

A
Biblical Perspective
on
Matters of *F*inance

BY PETER GRANDICH

“The blessing of the Lord brings wealth,
and he adds no trouble to it.”

Proverbs 10:22



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Is the Bible the financial Nirvana you've been searching for?

The Bible contains over 700 direct references about money, including the majority of the Parables, and one out of every six verses in the Gospels concerns itself with the right and wrong use of material possessions. It clearly states that spirituality goes hand in hand with matters of money. It teaches us that God is our only true provider and to honor him by being good stewards with what he has given us. It teaches us that debt in most cases is not wise and a prosperous life is not measured by what we have in the bank, but what is in our hearts.

An exclusive AARP-Modern Maturity survey of a random number of Americans 18 and over had some very interesting results. The first question asked was: Do you want to be wealthy? 65% of all people surveyed said they wanted to be wealthy. By race, caucasians answered 'yes' to the question more than other races. By generation, those ages 18-35 answered positively more frequent than their older counterparts. And by gender, men answered 'yes' 72% of the time compared to women's 58%.

When asked what can money buy, the percentage of who chose the answers is below:

71% - freedom to choose	29% - self-fulfillment
68% - excitement	23% - self-esteem
56% - less stress	19% - happiness
47% - peace of mind	8% - love
34% - good health	

When asked Why do you need money?, the results were:

74% - to provide for my family	27% - contribute to worthy causes
68% - get good medical attention	18% - buy more stuff
64% - stay healthy	18% - to travel
34% - have more free time	

What Is Money?

Money was created simply to be a means of exchange of work for goods or service of equal value needed to survive. It is acquired by means of a job, by investing, owning a business, buying and selling products of labor, lending money at interest, renting property, etc. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII promoted the need of a “living wage”. In the era of whoever ends up with the most toys wins, the living wage has gone the route of the horse and buggy. Profits are obtained at virtually all costs to individuals.

God had commanded us to “earn your bread by the sweat of your brow” (Genesis 3:19.) The world today seems “hell” bent on earning as much money with as little sweat as possible—at least your own.

Is More Money the Answer to Your Problems?

An employee of Henry Ford’s once said his number one goal was to make a million dollars. Ford gave the man a pair of glasses made of two silver dollars. When asked what he saw, the man replied, “nothing, the dollars are in the way.” Ford replied, “When dollars are your only goal, you miss a host of greater opportunities.”

Jesus Christ said, “You cannot serve both God and money”. No one can have two masters. It took me a long time and almost cost me my life to learn money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. The more money we try to possess, the more the money ends up possessing you. It can and will possess you. Many other problems arise from this obsession, including willingness to sacrifice our health. The results are virtually the same for everyone—we spend our newfound wealth trying to get back our health. Year after year, people cite financial issues as the chief cause of marital disputes and admit to more worry over wealth than health or any other facet of their lives, even love! Is it any wonder then why there are more Bible verses on the subject of money and possessions (16 of the 38 Parables deal with the use of money) than any other topic including salvation itself.

History is full of people who did just about anything to obtain wealth. Again, Jesus Christ gave the best advice (he always does) when he told us

the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21). He never implied the man was bad or even crazy—only foolish. From all we can make of the Parable, the man was a cautious, careful investor who came by his wealth honestly. He didn't cheat, lie or steal. Jesus also never suggested he was evil. This is a critical point, as Jesus doesn't suggest that having money is wrong. First Timothy is perhaps the most misquoted scripture. We often hear it quoted as "money is the root of all evil", when in fact it says, "the LOVE of money is the root of all evil". Here too, St. Paul does not condemn money; rather he condemns our losing perspective regarding its true value.

Having money is okay. In fact, both Jesus and Paul clearly tell us the most foolish thing we do regarding money is to deny its importance. Jesus clearly was telling us the rich man was foolish because he "mishandled" money. "What shall I do?" the rich man thought to himself. "Since I have no place to store my crops, I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat drink and be merry."

This is exactly what most financial institutions advertise in their quest to capture you as a client. They suggest that they can help you obtain the good life by not having to worry anymore and instead live off your wealth and relax. **THIS IS CLEARLY WRONG FOR TWO REASONS:**

- Most financial institutions do not have our best interests at heart
- The pursuit of wealth for the sole desire of personal pleasure is not what God intends for us.

