

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the
Mission Field Worldwide.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The Bible addresses the topic of money, possessions, and associated attitudes more than any other subject in the Scripture. There are more than 2000 verses on this theme as it pertains to our financial and spiritual lives.

The use of money and possessions are a needful part of daily living and are important to fulfilling the commission of God’s Word to care for family, help the poor, and even to spread the gospel. Due to the integral role of financial matters in life, God in His infinite wisdom gave fixed doctrinal parameters for the Christian to follow in addition to giving sound financial principles upon which to operate. The state of one’s finances greatly affects the mind and emotions which in turn affect the spiritual; hence, it is imperative for Christians to have a biblical perspective of money to more effectively walk daily with God.

While the world is driven by a false perspective of personal ownership which perpetuates greed, envy, and covetousness, the biblical perspective of material things is drastically different. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). All things belong to God and “every good gift...is from above” (James 1:17). God has entrusted the things of this life into the care of humans to responsibly manage His resources. The world would be so different if people would understand that things are not ours but God’s. We are merely stewards of all things that are in our possession and our

decision making should be based upon that which is glorifying to God. It is the “love of money” (1 Timothy 6:10) that is the “root of all evil,” not the money itself. Jesus said that “No man can serve two masters.... Ye cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions]” (Matthew 6:24). Hence, Christians are to be careful not to serve money, but to let the money serve them while recognizing that true treasure is not found in the things of this earth.

A wise steward makes choices that are not selfish but pleasing to the master. As stewards of God, our finances should be regulated and administered with the same care and faithfulness as in spiritual things. “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Jesus Himself asked a greatly relevant question in Luke 16:11, “If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” As in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Christians are to be faithful financial stewards of the possessions entrusted to them by God. Financial stewardship is about ordering finances in a way that is pleasing to God in how money is earned, spent, invested and managed. ■



“As stewards of God, our finances should be regulated and administered with the same care and faithfulness as in spiritual things.”

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

POVERTY THEOLOGY VS. PROSPERITY THEOLOGY

Poverty theology and prosperity theology are two opposing financial models which have been promoted in the religious world. These contrary theologies are supported by numerous scriptures which have been taken out of context and balance with the entire Word of God.

Poverty theology is the idea that wealth is wrong and that poverty is pleasing to God. It often includes the idea that voluntary poverty is of high moral excellence. This theology has produced monastic type living and vows of poverty. It focuses on scriptures such as: "Blessed be ye poor" (Luke 6:20, 24) and "Sell that ye have" (Luke 12:33). Possessions are viewed as a curse and it is exclusively God's job to provide. Yet, people that follow this theology are often consumed with trying to meet their daily needs and are unable to help the poor because they are the poor.



Prosperity theology (health and wealth gospel) claims that financial blessings are the will of God. This theology emphasizes personal empowerment and is often defined as a contract between God and mankind—if Christians have faith and obey God's Word, God in turn will give spiritual and physical prosperity. This theology focuses on scriptures such as: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20) and "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). This theology emphasizes faith for God's blessings and is known as "name-it and claim-it." One writer so aptly said that this theology is a form of "Christian Witchcraft." It exalts the things of this world and erroneously equates wealth with God's blessings.

Both poverty and prosperity theologies are half-truths. There is nothing inherently spiritual about wealth or poverty. Suffering is not a sign of disobedience nor is prosperity a sign of God's approval. Christians should never worship possessions and they should be committed to radical generosity. Christians are to have faith and trust in God for all things. They are to pursue a relationship with God Himself for its own intrinsic value and not for the external blessings of life. As stewards, Christians are to practice ALL principles of the Bible, not just a select few that support a theology of man, whether it be one of poverty or prosperity. ■

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Editorial



*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.
—Proverbs 27:23b*

The subject this quarter is on biblical financial stewardship. I stand in awe at the amount of information on the subject that is contained in God's Word. It was a challenge to reduce such a large subject into this small forum. Stewardship is taught too little among God's people and there has been a price to pay in marriages and in the gospel work due to mismanagement and poor stewardship.

