

What do riches attract like a magnet? (14:20)

The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many.

THE TEXT (NASB)

The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many.

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. Classic KJV - Proverbs 14:20

INTRODUCTION



Riches attract friends. Riches make us popular. Our money talks, and people listen.

All else being equal, says this proverb, the poor are shunned and the rich are appreciated.

So what?



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COMMENTARY

This proverb is descriptive, rather than prescriptive. It describes the prevailing social instincts of humans, without offering direct advice about wealth. It merely states one of the common results of being rich. It exposes our natural tendency to greed and selfishness, loving to acquire things and hating to lose them. So we're attracted to companions who have more, in the hope of getting more. On the other hand, if we're the ones who have more, our wealth will make us popular.

Translation: *Neighbour*

The Hebrew word for neighbour, רֵעַ (rēaʿ, pronounced “rey-a”), may also be translated as companion or associate. So the truth of this text applies to just about anyone. We might hope that a close associate or long-time neighbour or friend would overlook the ups and downs in our financial status and still be friendly. Possibly not. A loss of wealth can mean the loss of friends. Loyalty often lasts only as long as the cash flows.

Loving People or Loving Their Wealth



We're drawn to the rich plainly in the hope of getting something from them. On the other hand, the poor not only have nothing to give us, but may even want something from us. If we're surrounded by the poor, we may find ourselves losing a little here, a little there, and all that adding up to a lot. We tend to shun the poor because they seem an inevitable drain on our resources. As we grow wealthy, we may increasingly see the poor as a nuisance, rather than an opportunity to learn to be generous.

Not all of the wealthy attract many friends. Some are cold and tight with their assets, but they like to be surrounded by hangers-on, keeping them on the hook with vague promises of future luxuries. But most of their underlings drift away frustrated, leaving just a few minions, hoping for a generosity that never comes. On the other hand, some of the wealthy deliberately hide or obscure their wealth, because they don't want such so-called “friends.” Sometimes a lottery winner remains anonymous, to avoid attracting undesirable companions. A prosperous person who loses all his money soon discovers his true friends. How many friends would you lose, if all your assets suddenly vanished?



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It's Hard to be Poor

Poverty often contributes to social isolation. Sometimes people avoid the poor fearing the poor will ask for money or make them feel guilty just for being rich. Sadly sometimes the poor feel unloved even by God, because of bad theology which asserts that God always blesses the faithful with plenty, and thus the poor must be out of favor with God. I remember being at a MacDonald's restaurant in California and practicing my broken Spanish with a young man. He confided in me that God did not love him because he was poor and Mexican. False! God has particular compassion and concern for the poor. (Psalm 69:33, Psalm 140:12)¹. We must understand that riches can be contaminated (Proverbs 10:22) and also that sometimes poverty is preferred to wealth. (Proverbs 28:6).

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus was an advocate for the poor. God's love for each of us is not affected by our net-worth. Yet God told the wealthy to be generous with the poor, for their friendship:

When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Luke 14:12-14

How's that for personal financial planning? Wealthy kings of the past, like the Egyptian pharaohs, were buried encased in abundant gold, in the hope that they could use it in the after-life. Jesus had a different strategy.

He said that our reward in the next life is determined by our treatment of the poor in this life.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- It takes more love to be a friend to the poor than to the rich. Befriend someone who is poor.
- Consider how your attitude to the poor affects your relationship with everyone's Creator.
- Make sure you are not responsible for your own poverty through your own laziness.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), financial status, friend, hate, loneliness, lottery, love, loyalty, neighbor, human resources, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”), popularity, rich, bf sharing

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Self-Centered Sam?



Self-Centered Sam looks out for number one. Who's that? It's Sam, of course! Sam doesn't consider himself to be self-centered. One of his favourite books is ["The Richest Man in Babylon."](#)

What does Sam do with his income? The cream, the very best goes to his own long-term growth fund. His motto is 'pay yourself first.' Some call him Stingy Sam. But he's not stingy; he's just making careful preparation for his own future, comfort, and well-being. He is part of the "me" generation. He typifies the Maslow's hierarchy of needs with self-actualization as apex of all values. Sam is a dedicated humanist. He doesn't recognize any higher power than himself. He's a tough negotiator.

Sam doesn't ignore charity. But how could he possibly help anyone one else unless there was something in it for him? Therefore any and all charitable donations must have full and public credit given to the donor. The more people are aware of his generosity the better. After all, a little bit of advertising is good for business. When his corporation gives a gift it comes as a percentage of profits, not revenues.

His financial hero is the multi-millionaire, whose assets once exceeded the entire US treasury:



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The great Railroad and Steamship Baron [Cornelius Vanderbilt](#).



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FOOTNOTES

1. Money Seeking God's Wisdom, Jim Newheiser, P&R Publishing, 2019, Page 34

