lending money or getting involved in these kinds of deals. Some may even think it is their religious duty. But this poet reminds us that there are all sorts of “strangers” out there ready to scam us or take advantage of us

and we had better be both wise and humble. Giving money wisely and intentionally is Godly but just giving indiscriminately is foolish.

Here is the financial principle we need to learn. First, we should never lend money or cosign for a loan unless we can graciously afford to lose the money we are putting up. If I lend you \$1,000, I should not lend it to you if I cannot just kiss that \$1,000 goodbye with no regrets. If I cosign for you to buy a car and the car note is \$10,000, then I should not cosign if I can't afford to just give the \$10,000 without worrying if I will ever get it back. The Bible says that when we lend money, we should not expect to get it back. If you are the type of person who will lend someone money and then think about it all the time, then you should never lend money. If we lend money to one another when the need arises, we should look at the money as God's. We should be grateful to be able to help one another. If we get the money back, it should be a nice surprise, so the first principle is do not lend money you cannot afford to give away or lose. Secondly, do not get into business deals with people you do not know, business you do not understand, or deals that sound too good to be true. Lastly, when you discover that you have made a bad deal, be humble enough to admit it and take steps to get out of it. That is a good lesson for any situation in life where we have made a bad decision. We need to be humble enough to admit we made a mistake, get it right, and move on.

B. THROUGH LAZINESS (Vs. 6-11)

In verses 6-11 the poet tells us that we can lose money through laziness. Notice the words that parallel the last section: sleep, slumber, and hands also the note of urgency to take action parallels the last section as well.

The poet is out to insult this lazy person in the strongest possible way. First he calls him a sluggard. The NLT calls him lazybones. Then the poet compares this grown man, with a tiny ant,

sarcasm is dripping from the teacher's mouth. He is saying, "Go take a lesson from the ant." Keep in mind, we are intelligent, thinking, reasoning beings and the ant does not have reasoning or thinking skills. Think about how small the ant is and then think about how small its brain is. The teacher is telling this lazy person that he needs to be educated by the ant.

Let us follow the contrast between the ant and the sluggard. The ant is self-motivated. It does not need a boss or a supervisor. It works hard at storing food so it will never be in want. On the other hand, the lazy person will not work unless a boss is standing over him with a whip in his hand. The lazy person's motto is, "I'll do it tomorrow." He will say, "Just 5 more minutes sleep just 5 more minutes."

Look at the result in verse 11. Poverty and want will come upon you like a thief waiting for you in an alley. Again, humility, hard work, and urgency are the only things that can prevent this. There are many people who have made bad choices and continue to make bad choices in life yet many refuse to change. It is interesting to me that I have seen people hit bottom in their lives, yet they refuse to take responsibility, humble themselves, or take positive steps. The Apostle Paul was pretty straightforward to the church in Thessalonica. He said, "If you don't work, you don't eat."

Here are some principles that govern this whole first section in addition to the principles governing lending and cosigning. First, debt is neither a good thing nor a desirable thing. The only legitimate loans are car loans or a house mortgage. Other things that we cannot afford to pay cash for, we should not buy, but that takes an incredible amount of humility and discipline. Further, just because a car loan and a mortgage are legitimate loans, we should work hard and be diligent to pay them off as quickly as possible. Again, we should not just accept these loans as legitimate and then spend other money frivolously. We should work hard, live Spartan type lives, and pay those loans off in double or triple time. Our goal is to be totally free of debt. But again, that takes humility and

discipline. I know a lot of my friends ask me why I can live so good at this time in my life. The answer is Luing and I stayed debt free. Our first couch had an arm on one side that would not stand up we had to arrange our living room so that arm was pushed against the wall. Our second couch we got from the garbage on pick-up days. We bought nothing on credit. If we could not afford it, we did not buy it. We had relatives that constantly bought new clothes every time they went out and bought new clothes, we took their old clothes. If we want to do well financially, we have to be humble and disciplined. That is the message of this first section. **WORKING HARD, BEING HUMBLE, AND PURSUING WISDOM CAN ASSIST US IN HOLDING ON TO THE FINANCIAL BLESSINGS GOD HAS GIVEN US.**

II. LOSING PERSPECTIVE (Vs. 12-19)

ATTITUDES OF THANKFULNESS LEAD TO CONTENTMENT IN LIFE ATTITUDES OF ENTITLEMENT LEAD TO CONTINUAL DISSATISFACTION.

