

I read something this week that was honestly a little disturbing. In a 2015 study, Microsoft studied the brains of over 2100 participants, using a combination of surveys and EEG's, to try to determine the average human attention span.

Just for comparison's sake, A squirrel has an attention span on normal things of about one second and about four minutes on acorns and nuts.

A cat's attention span is between two and ten minutes

Dogs max out around two minutes.

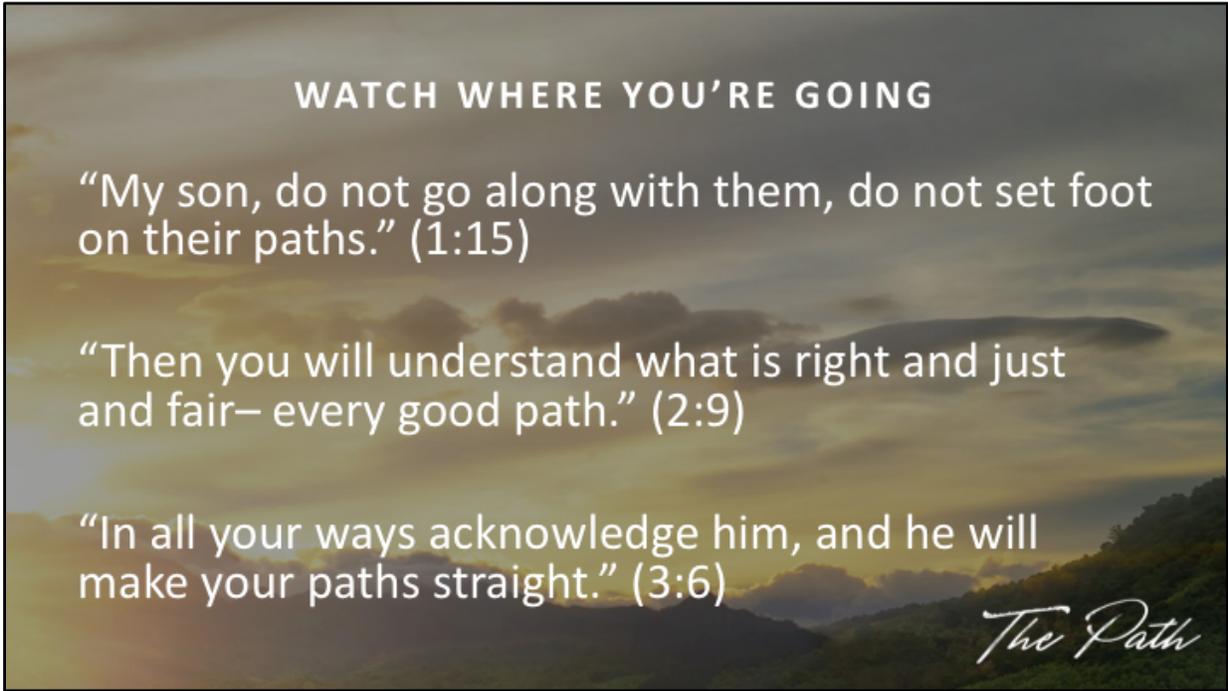
Goldfish have an attention span of nine seconds.

but according to a [new study](#) from Microsoft Corp., people now generally lose concentration after eight seconds, highlighting the affects of an increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the brain.

Researchers in Canada surveyed 2,000 participants and studied the brain activity of 112 others using electroencephalograms (EEGs). Microsoft found that since the year 2000 (or about when the mobile revolution began) the average attention span

dropped from 12 seconds to eight seconds.

Yes. It's true. Human beings actually have shorter attention spans than goldfish. Which makes preaching a 30 minute sermon an adventure!



We are on week five of our journey through Proverbs, in a series called “The Path.”

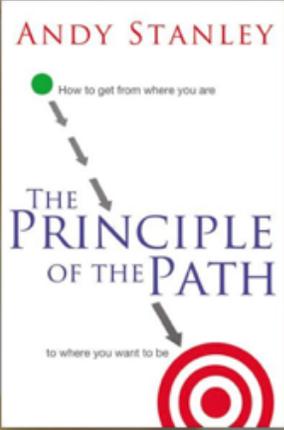
Proverbs mentions the path our lives can take over 25 times.

