

Is Your View Of Faith and Finances in Focus?

By Mike Coe

A Marist Institute poll published in the USA Today showed that 55% of Americans always or sometimes worry about money. A Worth Magazine survey reported that, the number one thing couples fight about is money and 56% think more about money than anything else. Financial problems in the lives of both Christians and non-Christians are the major cause of divorce in eighty percent of couples who divorce before the age of thirty. According to Barna Research Group, Ltd., 51% of Christians and 54% of non-Christians believe that no matter how they feel about money, it is still the main symbol of success in life. For the majority of Americans, fifty percent of their waking time is spend thinking about money; earning it, spending it, saving it, investing it, borrowing it, or giving it away.

Money is the common thread that ties all of the civilized cultures of the world together. Knowing this must have been why Jesus said more about money than any other single subject in the Bible. Two thirds of his parables deal with money or work. Did He teach that money is evil? No. Money in itself is not good or bad. It's not righteous or evil. Money is neutral (amoral), but it doesn't stay that way very long. What a person does with their money becomes a manifestation of their spiritual condition. Most money problems are the symptoms of underlying spiritual problems. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* Matthew 6:21. *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:..."* Proverb 23:7

Some people say that money corrupts. There are corrupt people in this world and certainly money is a way in which they manifest their corruption. But there are also people with money who are not corrupt and money is a way in which they manifest their righteousness. Money can build a nightclub and pay for illegal drugs or it can build a church and support a ministry.

Is it wrong for a Christian to be wealthy or enjoy the good things that money can buy? If you have any comforts, luxuries, or anything beyond what is necessary for food, and basic shelter and clothes, is it sinful? Some advocate that a Christian should take a vow of poverty and seek to never have more than what is essential for bare necessities. These people might also teach a form of Christian communism that would encourage equality among all Christians.

Conversely, there are those that teach that ones lack of faith is directly proportional to their lack of financial resources. These people are known by many titles such as "Name It and Claim It," "Health Wealth, and Prosperity Teaching," "Faith Movement," "Positive Confession," and many more. They produce articles with titles such as, "How to Write Your Own Ticket with God," "Godliness is Profitable," "God's Formula for Success and Prosperity," "God's Master Key to Prosperity," and more.

It must be understood and accepted that everything we have comes from God who is the Owner of all. As Paul questioned, *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"* 1 Corinthians 4:7.

It's all God's. He distributes it. The distribution is within the framework of His creative purpose and His providence. Although we do not all possess equal abilities, gifts and talents, God wants us to enjoy His wonderful creation and all that is good within it.

Throughout the magnificent creation of our planet, God stated how He was pleased with His creation. *"...and God saw that it was good."* Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25.

He created a world filled with wonderful beauty and resources and gave it to man to enjoy. Knowing that it would only be temporary in the scope of eternity, He gave it to us for the brief joy and richness that it had to offer. God is a God of generosity. God is a God of giving. God is not selfish. And He wants you to use money to enjoy what He's made and enjoy what He's provided as long as you give Him the glory and as long as you don't become indulgent and self-centered. *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy:"* 1 Timothy 6:17.

With the exception of obvious physical limitations, the reason that most people don't have enough is not a result of their lack of faith but as a result of their unwillingness to focus on God's purpose and apply His principles. The Bible is clear to point out specific reasons why many are found in need or without. The character traits that lead to poverty are:

- Stingy: *"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."* Proverb 11:24; *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."* Luke 6:38
- Hasty: *"The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want."* Proverb 21:5
- Lack of discipline: *"Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured."* Proverb 13:18
- Lazy: *"Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread."* Proverb 20:13; *"...drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."* Proverb 23:21
- Indulgent: *"For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty:"* Proverb 23:21
- Frivolous: *"He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough."* Proverb 28:19
- Negligent: *"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."* Proverb 10:4

We are given clear responsibilities to focus on in regard to the faithful management of our financial affairs. First, we are told to provide for our families. *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (lost person)."* 1 Timothy 5:8. We are warned that our faith is a lie (compared to the unsaved) when we do not first provide for our families.

Secondly, we must pay our debts. From our increase, we are to pay our debts even if it means selling something of value. *"Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."* 2 Kings 4:7.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8.

“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”
Proverb 22:7.

Thirdly, we are told that a wise man will save so as to be prepared for future needs and unexpected events. *“There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.”* Proverb 21:20.

A wise man will have desirable treasure that will enrich his life as a result of the good things that God has made available. His life will be blessed and he will thank God for it all the while, praising Him while realizing that everything comes from His good hand.

While living an orderly life, the obedient Christian will then be able to give faithfully and regularly as God directs. *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* 2 Corinthians 9:7.

The joy in giving comes when we realize the freedom that is an inherent part of a right relationship with money. God is the Owner of it all and we are appointed to manage it. We are entrusted with what he knows we can handle based on our abilities. *“...he gave...to every man according to his several ability...”* Matthew 25:14

As we focus on our responsibilities and try to better understand the relationship between faith and finances there are four key action steps that we must take.

- Transfer ownership of your money and possessions to God.
- Make the goal and purpose of your life to advance the kingdom.
- Live in such a way that you can respond to the Lord’s call and direction for your life.
- Give faithfully and regularly realizing that all of your giving will ultimately be an investment in eternity.

Deuteronomy 8:18, “I am going to give power to people to make wealth.”

Proverb 11:28 “He who trusts in his riches will fall.” 1Tim 6:17

Ecclesiastes 5:10,11 “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money. When good things increase, those who consume them increase.”

Tim 6:10 “The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil.”

Tim 6:9 “They that will be rich..”

Matt 6:33.. ”Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...”

***Should we have it or not? What is Gods plan?
The key is your focus!***