So we have seen that foolish behavior can cause us to lose money. The next situation is a little worse. Ignoring wisdom and acting the fool can lead to losing perspective. **ATTITUDES OF THANKFULNESS LEAD TO CONTENTMENT IN LIFE ATTITUDES OF ENTITLEMENT LEAD TO CONTINUAL DISSATISFACTION.** Please follow this section because I am amazed at how defiant our culture is. I see young people who make horrible choices and then expect that their lives should be as good and prosperous as people who make good choices. Let me talk to the young people here but it applies equally to all of us. Right now, you all have a chance to go to school, study hard, get into good colleges, graduate, and get good jobs and my guess is that many of you will follow that route. However, there will be some who choose to rebel against your parents, the church, and God's word. You may get involved in sex, drugs, or the party life and never do well in, or finish school. In five or six years you may have a child and be stuck in a nowhere job. Then you will ask yourself why you cannot have the good things in life like your

classmates who went to school, followed God's commands, and now have all sorts of nice things. All I can say to you at that time will be, "You had your chance to do things right but you chose to do things your own way and not follow God's ways, now you must live with the consequences of your choice. You have blown that opportunity because of bad choices and now you must accept the consequences in all humility, and move on to God's second best for your life. Don't make any further bad choices."

The constant theme the poet plays with in this section is our bodies. Our mouth, eyes, feet, hands and heart are to be used for praising God and for serving Him. But the fool uses them to serve himself. The motivating driving force is self-satisfaction, self-gratification, and self-interest.

A. AGAINST OTHERS (Vs. 12-15)

Verses 12-15 describe this fool's offenses against others. In verse 12 the poet calls this guy a scoundrel and a villain, other translations call him worthless and wicked. Put all of these together and multiply them by a hundred and you will get the idea of what this person is like. He thinks of no one but himself. Look at his description. He is shady and underhanded.

Let's start with the core of our being where good and evil is hatched, the heart. In verse 14 we learn that this wicked, evil person's heart is deceitful and plots evil. He stirs up dissension so that he can come out on top. Be careful of people who come and tell you bad things about other people, always be suspicious of their motives, and always be suspicious of people who come to you with stories of, "He said, she said, that she said, that he said ...". You all know those types of stories and those kinds of people. A gossip is a person who is trying to make himself or herself look good. You see, these people think they are entitled to have all they want and desire, and they will do anything to achieve their goals.

The description in verses 12 and 13 are like highly trained field soldier tactics, it's a picture of stealth. They use their eyes, feet and fingers to motion to one another and to get in position for the attack. They will lie, cheat, steal, and even murder to get what they want they will use and hurt people. The only people they care about are themselves. Verse 15 reminds us never to desire to be like them because some day, they will receive their payback. This is the same suddenness that will overtake the lazy person in poverty. Here, disaster and destruction will sneak up and overtake this worthless, wicked person.

B. AGAINST GOD (Vs. 16-19)

Verses 16-19 explain why that payback is so certain, so sudden, and so final. It is because this person has not only acted against others, he has acted against God. I love God's idea of poetry and the way the Hebrews expressed it.

