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“The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Timothy 6:10).

Living Within the Family Budget

Lesson Subject: Financial management is a responsibility of the Christian family.

L65. Date: February 1988. **Text:** Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17, 18; Matthew 6:31-33; I Timothy 6:6-9. **Topic:** Family; Money.

The Bible speaks a great deal about material wealth. More than a thousand verses deal with how to get it, how to give it, how to save it, and how to spend it. It is a very scriptural subject. Jesus' teachings may be summarized in these statements: *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. . . . So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. . . . Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Luke 12:15, 21, 31).

Many people are in financial trouble today. Much of that trouble is the result of poor management of their money. *“Till Debt Do Us Part”* could be written over many a broken home. It has been estimated that 40 percent of the cases where a man deserts his family are related to financial pressures.

We need a word from God on the subject of finances. We need it for our own good, and we need it that we might be good stewards toward Him. Financial management is a part of good stewardship which God requires of the Christian family.

1. THE BIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARD WEALTH

A. Possession of wealth is neither good nor bad. There is no extra spirituality in being poor; neither is there any in being rich. God had saints

who were of both extremes in finances and He approved each of them. Abraham was so wealthy that he is called a “king” in one place in the Hebrew Bible. There was never a man as wealthy as Solomon. On the other hand, some of God's people were so poor that “*they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute*” (Hebrews 11:37). They were like Jesus who had nowhere to lay His head. Yet, both the wealthy saint and the poor saint were approved of God.

B. The attitude toward wealth is the key. There is no evil in money as such. It is only a medium of exchange. The attitude of greed, covetousness, and selfishness gives money its bad reputation. “*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (I Timothy 6:9, 10).

The poor man may be covetous and envious, the same as the rich man. But the “love of money” is the source from which all sorts of evil arise. Watch your attitude toward wealth.

C. Possession of wealth is an opportunity and a responsibility. The Bible principle is this: “*Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). A day is coming when God will call each Christian to “*give an account of (his) stewardship*” (Luke 16:2). Then each will answer as to how he made his money, how he spent it, how he saved it, and how (including how much) he invested it in the Lord's service. That will be a solemn day.

The more God makes available through your work, the more you are responsible for before Him.

D. Work, as well as wealth, is of concern to God. He made man with the capacity and need to work. Man worked in the Garden of Eden before sin entered human experience (Genesis 2:15). Sin added the element of burdensome toil to man's work, but the work itself was not a consequence of sin.

God commanded mankind to work six days and to rest on the seventh day of each week (Exodus 20:8-11). The New Testament requires work for livelihood, saying, “*If any would not work, neither should he eat*” (II Thessalonians 3:10).

Man's work receives God's reward so that he receives a proper proportion of earth's wealth. God warns us against saying, “*My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember*”

the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17, 18). It is He who gives the increase of farm and flock, prospers a business, or makes possible the health to make a salary. Look to God as the source of your income.

II. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD WEALTH

A. Money is a medium of exchange. It has no value except for that purpose. Different nations have different money systems. They may call it a dollar, peso, mark, yen, or whatever. It may be green, red, gray, or any other color. But it is all just so many pieces of colored paper with certain insignia printed on it, except as each nation accepts it as a medium of exchange. Some countries may use shells, colored beads, or various seeds which work as well as our dollars.

A visitor to another country may think its money looks like “play money.” And it would be except for the fact that it is accepted by that nation as the basis of its financial value system. Why should anyone covet a thing which is only representative of value?

B. Money is coined personality. Money has value because it represents labor and its value. If you hired out to work for an employer for ten dollars an hour, you would exchange one hour of your life for every ten dollars you received. At the end of a work week you would receive four hundred dollars, for which you had given forty hours of your life. Now watch how you spend that money. Is an eighty-dollar pair of shoes worth eight hours of your life? Would you give 1,500 hours of your life to own a fifteen-thousand-dollar car? That is what you will give for it. Be careful how you spend your money. That is how you are investing your life.

C. Money is a great problem. Those who have not conquered greed have an especially great problem with their money. Those who are involved in ministering to families report that one family in five is in serious financial trouble today. They report that 40 percent of all desertions, 45 percent of all cruelty in the home, and 70 percent of all worries in the home have finances as the underlying cause. How tragic! God never intended finances to be such a problem for us.