It warns us about walking with people with questionable morals: Proverbs 1:15: “My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths.

Proverbs 2:9 says that when we follow the way of wisdom, we “will understand what is right and just and fair— every good path.”

A few weeks ago when we talked about the human heart, we went to Proverbs 3:6: “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

And all of these have reinforced what Andy Stanley calls “The Principle of the Path.”: [Transition]



**The Principle of the Path:**  
**DIRECTION → DESTINATION**

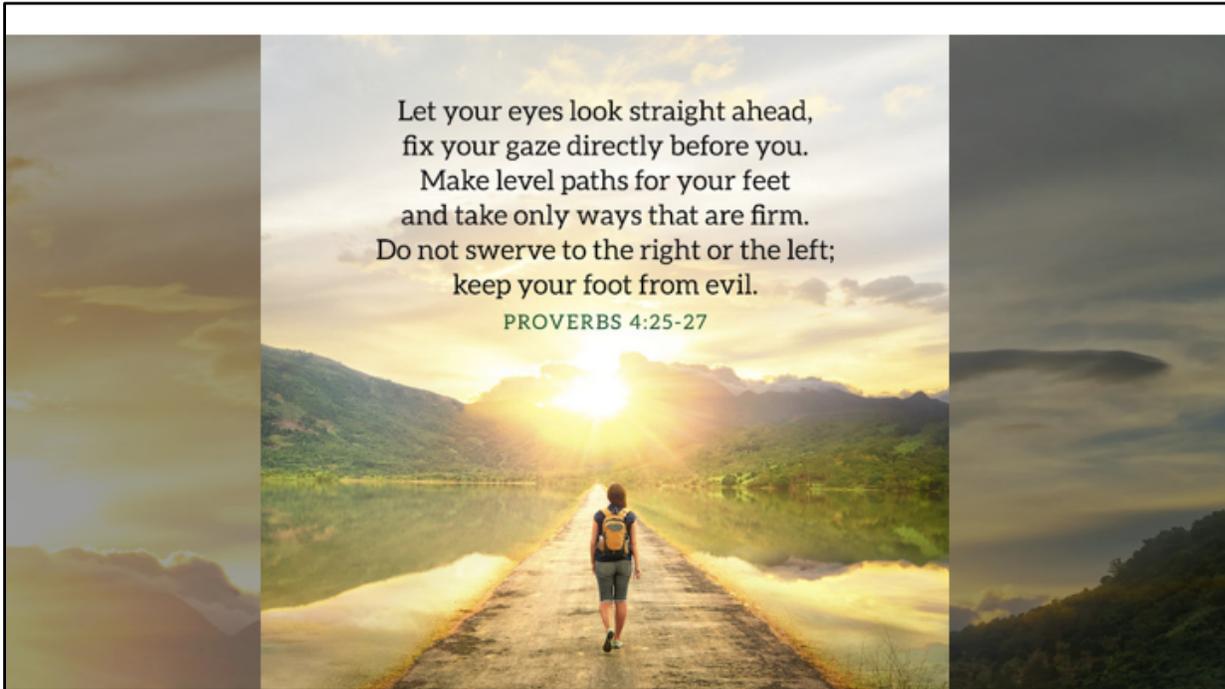
**The Principle of Focus:**  
**ATTENTION → DIRECTION**

*The Path*

But today, I want us to talk about a corresponding principle to the principle of the path, and that is the principle of Focus [Transition] If direction determines destination, what determines our direction? [Transition]

We all kind of learned that in driver's ed, didn't we? Or at least, I hope we did. We learned not to pay attention to the car that was alongside us for too long, because what happens when you do? You start to drift in that direction.

Our key verse for this morning really reinforces this. Let's read Proverbs 4:25-27 together [Transition]



I want you to notice something— the path we choose is determined by the direction we look. Before anything else, Solomon told his son “Let your eyes look straight ahead. Fix your gaze directly before you.”