If you haven't learned already, you will find that financial security alone will never bring you real peace. Genuine happiness only comes when we make a deep commitment to the network of all creation. Happiness comes from sharing what we have with others. No one proved this more to me than Jean Paul Getty. In his day, he was one of the richest men in the world. Yet he was certainly not a happy man. How do I know this? One of his grandsons was once kidnapped. Getty refused to give the kidnappers a one million dollar ransom. It wasn't as if one million would seriously impact his life, but he stated money would be wasted on any ransom. He also felt paying would give reason for others in his family to be kidnapped. Forgetting for the moment he could pay for all his families' ransoms and still be quite wealthy, Getty simply ignored the first ransom. Only after the grandson's

ear was cut off and mailed to Getty did he agree to pay. Did the story have a happy ending? Not really. Oh the grandson was released, minus one ear. But the fact that Getty demanded his son pay him back for the ransom of his grandson, suggests strongly Getty was a prime candidate for a Parable.

We can never truly measure the spirit of giving. One little known true story goes a long way in telling us the true, awesome power of sharing the wealth God has given.

Back in the early 1900's, a man gave \$100,000 to build a college in Liberia. By the 1940's, the college had grown and saw thousands of young Africans receive an education. The college decided to track the benefactor down. Little did they know that he lost everything in the stock market crash of 1929. They found him living in a little house on the South Side of Chicago. At first he refused to accept their invitation, but finally agreed to be flown to Africa for the celebration. As he looked over the campus filled with hundreds of students, he whispered to the college president, 'The only thing I kept is what I gave away.'

How The Bible Views Money

While God has spoken from a burning bush, he never beats around one. He constantly tells us men will commit all manner of evil to get money, and once they get it, they will use it for every evil purpose. In the early church, there was a belief that all goods and possessions were evil. It was called Gnosticism. Jesus Christ emphasized that money itself was not evil. Indeed, no mere thing is evil. A gun in itself is not evil, although in the hands of a criminal it might become an instrument of murder. Despite what we sometimes think (at least I do), television itself is not evil.

There's a wonderful text to build our entire balanced view on the subject of money and God:

“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty
nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:
Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?
Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

Proverbs 30:8-9

I truly believe this text is the middle road God so much wants us to take in matters of finance.

How To Be Faithful In Matters Of Money

“He who is faithful in what is least is also faithful in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?”
Luke 16:10-12

There are two messages for me within this one powerful scripture. Before I truly found God, I was not 100% trustworthy in business and in my personal life. Therefore, how could I have expected to hold onto what I once had? God is indeed very interested in the way we handle our money. While money clearly has a role, God’s favor and the spiritual blessings that bring true joy, peace, love, forgiveness and the eternal ultimate reward of salvation, has far more value. Jesus tells us that if we can’t be trusted to use our money correctly—**ESPECIALLY THE MONEY WE EARN IN OUR LIVELIHOODS**, then we have shown ourselves unfaithful also in the small things. In turn, if we are unfaithful in small things, we will be unfaithful also in the great things. How then can God bless us?

THIS IS WHY I FEEL GOD AND MONEY DO GO HAND IN HAND. GOD WOULD HAVE NOT PUT SO MUCH EMPHASIS IN THE BIBLE REGARDING MONEY UNLESS IT PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN OUR LIVES. WALL STREET REFUSES TO LINK THE BOTH IN FEAR OF OFFENDING AND LOSING SALES. I BELIEVE ONCE YOU REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT THE BOTH ARE, THE BETTER YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS WILL BE MET.

Time—One of Our Most Abused Assets

We’ve all heard the saying “time is money”. We mustn’t just be faithful with our money, but also with time. It is one of our most precious commodities. How we decide to spend our time is of great importance to God. Forgive me, but I honestly believe God must question his decision to allow TV to be developed. I likely wasted countless hours in front of that box which, in hindsight, could have been much better served elsewhere. God commands us to renew our minds, meditating on the word of God day and night (Joshua 1:8, Philippians 4:8).

