

BIBLICAL PROSPERITY AND GENEROSITY

(ch 10 from “The Purple Book—Biblical Foundations for Building Strong Disciples” by Rice Brooks and Steve Surrel)

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will about in every good work... You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.” - Paul, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8,11 (TNIV)

Literally thousands of passages in the Bible deal with the subject of money. Money is a powerful tool that, like most things, can be used either for great good or for great evil. In this chapter we will explore both the dangers and opportunities that money brings to a follower of Jesus. We will also examine our attitude toward money to see if we view money as means to an end or as an end in itself.

LESSON 1

THE DANGERS OF WEALTH

1. According to Jesus’ parable of the sower, what can choke out God’s word and cause it to be unfruitful? Mark 4:18-19

2. What are some ways that people are deceived by wealth?

3. What are some worries of life that choke out God's word? Matthew 6:25,28,31,34

For most people in the first century, food, drink and clothing were much more matters of life and death than they are for many today. So if Jesus told people back then not to worry about these things, how much more should we not succumb to the worries of life?

4. Is it impossible to serve both God and _____. Luke 16:13

Jesus never made such a statement about anything else. He did not say, "You cannot serve God and power....God and sin...God and career...God and self". Why not? Because people know instinctively that they must serve God alone. But because of the deceitful nature of money and wealth, many people are convinced they are serving God when they have actually become slaves to money.

5. What can happen to those who are eager for money and want to get rich?
1 Timothy 6:9-10

6. Do you want to get rich? What are some potential dangers of this desire?

7. What is a root of all kinds of evil? 1 Timothy 6:10

8. What can deliver us from death—righteousness or money? Proverbs 11:4

9. What happens to those who trust in money? Proverbs 11:28

10. Do riches last? Proverbs 23:4-5

11. What should we guard ourselves against? Luke 12:15

12. Read Luke 12:16-21. What is the point of the parable of the rich fool?

Application & Reflection

What did you learn about the dangers of money!

LESSON 2

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF PROSPERITY

Having established the dangerous nature of money, now we can look at some of the positive things the Bible says about money, abundance, and prosperity. Just because something is dangerous doesn't mean we should never use it. For example, cars are dangerous, but that doesn't mean we should stop driving and walk everywhere. It simply means we need to obey traffic rules. In the same way, the proper response to the dangers of money is not to be intentionally poor, but to handle the money God gives us according to his principles.

1. Who gives us the ability to produce wealth? Deuteronomy 8:18

2. Read Deuteronomy 30:8-10. What did Moses tell the Israelites God would do for them if they obeyed his commands?

3. What do the following verses from Proverbs have to say about prosperity, or God's provision?

10:3 _____

10:4 _____

10:22 _____

13:21 _____

13:22 _____

21:21 _____

22:4 _____

22:9 _____

4. What happens when we give? What if we give with small measure? What if we give with a large measure? Luke 6:38

5. How does the “law of sowing and reaping” apply to money? 2 Corinthians 9:6

6. What kind of giver does God love? 2 Corinthians 9:8

7. What is God able to do for the cheerful giver? 2 Corinthians 9:11

8. Why does God make people rich? 2 Corinthians 9:11

When talking about prosperity, the question is not, “Will God prosper me?” The question is, “What will I do with God’s abundant provision?”

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

How has God blessed you with abundance? How can you use that abundance to bless others?

LESSON 3

PUTTING GOD FIRST

1. What did the Israelites do with the first portion of all God provided for them? 2 Chronicles 31:5-6

2. What part should we give to God? Proverbs 3:9

3. What happens as a result of giving the first part to God? Proverbs 3:10

4. Read Leviticus 27:30-32. Should we give a tithe of everything or of only our net pay? On the first part or the leftover part? Before or after taxes and other expenses?

5. Why did Malachi tell God's people they were under a curse? Malachi 3:9

6. How do people rob God? Malachi 3:8

7. How did God tell them to test him? Malachi 3:10

8. What did God promise to do if his people would give him the whole tithe? Malachi 3:10-12

APPLICATION & REFLECTION

What did you learn from this lesson? How will you apply it to your life?

LESSON 4

EXTREME GENEROSITY

Luke 21:1-4 introduces the idea of extreme generosity—that is, sacrificial giving. Jesus is standing in the Jewish temple when a poor widow comes and gives two copper coins—not much, but apparently all she had. Jesus' reaction is instructive.

1. According to Jesus, who gave the most? Luke 21:1-4
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Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

2. Paul bragged about the generosity of the Macedonian believers. Describe their situation. 2 Corinthians 8:2
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Here is the Macedonian formula for generosity:

Severe trials + extreme poverty + overflowing joy = rich generosity

3. How much did the Macedonians give? 2 Corinthians 8:3
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Some people spend all they can afford to spend—they're the ones who are always broke. Others spend less than they are able to spend—they're the ones who are constantly saving their money. Then there is that category of people who actually spend more than they have—they're the ones who are enslaved to debt.

On the flip side, some people give less than they are able to give. According to the Bible, they are robbing God. Others give what they are able. This is called obedience. And still others sacrificially give beyond their ability. These are extreme givers, like the widow in the temple, are considered heroes of the faith.

4. Did Paul have to pressure the Macedonian believers to give? What was their attitude toward giving? 2 Corinthians 8:4
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APPLICATION & REFLECTION

What did you learn from this lesson and how will you apply it to your life?

What kind of giver are you?

Less than you can afford

As much as you can afford

More than you can afford