There’s a story in the book of Genesis that shows what happens when we don’t do this. It starts off in Genesis 13, [Tell story of Abraham and Lot]

## A Lot Like Lot

1. Genesis 13:10: Lot looked and saw
2. Genesis 13:12: Lot pitched his tents near...
3. Genesis 14:12: Lot was living in...
4. Genesis 19:1: Lot was sitting at...

*The Path*

<sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”

<sup>10</sup> **Lot looked around and saw** that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt.

(This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: <sup>12</sup> Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and **pitched his tents near Sodom**.<sup>13</sup> Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

The next time you see Lot, its after this epic battle of nine kings– 4 against 5, and one of the losing kings was the king of Sodom. Genesis 14:11-12 says <sup>11</sup> The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. <sup>12</sup> They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was **living in Sodom**.

Do you see what's happening here? Lot goes from simply looking in the direction of Sodom, to pitching his tents near Sodom, to living in Sodom. And I want to stop us and consider, how often are we a lot like lot?

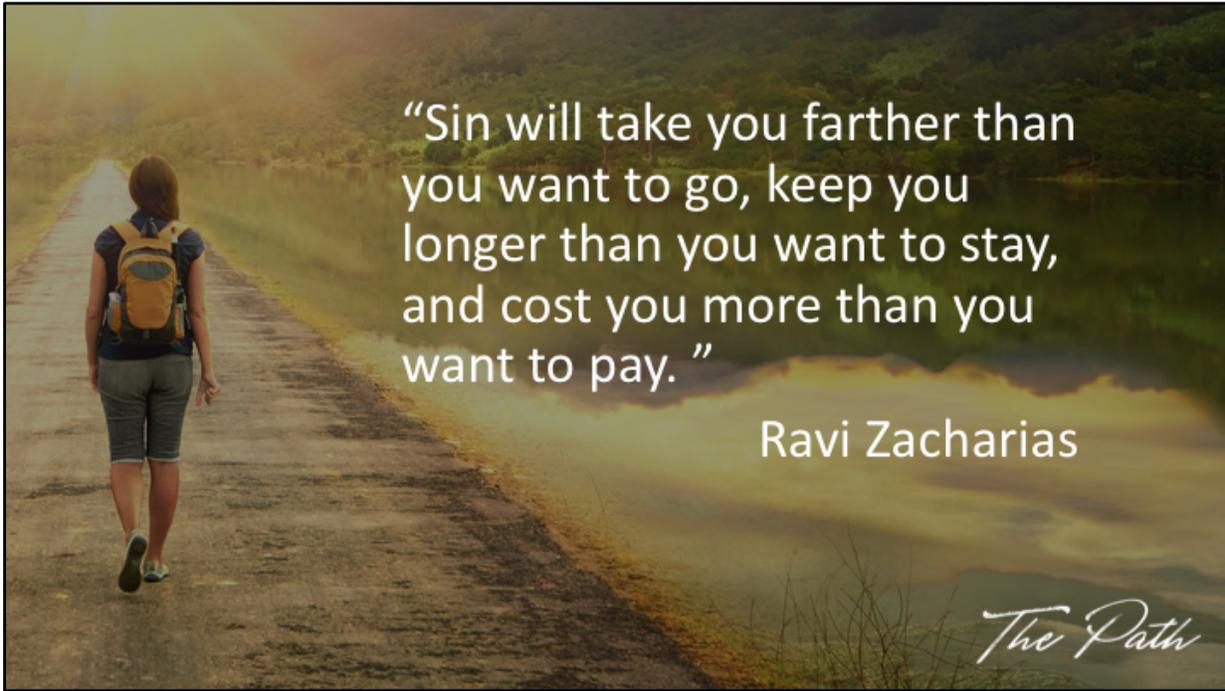
Can you imagine Lot's thought process that got him from step two to step three? Maybe it went something like this:

- Wow— look what's going on over there...
- I probably shouldn't go there...
- But it looks like they're having fun...
- Maybe I should just double check—just to make sure I shouldn't go there.
- Yep. I definitely shouldn't have gone there.
- But maybe I should go back. I can probably handle it this time.

