

Question: What advice do you think Jesus would give to people of today struggling with financial difficulties? (Part 2)

Although Jesus often discussed attitudes toward money, he was not concerned about teaching financial strategies for the 21st Century. However, I do believe that he would encourage us to follow some simple, common sense yet practical principles found in the biblical proverbs. Last week we discussed three principles that can help us. This week we will consider three more.

We begin by suggesting that one should be cautious about spending money on unnecessary pleasures or other items, especially in times of financial difficulties. The wise man warned, “He who loves pleasure will become poor” (Proverbs 21:17); and, “He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich-- both come to poverty” (Proverbs 22:16). Pride, envy or the competitive spirit can sometimes drive people to spend money on things they do not need (Proverbs 16:18). Sometimes we buy expensive gifts we cannot afford to impress others. But, wise management of God’s blessings should be more important than what others may think of us. Whether rich, poor or in-between, no one can afford to waste time or money on what is unnecessary. Before making any purchase, we should ask whether it is something needed now. Perhaps the purchase could be made when finances are better.

Instead of spending money unnecessarily, we should cultivate the principle of contentment. The apostle Paul explained that he had “learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11-13). The Lord will bless those who find their contentment through patient faith in Jesus. With such contentment, we can join the wise man who prayed: “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8-9).

In addition, we should maintain a generous spirit toward others who may be facing similar difficulties. The wise man of Proverbs observed that “one man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly,

but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:24-25; cf. Prov. 22:9; 28:8 & 22; Luke 16:9). The way we treat others who are facing life’s challenges is often the way they will respond to us when we face similar problems. When the early Christians in Jerusalem faced economic difficulties, we are told that “all the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:44-45). This kind of sharing not only met their immediate needs, but the Lord also blessed them for their generous spirit. The wise man said, “He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done” (Proverbs 19:17).

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