The subject of money pertains to all people and how we manage that with which God has entrusted us has a great impact on our mental and spiritual walk with God. Too many Christians are servants to money either by debt or by a spirit of materialism. Lord help us to put it and keep it in its proper place.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of this subject. May God bless this information to whet the appetite of the reader to investigate more fully the truths contained herein. It is one thing to have a head knowledge but something else to practically apply these financial principles. Spend time and consider the state of your finances. Make whatever adjustments and sacrifices necessary to ensure your finances are in order for the present and the future that you may be a greater blessing to others.

Michael W. Smith

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THE POWER OF COMPOUND INTEREST

There is never a convenient time to save and invest money. Many people, rich and poor, believe they cannot afford to invest. The truth is that people cannot afford NOT to save and invest. From the village farmer to the office worker, the best time to invest is now, even if the amount contributed is small. Most people can find something to cut out of their spending and invest that amount—the price of a soda, chips, etc. That which is small can become large through the power of compound interest. Consistent saving will accumulate through time, so start saving when you are young.

Below are figures for investing an amount monthly for 40 years at 8% interest.

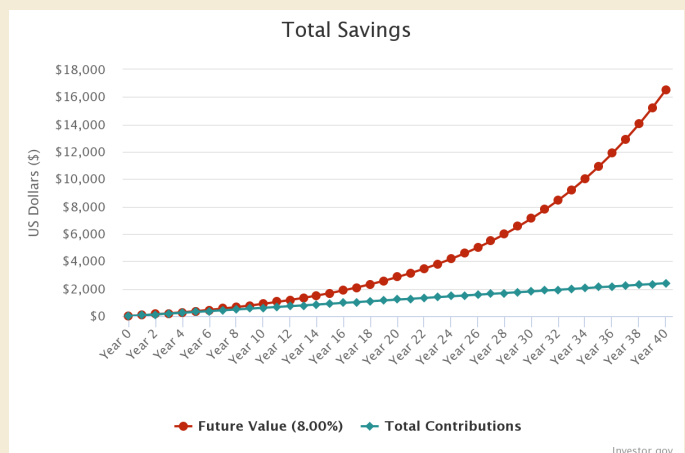
An increase or decrease in time and/or interest will drastically change these figures. Note the power of compound interest.

Investing \$5/month at 8% for 40 years yields a total of \$16,537 [Total Contribution: \$2,400]

Investing \$50/month at 8% for 40 years yields a total of \$165,373 [Total Contribution: \$3,600]

Investing \$100/month at 8% for 40 years yields a total of \$330,747 [Total Contribution: \$48,000]

Investing \$1000/month at 8% for 40 years yields a total of \$3,307,470 [Total Contribution: \$480,000]



Bible Study Guide

Subject: Financial Stewardship

Scripture Reading: *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*
—1 Corinthians 4:2

Summary: Doctrines and principles of financial stewardship are an integral part of the Old and New Testament. A child of God is to manage temporal things with integrity and honesty. Scripturally-based financial planning is important to enable the Christian to work, pay, give, and prepare for the future to live in accordance with God's provision and care.

Definition: Stewardship—The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care (*Merriam-Webster*).



I. Stewardship

- A. James 1:17 Every gift is from above.
- B. 1 Corinthians 3:9 Laborers together with God (1 Corinthians 4:2).
- C. Luke 16:10-11 Faithful with money.
- D. Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the Talents.

II. Good Work Ethic

- A. Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business (Proverbs 10:4).
- B. Proverbs 24:30-34 Field of the slothful.
- C. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 Work and eat your own bread.

III. Give

- A. Acts 20:35 More blessed to give.
- B. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 A cheerful giver.
- C. Deuteronomy 16:17 Give as able.

IV. Provide for Your Family

- 1 Timothy 5:8 Provide for your own house.

V. Honesty and Integrity

- A. Proverbs 22:1 A good name.
- B. Proverbs 22:16 Oppress not the poor.
- C. Deuteronomy 25:13-15 A just weight.

VI. Pay Bills and Laborers

- A. Leviticus 19:13 Pay wages due (Jeremiah 22:13).
- B. James 5:4 Defraud not.