I also find myself to be lazy. It is certainly okay to relax at times (Isaiah 40:31), but laziness and slackness is not looked upon favorably by our Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58) One of my favorite places in the Bible is the Book of Proverbs. Why? Because when I finally read it versus skimming through it, I found how ungodly I really was. A lazy person (Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4; 12:11,14; 12:24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 19:15) is really rebelling against God and is a fool. God wants us to make the most of our time. Moses prayed, “Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

The right financial advice won't matter if I don't also tell you managing our time correctly is as important. Working constantly without taking time to listen to God and enjoying the many blessings he gives us all, is in reality a waste of time—NO MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY YOU MAKE IN THAT TIME PERIOD!

Hopefully, we all do a serious amount of due diligence on our investments. God also has shown throughout His word that we must also seek diligence in fulfilling the purpose He has given us here on earth. God rewards diligence (Hebrews 11:6). He tells us it's a very special possession (Proverbs 13:4). The Book of Proverbs (a great source for life itself) is full of wonderful promises for the diligent or hard working. Romans 12:11 tells us we are commanded to be diligent, especially those who are leaders in God's Kingdom (Romans 12:8).

Tithing—The Greatest Investment You Can Ever Make!

The subject of money and tithing is spoken more about in the Bible than any other subject. We can't lose sight of this as it is obvious God finds these two subjects of great importance.

Beginning with Abraham, the true father of faith, God constantly applied his hand in support of all those who tithed. It is not only in the Old Covenant or of the Law of Moses, but also the New Testament that teaches us that Abraham is a spiritual father to those who “walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised” (Romans 4:12). Jesus constantly scolded the scribes and Pharisees for their abuse of tithing. If there is one central theme from Genesis to Revelation, God challenges us to tithe and to have faith that the act will bring many blessings.

The gift of giving is often confused with tithing. Luke 6:38 says, “Give and it will be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” How much do you give? No, not in dollars but in time, support and caring for others? Is God a liar? Of course not! Then should we not trust him when he tells us in Proverbs 11:24,25 “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.”

We all hear the saying “we reap what we sow”. What is God really telling us? If we sow material things by giving of them, God arranges things so that we in turn will receive from others—usually more than what we gave! I can attest to this and if you think about it, so can you! So while tithing is important, giving is a far more important act for us. Let’s face it, when we tithe, we are just giving a part back to what already belongs to our Lord. But giving, especially to the poor, is a gift you can be certain will be blessed over and over again.

Do not make the mistake that I once did that God needs some of my money. He owns everything so whether I gave 10% or 100% isn’t what is most important, but have I allowed God into a place in my life? Do I have a relationship with him? Do I honor him as lord of everything I am and own?

In The End, Honesty and Accountability Rules

You cannot be faithful in matters of money without being honest and accountable with what we receive. Proverbs 21:6 tells us that getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. I failed in the past to be honest in all financial matters. I truly believe because of this my so-called treasures were fleeting. “Treasures of wickedness profit nothing.” Proverbs 14:5 As noted earlier, the Book of Proverbs is a wonderful source for honesty in business, life and all things. Examples include Proverbs 10:2; 11:1; 12:22; 13:11; 16:8; 20:10; 21:3.

The responsibility of being honest with our money is not just for the sake of God, but also for our fellow man. 2 Corinthians 8:20,21 says,

“Avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”

How to Spend and Invest Wisely

The Parable of the unjust steward who Jesus told us was accused of wasting the master’s goods, is a superb example of two facts God wants us to realize:

- He rewards some with more talents than others. But no matter the degree he gives, he expects us to put them to good use.
- God doesn’t have a problem with some having more than others, but what we do with them is what matters.

Throughout the world, people are protesting in the streets over the mis-handling of our resources. If God wasn’t all loving, I could imagine him walking a picket line with a sign that reads, “stop wasting the resources of time, talent and treasure I have given you.” I have often wasted precious time gossiping about perceived waste of others. We mustn’t be quick to judge what is waste or not, as Mark 14:3-9 tells us the wonderful story of a woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with perfume worth a year’s wages. Little did they know at the time what a great act of worship that woman had performed. This is why our priorities on how we spend must constantly be monitored. Make no mistake about it, God is not against wealth. In fact, with his blessing and wisdom, a person can become quite wealthy by making the right decisions. No finer example exists than that of King Solomon. Duet. 28: 1-14 clearly states that multiplication of material resources is a promise to those who obey God’s covenant fully. All should study the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. What you will find is that common sense is intertwining in all the writings. Just look at the men and women we know who have succeeded in business and helped influence the world in the knowledge of God and assisted in channeling material resources for God’s work. They all shared a high degree of common sense, diligence, faith and sensitivity to God to be fully successful in their calling.