Again, the real problem is not wealth — the presence or absence of it. The real problem is greed, the desire to get more, spend more, and get more to spend more. The spirit of covetousness and greed must be conquered in order for there to be peace.

III. CONQUERING THE SPIRIT OF GREED

Isaiah warns against the spirit of “*greedy dogs which can never have enough, . . . they all look to their own way, every one for his gain*” (Isaiah 56:11). The Christian must conquer that spirit or it will lead him into sin (I Timothy 6:9, 10).

A. Love God supremely. If you truly learn to love God “*with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*” (Mark 12:30), you will have taken the first great step in conquering greed. If you love God more than yourself, you have little problem with being a faithful steward.

B. Kill the spirit of covetousness. It can never be satisfied. It will never say, “This is enough; I can be content.” It will continue to cry, “More, more; it is not enough.” A wealthy businessman testified, “I wanted to have an estate of one million dollars. But I found that I wanted the second million more than the first, and the third more than the second.” By an act of the will, one must place the selfish spirit of greed on the altar as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ.

C. Learn to give with joy. Many who give do not do it with the hilarious abandonment which Paul recommends in II Corinthians 9:7. Do not think of giving to the church, giving to meet obligations, or giving to raise a budgeted amount. Think of giving to the Lord. By a conscious act of your will, let each offering be to Him. You will forget self when you give to God as an act of worship.

D. Distinguish between your needs and your wants. God has promised to provide all our needs (Philippians 4:19), and you may trust Him to do that. But He does not offer to provide our wants. You may trust Him for necessities but not for luxuries, except by His generous blessings. If you distinguish between want and need, you will live with a contented spirit. You will see God at work providing for you. If you are covetous to keep up with other people's luxuries, you will live with constant turmoil. Conquer covetousness. It is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

IV. HOW TO CONTROL YOUR WEALTH

A. Establish a budget for your family income. A family budget is to be a guide, not a god. But it is almost essential for the control of family finances. Here are some practical suggestions for developing a budget.

1. Write down every dime you spend and the purpose for which you spent it for a period of thirty days. That will show where your money is going.

2. Survey your financial situation: income, debts, cost of interest on your charge accounts, coming expenditures, etc.

3. Establish practical steps for moving to a cash basis. Set a “D” day — debtless day — for the family. Move toward getting out of debt for all but major expenditures (house mortgage).

4. Set priorities in your expenditures, and purchase needs before wants.

5. Establish a balanced budget of 10 percent to the Lord, 10 percent to savings, 25 percent for debt retirement, and 55 percent for living expenses.

B. Restrain yourself in credit buying. Credit buying is paying in the future for something received in the present. There are thirty-day accounts, installment accounts (usually twelve to forty-eight months), revolving charge accounts, credit cards, etc. If not kept under control, credit can destroy a family's finances. It can even destroy the family!

C. Guard the areas where financial problems develop. These are the primary problem areas: failure to build a sensible family budget, irresponsibility in installment buying, extravagant wants with limited income, poor records, impulse buying, and ignoring the sense of divine stewardship over all of life and its resources.

Watch the sales appeal. An item marked at \$300.00 is advertised at \$250.00 with the claim, “Save \$50.00.” If you buy that item you do not save \$50.00; you spend \$250.00.

Who handles the money in American homes? One survey indicated that one half of all farms in the United States are in the names of women. Women spend over 80 percent of the income. Women receive 80 percent of all inheritances and 80 percent of all insurance money. Women control about 40 percent of the nation's income. Many women are in control of the family finances (about 33 percent of the homes). And yet, God holds the man responsible for the family.

“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9, 10).

QUESTIONS

1. What does Luke 12:15 say about wealth and life?
2. What warning about wealth is given in I Timothy 6:9, 10?
3. How is responsibility related to wealth, according to Luke 12:48?
4. How does Deuteronomy 8:17, 18 say a person gets wealth?
5. What is meant by the statement “money is coined personality”?
6. How does Isaiah 56:11 describe a greedy person?

7. How can one kill the spirit of covetousness?
8. How would one go about establishing a family budget?
9. Why is debt such a problem for the family today?
10. How can you be a better steward of your family finances?