And before you even realize it, you are so deep into a habit that you never wanted to start, or a relationship that you know isn't healthy, or a sin that you can't seem to get a victory over, and you're asking yourself "How did I get here?"

That's what happened to Lot. When God sends his angels to destroy Sodom for its wickedness in Genesis 19, look where they find Lot:

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was **sitting in the gateway** of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.



“Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

Ravi Zacharias

*The Path*

And the thing is, when someone has a moral failure, sometimes the justification or the defense is “well, he’s only human.” and it’s like we expect people to give in to sin because its just human nature. But this is so important, please here it. What makes us human is not our inevitability of falling to temptation. What makes us human is our ability to say no to temptation and sin. And it has to do with our ability to choose what we focus our attention on.



Dogs and cats.



## Passive vs. Active

Emotions fuel what grabs our attention  
(2 Samuel 11:2)

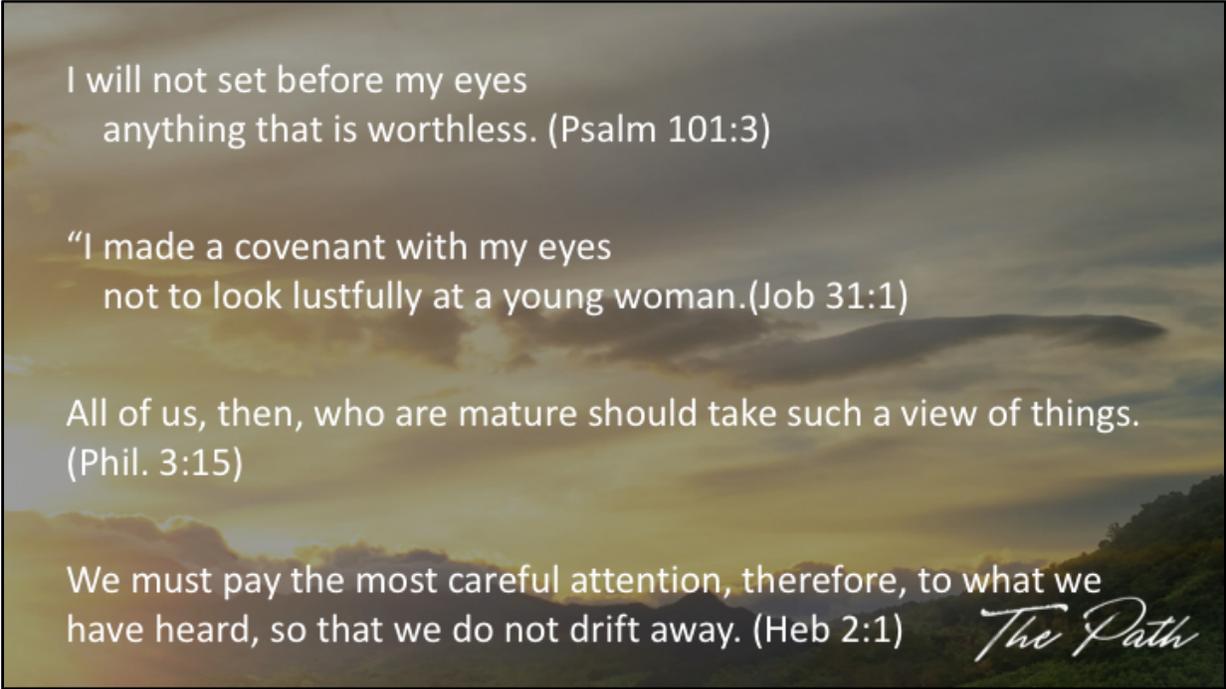
Intentionality fuels what we pay  
attention to

Is it about what “grabs our attention” or is it about what we “pay attention to?”

Emotions fuel what grabs our attention. Whether its greed, or lust, or envy– those are strong emotions, and they can dictate our attention. This is what happened to David in 2 Samuel.