Matthew 19:23,24 tells us those blessed with wealth will be subjected to special temptations. The desire to be rich we are told in Timothy 6:9 is especially dangerous. **BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT. BEING RICH IS NOT EVIL!** Some people are rich because God made them rich. The key is for those blessed in this manner to recognize they are called

upon to do good works, be ready to give and willing to share. They are commanded not to put their trust in uncertain riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

And Finally...

God wants you to prosper, no ifs, ands or buts!!!

“Beloved I wish above all things that you prosper and be in health,
even as your soul prospers” *3 John 2*

The Lord “teaches us to profit, and lead us by the way we should go” (Isaiah 48:17). We will indeed be tested over and over again and go through trials and periods that seem like we will never come out on the other side. But through it all, God told us he would never leave or forsake us. HE HAS GIVEN US THE GIFT OF MONEY BUT HOW WE USE IT WILL ALWAYS HAVE A TREMENDOUS BEARING ON WHAT ROADS WE END UP TRAVELING.

Three Golden Rules All Investors Must Follow

1. Spend less than you earn. Making a habit of using the financial resources you already have is an important first step. Whether you make \$50,000 or \$500,000, make it a habit of spending less than you earn. Everyone can lower their expenditures without greatly reducing their lifestyles. See for yourself by accounting for every dollar you spend in the next month. Then decide if it was indeed necessary and important. A personal audit will reveal a wealth of valuable information.
2. Develop a savings plan. Once you have identified and placed your spending under control, a savings plan can begin. Monitoring the plan will show you one of the keys to financial success—wealth is measured by how much you keep, not how much you make.
3. Invest your savings. Never confuse investing with hoarding. We already know what God taught us in the parable of the man who hoarded and died never to enjoy his wealth. While you invest, always be willing to share the wealth created.

There’s a fourth rule that, if not followed, will never make the first three enjoyable—find work that you love! If there’s one common theme among some of the most financially successful people in the world, it’s that they loved what they did to earn their wealth.

Debt

While it can play a role in Godly investing, debt can also be one of the most destructive financial decisions in our lives. If you find yourself up to your ears in debt, take heart, the God of Abraham, Solomon, Isaac, David and Jesus, can overcome even the most overbearing bondage- debt. But remember God calls upon us to use common sense at all times. Therefore, just as it is always more beneficial to avoid a car accident than to fix the damages caused by it, it's also more beneficial to avoid becoming enslaved to money than it's to dig your way out of debt.

It is easier said than done, but there are seven factors that tend to lead us into unnecessary debt. They are:

1. Desires for things we really do not need (Galatians 5:16-17) Learn to identify needs versus desires. An example is recognizing the need for food. Thinking about a particular restaurant for dinner, especially one that is not truly within our budget, is a desire.
2. The world has conveniently all but eliminated the talk and discussion of Satan. How pleased he must be about this development. One of his many evil skills is deception. He has used debt as a deception whenever we believed one of our wants was really a need. Credit has never been easier and I am certain the Devil has used this fact to an extreme. Again, the Book of Proverbs tells us in 22:7 that “the borrower becomes the lender’s slave.”
3. Never doubt God’s complete sovereignty and the ability to provide. Many times we incur debt because we do not believe the natural order of things will take care of us.
4. “God I believe in you. So, can you send me a Mercedes?” God did say ask and you shall receive. But he also told us over and over to be wise in what we receive and to see the difference in His will versus our own.
5. Do not delay paying back debts because you chose or choose to spend income on things, not truly needs.
6. Do not fret over getting into debt. Our God is the ultimate forgiver. As in investing where being wrong is not bad, but staying wrong is. Once you realize your indebtedness is a problem, take actions, no matter how small, to reduce and eliminate it ASAP.
7. How can we teach our children and loved ones about Godly ways when we continue to use debt for things we truly do not need? Lead by example.