In verse 16 we see a common phraseology, "There are six things the LORD hates, ... even seven that are detestable to Him." This is a common technique that emphasizes the list, the list is not exhaustive, but each thing should have an exclamation point behind it. The LORD hates people consumed by lust! Jehovah despises liars! He cannot stand murderers! God loathes wicked and worthless people who cannot wait to do evil! People who lie and cause trouble make God want to puke! Is that vivid enough? God gave us minds, bodies, and spirits so we could praise Him and worship Him. He made us embodied spirits so that we could serve and heal one another. Our eyes were created so that we could see the needs of one another. Our ears were created so that we could hear one another. Our feet and hands were created so that we could serve one another. Our mouths were created so that we could speak healing words to one another. Here is what I have been praying for of late in my personal devotions, "Lord helps me to use my eyes to see Your hand, my ears to hear Your voice, my mouth to worship and praise You, my heart to feel Your desires, and

all of me to serve Your people.” The way to wisdom concerning our perspective on life is to be thankful for everything God has done for us and has given us. Thankfulness demonstrates our love for God. **ATTITUDES OF THANKFULNESS LEAD TO CONTENTMENT IN LIFE**
ATTITUDES OF ENTITLEMENT LEAD TO CONTINUAL DISSATISFACTION. As we can see, acting foolishly can cause us to lose money and perspective in life. We can end up broke and unhappy. But not following God can even cause us to lose hope.

III. LOSING THE WORTHWHILE THINGS IN LIFE (vs. 20-35)

RESPECTING GOD’S LAWS, LOVING GOD, AND LOVING OTHERS LEAD TO A FULFILLED LIFE.

In verses 20-35 the poet informs us that refusing to follow God’s wisdom ends up in our losing the worthwhile things in life. However, **RESPECTING GOD’S LAWS, LOVING GOD, AND LOVING OTHERS LEAD TO A FULFILLED LIFE.** That is really a good description of the abundant life, isn’t it? Being in harmony with God and other people is truly to live a blessed life.

A. LOSING YOUR SOUL (Vs. 24-26)

Let’s skip down to verses 24-26. These verses talk about losing your soul. Last time we were together, we talked a lot about sex, in the rest of this passage the poet is going to talk specifically about adultery. Again, notice the theme of body parts --eyes, feet, etc. Let me make a comment here about prostitution in the Bible. For the most part, the Biblical record seems to accept prostitution as something that exists, it never condones it, merely accepts its existence. In chapter 5, the poet laid out God’s plan for sex so in no way is he saying that prostitution is acceptable and desirable. He is merely going to show us how evil a person is who commits adultery. Here he uses the female as the adulteress but the same applies to the male adulterer. She will tempt the young, naïve man with her beauty, her seductiveness, and promise of exotic love and

she will catch many. She is married, but the young man soon does not care. Let me throw this out there to keep in mind, in the Hebrew law, people caught in the act of adultery were sentenced to death.

Now look at verse 26. The poet says that the prostitute will cost you money perhaps even a lot of money, but the adulteress will cost you your very life. Literally the Hebrew says, “The adulteress hunts for your precious soul.” That is why I do not understand how spouses can ever take back cheating husbands or wives since they are soul destroyers. Understand what the poet is saying here. Let’s take a married woman who decides to have an affair, she is cheating on her husband and destroying his soul, but she is also cheating the person she is having the affair with. First of all, she cannot deliver love because she belongs to another. Secondly, if she cheated on her husband, she will certainly cheat on the man she is with and it goes the same for the man she is cheating with. If he is willing to have an affair with a married woman, then he is a thief and a murderer. He is stealing another man’s wife and murdering his soul. Let us define a person who is cheating: you are either cheating on your partner or you are cheating with someone else’s partner, and that makes you a thief and a soul destroyer.

B. LOSING YOUR HEALTH (Vs. 27-29)

Look at what else is at stake in verses 27-29. Losing your health is a real possibility. In erotic poetry, the feet often can refer to a penis and the lap the crotch area. I do not think I need to explain. You put your penis where it does not belong, and you will get burned. I am going to get to this later, but the message here is that God sees adultery and He will not let it go unpunished.

C. LOSING YOUR REPUTATION AND EVEN YOUR LIFE (Vs. 30-35)

Verses 30-35 describe the real possibility of losing your reputation and even your life. Here the poet compares the adulterer to a thief now he is using the masculine, but it also applies to

women. He is going to talk about a man having sex with a married woman or a married man having sex with another woman. The feminine counterpart would be a woman having sex with a married man or a married woman having sex with another man.