<sup>2</sup>One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup>and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup>Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

But unlike dogs and cats, we can choose what we pay attention to. [Transition]



I will not set before my eyes  
anything that is worthless. (Psalm 101:3)

“I made a covenant with my eyes  
not to look lustfully at a young woman.(Job 31:1)

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.  
(Phil. 3:15)

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we  
have heard, so that we do not drift away. (Heb 2:1) *The Path*

Over and over scripture reinforces that we can choose what to pay attention to.

You say, but how can we do this when we are bombarded by so many visuals. When they use sex to sell everything, how can you get away from it?

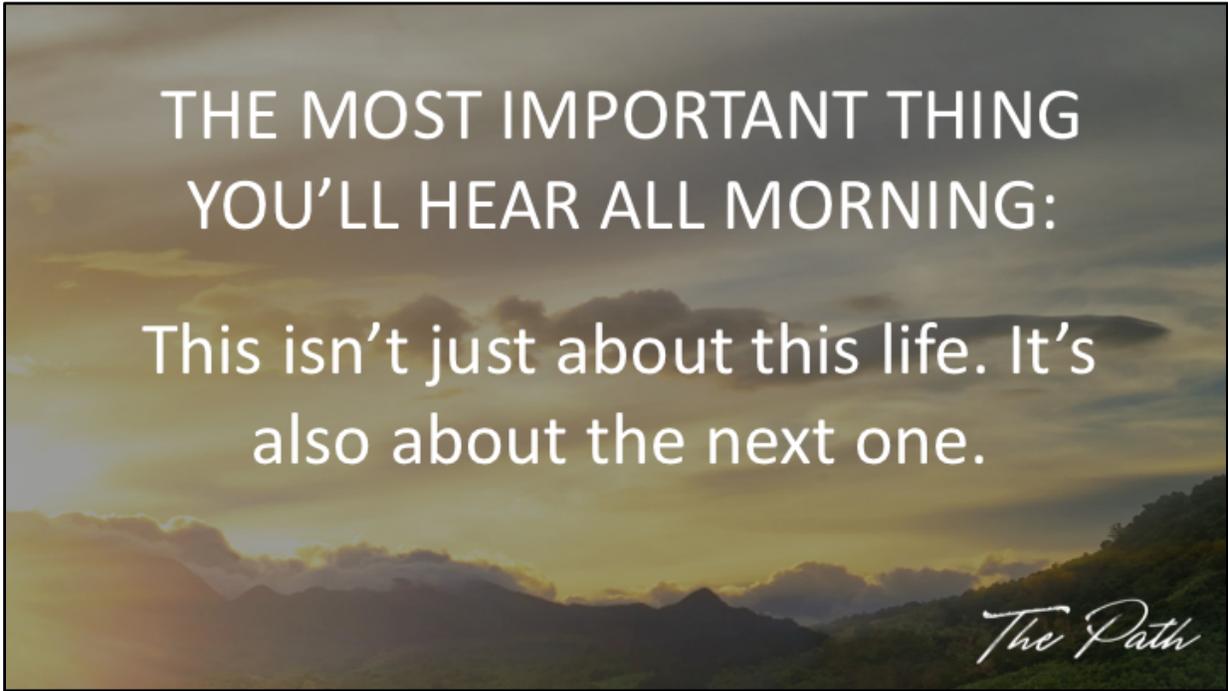
Martin Luther quote

“You cannot keep birds from flying over your head  
but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair”