VII. Pay Taxes

- A. Matthew 22:17-21 Render unto Caesar.
- B. Romans 13:7 Pay tribute and custom.

VIII. Debt

- A. Proverbs 22:7 Borrower is servant to the lender.

- B. Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing.
- C. Psalms 37:21 Wicked do not pay debts.
- D. Proverbs 22:26-27 Do not cosign debt.

IX. Plan and Budget

- A. Luke 14:28-30 Count the cost.
- B. Proverbs 27:23 Know the state of thy flocks.

X. Save and Invest

- A. Proverbs 6:6-8 Go to the ant.
- B. Proverbs 21:20 The wise save.
- C. Genesis 41:34-36 Joseph in Egypt.
- D. Matthew 13:44-46 Buy and sell (Prov 31:16).
- E. Proverbs 13:22 Leave an inheritance.

XI. Warnings

- A. Ecclesiastes 5:10 Riches do not satisfy.
- B. 1 Timothy 6:17-18 Trust not in uncertain riches.
- C. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 Love of money.
- D. Luke 12:15 Beware of covetousness.
- E. Matthew 13:22 Deceitfulness of riches.
- F. 1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world.
- G. Mark 8:36 What shall it profit?

XII. Trust in God

- A. Matthew 6:19-33 Serve God not money, for your Father knows what you need.
- B. Philippians 4:11-13 Be content (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- C. Philippians 4:19 God shall supply.
- D. 1 Peter 5:7 God cares for you.

Conclusion

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? — Luke 16:11

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The Scripture lays out many clearly defined principles of financial stewardship that if followed will bring greater peace of mind and stability.



“Christian stewards
are to have a
good work ethic
and should work
hard, be on time,
and do things at a
high standard.”

Good Work Ethic

Christians are to be an industrious and hardworking people, not slothful in temporal affairs (Romans 12:11). Proverbs 24:30-34 details the field of the lazy man who does not tend well to his field. Through carelessness and inattention, the field did not yield a good harvest so poverty came. Christian stewards are to have a good work ethic and should work hard, be on time, and do things at a high standard. A welfare mentality is contrary to Scripture. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 states, “If any would not work, neither should he eat.” Paul commanded these people who were not working due to laziness to “work and eat their own bread.” From the fall of Adam, man was given a charge to work and eat bread from the sweat of his brow and the labor of his own hands.

Give to God First

When crops are harvested, wages are paid, or money is made from other endeavors, remember that it is the Lord’s. A good steward does not hoard the Lord’s money but spends it as instructed. It is God’s will that His stewards give freely and liberally to support the gospel work and the poor. “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 16:17). While tithing is an Old Testament doctrine, giving is an important part of stewardship. Stewards are to give cheerfully and willingly (2 Corinthians 9:6-7), for the Lord said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Giving should be of the first fruit of our earnings and should be done with consistency and discipline, regardless of other financial demands.

Provide for Your Own Family

1 Timothy 5:8 gives clear guidelines on the responsibility of the man of the family. “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.” While God should always be first in spending, a man is to spend his money to provide for the necessities of his wife and children. A man professing Christ who is spending money for other things and not providing for his family is worse than someone who has denied God altogether.

Honesty & Integrity

There are various ways to earn money, but a good steward is to do everything personally and in business with honesty and integrity. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Proverbs 21:1b). There are many people in our world who make money through shady transactions or by taking advantage of others. This is not the Bible way. “He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches...shall surely come to want” (Proverbs 22:16). Deuteronomy 25:13-15 teaches that the weight used to measure should be perfect and just. In other words, there should be honesty in all business and no undercover method of trying to cheat or deceive. Deceitful business practices are some of the quickest ways for a Christian to mar his own reputation and the reputation of God’s people in a community.

Pay Bills and Laborers

It is further incumbent upon a faithful steward to make all effort to pay wages and bills for services in full and on time. Jeremiah 22:13 and Leviticus 19:13 warn against defrauding thy neighbor by not paying the wages for the services and work he was hired to perform. It is robbery to hire someone to do a job or to use services (i.e. electric and water) and not pay the bill. “The hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered in the ears of the Lord” (James 5:4). Christian living and honesty dictate this basic principle of financial stewardship.