Let us get back to the comparison. The poet says that we can all understand and even have a measure of compassion on a person who steals some food because he is starving. Verse 31 is a key to understanding this section. If a thief was caught, he was usually required to pay back between 2 to 5 times interest on what he stole, but here the poet ups it to seven times. That is extremely harsh. If he could not pay, he would have to sell himself into slavery until what he stole times 700 % interest was paid back and keep in mind we have compassion for this guy, we can understand why he would steal he is starving. But we can also understand the punishment because we can sympathize with the person he stole from. So the thief may steal out of necessity, but still end up making restitution by selling himself into slavery.

On the other hand, the man who commits adultery is just plain stupid and evil. Look at verse 32. It says that he lacks judgment, and he destroys himself. The thief is publicly embarrassed when he is caught, but public disgrace is the lot of the one who commits adultery. There is no excuse or explanation for committing adultery. He will forever lose face in the community and not only will he lose face, but if the woman's husband catches him, he may lose his life, and justifiably so. There is no one in the community who will feel sorry for the adulterer or adulteress. At least the thief can make restitution, but there is no acceptable price for the adulterer or adulteress to make restitution short of death.

I know there are people who think my attitude towards cheating and adultery is harsh. But if you think so, look at God's attitude. God said that David was a man after His own heart. David loved God and God loved David. But I would challenge you to do a study of David's life. Divide

his life in two, before he committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband, and after that event. You will find that God used David greatly before this incident, but after this David's life was one tragic and disgraceful event after another. Life was never the same for David. Was David forgiven? Yes! In fact, he should have been executed for each crime since adultery carried the death sentence and so did murder. Yet, God forgave him. But it is clear that in that act of adultery and murder, David threw away the abundant life that God had planned for him. Maybe we do not take things like sex, adultery, and justice very seriously, but God does. Please never forget that because we stand to lose the abundant life God has planned for us.

D. GAINING THE WORTHWHILE THINGS IN LIFE (Vs. 20-23)

In verses 20-23 the poet instructs us that dedicating ourselves to wisdom leads to gaining the worthwhile things in life. I know that Satan has convinced us that following God is boring, dull and no fun. He has convinced us that following the world and living like movie stars and rap artists are a lot more exciting.

I wish there were some way that I could convince you that life in Christ is exciting it's a new adventure every day. Look how desperate the teacher tries to communicate this. He tells the student to hang on to the commands of God and the advice he is giving about how to implement them in every day life. He says, "When you walk, God's wisdom will guide you. When you sleep, God's wisdom will watch over you, and when you wake up, God's wisdom will be waiting for you." I wish I could convince all of you of that, but I so know two things, first Satan has blinded the majority of people, even in the church. So many of us will simply continue to stumble through life. Secondly, it is only the power of God, the Holy Spirit, Who can remove the blinders and get us through. My prayer is that God, the Holy Spirit, removes Satan's blinders from our eyes. The

fact is, **RESPECTING GOD’S LAWS, LOVING GOD, AND LOVING OTHERS LEAD TO A FULFILLED LIFE.**

I want to plead with all of us to be humble and follow God’s wisdom. The wisdom teacher is saying, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Do not let foolish choices ruin that: **BECAUSE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, HE HAS PRESENTED US WITH MANY BLESSINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES. WITH EACH BAD CHOICE WE MAKE, WE LOSE BLESSINGS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND OPTIONS.**

Once we make a bad choice, we are immediately presented with another choice either we can humble ourselves and minimize our losses, or continue to make more bad choices and ultimately lose everything worthwhile in life.

Listen to how Arnold Toynbee describes the spiral down.

“I am not a determinist. But I also believe that the decisive choice is seldom the latest choice in the series. More often than not, it will turn out to be some choice made relatively far back in the past.”

Each bad choice we make carries us further down the road to destruction the only way to change that destiny is to humble ourselves, cut our losses, and get back on the right road to holiness.

The abundant life is a lot to lose.