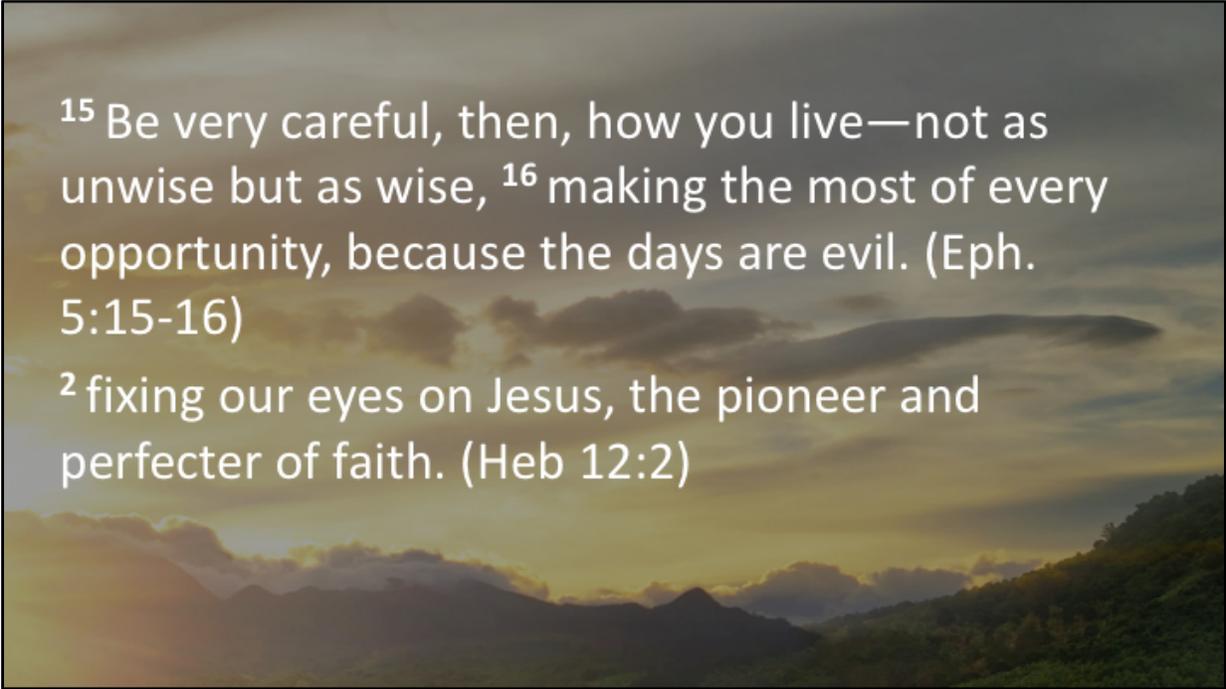
Let your eyes look straight ahead,  
fix your gaze directly before you.  
Make level paths for your feet  
and take only ways that are firm.  
Do not swerve to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.