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Pay Taxes

The top white-collar crime in some countries is cheating on paying the taxes the government requires. The Bible addresses this clearly and it is non-negotiable for the Christian steward. Jesus said, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21). He was speaking about the necessity of paying taxes to the secular government. Romans 13:7 further supports this by instructing the saints to pay “tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom.” A Christian is to pay that which the government demands within the legal parameters of the government itself.

Debt

Romans 13:8 says, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Contextually, the Bible does not absolutely forbid borrowing but teaches that all financial debts must be paid when they are owed. The debt of love is one debt that can never fully be repaid. Multiple scriptures regulate but do not prohibit debt and borrowing. The scripture does clearly warn about the danger of borrowing. Debt can cause much stress to the debtor and will affect the joy and peace of the child of God. Therefore, debt and money do become spiritual issues. Proverbs 22:7 states, “The borrower is servant to the lender.” Many people are enslaved to debt and are bound up with money problems. It is God’s will for His children to be set free from such enslavement. Freedom from debt comes by making a concerted effort to do all possible and sacrifice in order to pay down the debt and remain free from its servitude. If a Christian owes money, they are to pay back the debt regardless of the time it takes. It is the wicked who borrow and do not pay back the loan (Psalms 37:21).

Debt is a trap of the enemy and many souls have been lost over poor financial decisions. Debt is often incurred by spending more than one possesses for items that are too extravagant or unnecessary. Pride, greed, and envy drive the consumerism in this generation and credit cards and debt are to be used with great caution if at all. Many young couples want to have the same possessions that Dad and Mom have without the long years of work and they go into debt to that end. It is a trap of the enemy and young people should be very careful of this financial quagmire. When people are in debt, not only is their joy and peace at stake, but they then do not have the resources to give as freely to the Lord’s work.

God wants our spending habits to be disciplined and our lifestyle one of modesty and simplicity, even if we can afford the grander things of this life.

Plan & Budget

Jesus spoke about the importance of counting the cost before building lest there not be enough funds to finish (Luke 14:28-30). Herein is contained a very basic and fundamental lesson of financial stewardship. It is wise to have a financial plan and budget for spending, giving, and saving in accordance with income. It is helpful to write down income and expenses and physically take stock to better manage the finances. Many people are careless in their management and do not know their financial state or condition. “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Proverbs 27:23). Knowledge and information equip for better decision making. Budgeting and planning are important for both the rich and the poor.

Save & Invest

Saving and investing have at times been spoken of as a lack of faith, but God’s Word clearly teaches the importance of saving for the future. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise....[She] provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8). God’s instruction to Pharaoh in Egypt was to save during the times of plenty to prepare for the time of famine (Genesis 41:34-36). The wise save and invest knowing there will come a time when the aged cannot work and income will be at a minimum. Some years the harvest is plentiful and other years are lean, thus it takes planning and saving to prepare for that variance.

Jesus told the parable of the man who sold all he had to purchase a treasure in the field. Jesus was using the financial principle of investing to illustrate a spiritual point (Matthew 13:44-46). He again used a similar point in the parable of the talents when one man hid his talent in the ground and did not even invest it with the money changers to make interest. It is wise to save money and invest it long-term that through compound interest more money can be available for the lean years. The best time to save and invest is as young as possible. There will always be ways to spend money, but it is a wise person who with consistency lays aside a portion for the future.



“It is wise to have a financial plan and budget for spending, giving, and saving in accordance with income.”

Warnings

While money is necessary and should be handled in a godly way, the Bible also gives many warnings concerning our attitude toward it. Riches do not satisfy (Ecclesiastes 5:10) and a Christian should not trust in “uncertain riches, but in the living God” (1 Timothy 6:17-18). While Christians should practice good financial stewardship, their hearts and love should not be after the riches of this life nor for the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17). “Beware of covetousness” (Luke 12:15) and know that riches can be deceitful and choke out the Word of God (Matthew 13:22). The true treasure is found in Christ Jesus and our primary purpose and goals should be centered around Him. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36).