Money, Children & Parenting

No one has driven more of a wedge between our children and our pocketbooks than the advertising world. Not a day goes by that our children aren't bombarded with "new", "improved" and the "coolest" ways to enjoy life. Can we really expect our children to not cave into this assault? Never in our entire history have parents had a more difficult time teaching values based on spiritual beliefs that don't correspond to the "gimmie, gimmie, gimmie" state we now live in. While it is true some percentage of parents seemingly have given up the good fight, the fact is the enemy has never been stronger. Television, radio, magazines, videos, movies, the internet and the like, hammer our children every day with what the "world" says is cool and un-cool, what is right and wrong. The message is always the same:

- Happiness is found in having more and more things.
- Get all you can as fast as you can.
- Win at all costs
- Whoever has the most at the end, wins.
- Violence is entertaining and a way to achieve Number one.

Never has the world been in such a state of "materialism". Is it any wonder that despite all the toys, more children are emotionally unstable, unhappy and committing suicide?

Recently, one of my friends' sons tried to negotiate a price to get paid for cleaning his room. His father asked him, "Why do you expect to do something you should do without any question of pay?" The boy responded that his favorite ballplayer just renegotiated his contract so why can't he? The son had lost all the value of contributing to the betterment of home. He has assumed by all he has seen and heard that anything with value has a price tag attached to it.

Because many kids now spend free time at a frenzied pace and appear to do only what excites them, the mundaneness of chorus has no allure and to them is only useful to do if there's a financial reward. But before we just complain about this, let's all make sure we as parents are not setting the example of this. Children will and always have emulated their parents. Is it any wonder that despite a dramatic increase in our lifestyles, our children seem to be more of a mess than any other time in history?

God has given parents the responsibility to raise children, gather wealth, and preserve one another's lives and freedom:

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”
Deuteronomy 11:18,19.

While the world has taken claim of ultimate responsibility of children by making them wards of the state, we as parents have been given the supreme responsibility. Financial wherewithal is a very important education process for our children. Adding one and one is important, but the responsibility of managing the sum result is of greater value.

God is living proof there's two sides to every story—I have always been an either/or type of guy. Either I pig out or try to eat next to nothing to lose weight. I am either for one team or totally against another. God teaches us that many times the middle of the road is the best path. And only God can do this by giving us two opposite stories, yet driving home one point. Take for instance Jesus' positive approach to money in the Parable of the stewards who were each given coins and doubled their money. The steward who hid his one coin, fearing its loss, was the one criticized (Mark 12:41; Matthew 25:27).

Yet in Luke's story about Jesus sending His disciples out on a mission, he tells them to take no purse, staff, nor other supports (Luke 10:4). How can God seem to support increasing our wealth on one hand, while on the other, seemingly telling us to make do with as little as possible. The lesson? Firstly, God desires a balance. And secondly, God desires us not to take any one part of scripture literally without blending it in with others. A perfect example is the call to take nothing with them. Yet in Luke it also says “But now if you have a purse, take it; if you have a haversack, do the same” (Luke 22:36).

This is yet one of thousands of examples where if we seek the in-depth meaning of scripture, we'll find why the Bible has the answer to all our questions. What seemed like two contrasting teachings were in fact used to show us how two moments of discipleship, one of eager first-time volunteers and the other of seasoned veterans of service, acted. It seems the first burst of evangelical enthusiasm led the early disciples to affirm a stark rejection of all material goods. They focused on themselves and detachments from

things. But over time, perhaps they focused more on how God was transforming others' lives and understood that dependence on God was the key.

I believe we are all called upon to use our wealth wisely not only in our own lives, but also in those we will touch for the rest of our lives. This is what I believe is the cornerstone of Trinity Financial, Sports & Entertainment Management.

Two famous people made statements which are very wrong:

“He who ends up with the most toys before he dies, wins.”

Malcolm Forbes, Sr.

“I don’t want to be a role model.”

Charles Barkley

Both of these men, giants in the world of money and sports, were wrong! How do we know this? Both of our life experiences tell us, but more importantly, so does God:

“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.”

Proverbs 11:28

“In everything set them an example by doing what is good.
In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness
of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose
you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say
about us.”

Titus 2:7-8

We invite you to consider becoming a part of this great journey the Lord has waiting for us. The profit potential is enormous monetarily, but the return on investment—the life and soul of someone, is priceless.

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