PROVERBS 4:25-27



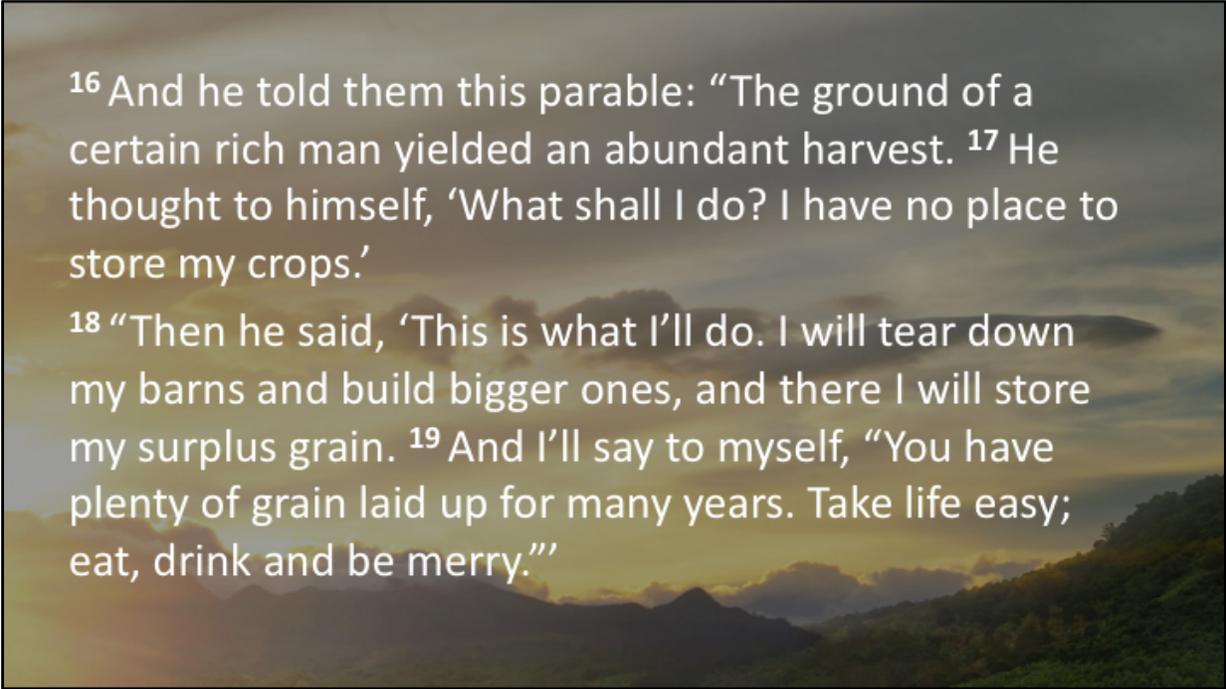


There have been a lot of times in this series where I've said, You don't even have to be a Christian for this to make a difference in your life. But if you walk out of here thinking that this is just super helpful and practical, and now you know how to have a better relationship with your wife or how to manage your finances better or how to be a better student, we have failed.



<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Eph. 5:15-16)

<sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Heb 12:2)



<sup>16</sup> And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

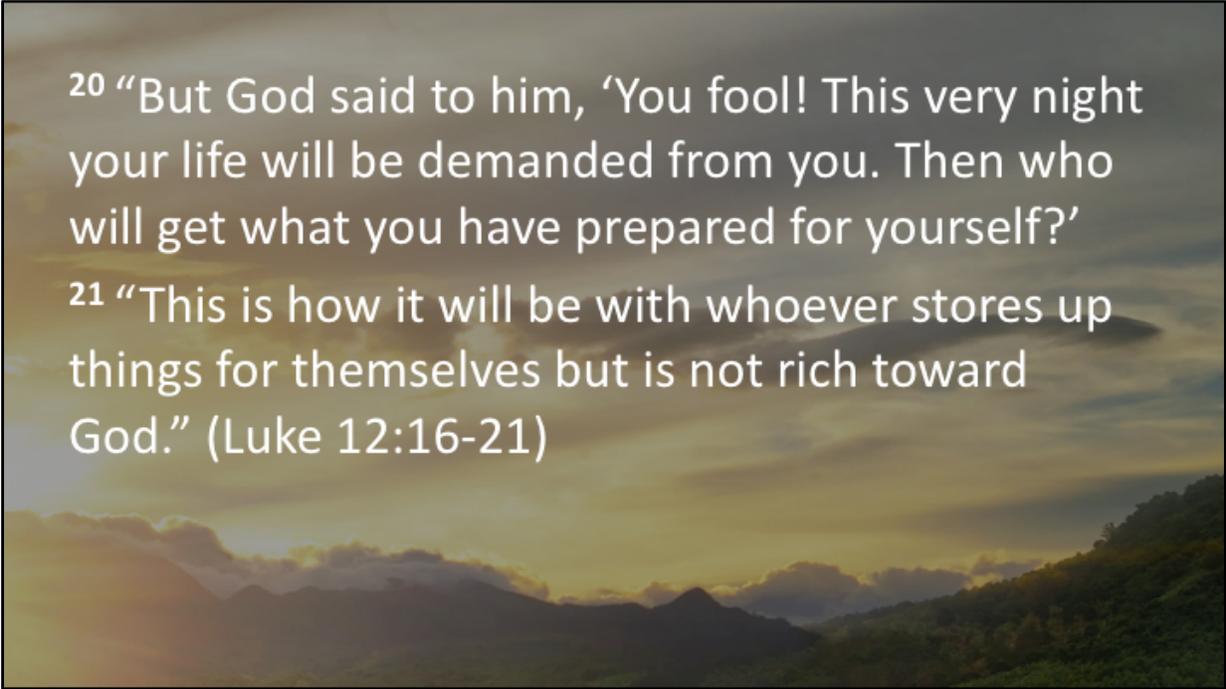
<sup>18</sup> “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. <sup>19</sup> And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

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