Trust in God

Christians should put their trust not in the things of this world but in the living God. The heavenly Father knows what we have need of and will take care of His children (Matthew 6:19-33). While this does not negate sound financial principles, the Christian’s heart and mindset toward money is different than the people of the world. The Christian must recognize the proper role and function of money and possessions while still

having a heart of trust and faith in God Himself. The child of God should learn to be content (Philippians 4:11-13) and rest in the knowledge that “God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

May the Lord bless each child of God to take to heart the lessons and wisdom of these biblical principles of financial stewardship. Some in pursuit of the world and some in pursuit of righteousness have neglected these principles and have suffered spiritually and financially. While poverty or riches is not an indication of spirituality, a person’s stewardship is reflective of their obedience to the Word of God. A blessing awaits to those who will follow wholeheartedly the Scripture on these issues. If we are not faithful with money and things of this world, how can God trust us with the true riches of the kingdom of God? (Luke 16:11). ■



“Having, first, gained all you can, and, secondly saved all you can, then give all you can”.

—John Wesley

Marriage & Money

Research shows that money is one of the main reasons for marriage problems and one of the leading causes of divorce. Money issues can be challenging in the home but can be minimized by following biblical principles.

When speaking of marriage in Matthew 19:6, Jesus said that a man and his wife were no more two but one flesh. This principle applies to much more than the physical intimacy of marriage. Marriage is about oneness and togetherness and that applies to financial issues as well. While respecting differences in cultural practice, marriages are stronger when matters concerning financial things are joint. A barrier is too often created by individual ownership and management rather than jointly earning, spending, saving, investing, etc. An “allowance mentality”



from one spouse can breed resentment in the relationship.

Decisions concerning money matters are best made together. Communication is one of the best ways to reduce the stresses of money in a marriage. Open communication about the financial realities of the home is vital to working positively together. An agreed upon budget and financial plan can assist in reducing the tensions that can daily exist in some homes over spending habits. When financial habits are discussed in marriage, it can feel very personal; so, it is important to discuss things with grace and respect, recognizing

the value of a different perspective. A husband and wife should show great regard for the different role and function they fill in the home, and yet work together for their financial benefit and peace of mind. ■



DID YOU KNOW?

Good Debt vs. Bad Debt

All debt is not created equal. Good debt is referred to as debt that helps generate income and increases net worth such as education, business ownership, real estate, and investing. Even “good” debt is not guaranteed and can have a downside.

“Bad debt” refers to debts incurred to purchase depreciating assets such as vehicles, clothes, consumables, and other goods and services. Credit card debt is one of the worst due to high interest rates if not paid in full monthly. ■



A Word
in Season

GOD KNOWS YOU NEED THESE THINGS

What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God....
—Matthew 6:31-33

Dedicated, full-time gospel workers will often experience financial hardship and even poverty as they labor to promote the richer treasures of Christ rather than the mammon of this life. While time and talents should be fully invested for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, money is necessary to live in this world. God is well aware of this reality and will not forget His servants in their time of need. Ministers of the gospel must be willing to suffer while maintaining a steadfast faith that God has promised to provide those necessary things. In times of difficulty, our trust must rise beyond the present need in acknowledging that God has a higher purpose and plan.



The words of Paul in Philippians 4:11-13 should challenge us all: “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” God has proven His love and care and will not forsake you if you stay faithful to His cause and live for His glory.

Faith does not negate other principles of stewardship. Regardless of income, it is still incumbent for the ministry to practice sound financial stewardship. Ministers should save for the future just as everyone else yet without placing trust in those uncertain riches. Do not fall prey to the idea of spending all extravagantly today expecting God to take care of tomorrow. God may be blessing you especially today so that can save money and have something to eat next month.

God, as our heavenly father, knows the problems you face and the financial concern you may have for your family’s welfare. Keep your faith fixed in Christ and do not compromise your call to preach the gospel for the material things of life. God will be faithful to His Word and will minister to you as you have need. ■

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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD