



Stewardship: *What is Wealth?*

Lesson #1

For most of us the term “wealth” conjure up images of an abundance of tangible assets like multiple homes or mansions, yachts, cars, jewelry, designer clothing and other so called adult toys. We also think of a seemingly limitless stream of cash, investments and income and even a surreal lifestyle. Of course, wealth as a means of measurement is largely determined in the eye of the beholder, which makes wealth somewhat less tangible in real terms.

For example; wealth is many times referenced in terms of “net worth” or in terms of our perceptions of various professions like doctors, lawyers, high-ranking corporate officers and business owners, star athletes, entertainment icons etc. A person’s credit worthiness, trustworthiness or position is also a modern day measurement of wealth. In most circles wealth equates to power, which also becomes a measurement device.

In a more historical view wealth has been measured in other ways as well. In Agronomies land holdings and herd sizes was the popular measurement and in more ancient settings family size and health stood as the measurement.

Regardless of the perception or measurement means, looking upon the “so-called” wealthy with envy, disdain or even contempt is not uncommon in today’s society. The reality of the situation is not wealth itself but how the wealth is obtained and /or used that dictates its real value and each of us probably has some idea of how we’d use it if we had it or of how those that do have it should use it.

In the past, opportunities for acquiring wealth were limited. However in these times there has been an amazing shift in the ways wealth can be accumulated. The vast majority of the “so-called” wealthy did not become wealthy by inheritance. Instead, it seems as though the rules of accumulating wealth have changed. Vast new product developments, computers, the internet, stock and commodity markets, new and more efficient marketing methods and even lotteries have led to a dynamic expansion of the “wealthy.” And yet, there continues to exist a large majority of the population that continue to work hard, even struggle to get ahead in the financial world that seems to be passing them by. Why does it seem so hard for most and yet so easy for some to reach that so-called “wealthy”

status? Throughout this study light will be shed on that question but for God's people wealth should mean more than just the accumulation of material possessions.

As appealing as being wealthy in the tangible and worldly sense may seem, if that measure of wealth alone brought happiness, then the wealthiest among us would be the happiest, right? Evidence clearly shows that the exact opposite is often true. **God's plan is that we should have "True Wealth" (See Prov. 10:22),**²² *The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.*

Please take a moment to reflect upon the following.

In your own words, what does this verse mean to you?

What does God promise?

What does the "World" typically deliver?

What differences do you think should there be in a Christian's material life?

(See **Matt. 6:19-20**) and answer these three questions, "¹⁹ *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.* ²⁰ *But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*"

Does this mean Christians should never save?

Should we give away our entire surplus?

How does (**Prov. 3:13-14**) relate? "¹³ *blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding,* ¹⁴ *for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.*"

CHRISTIAN WEALTH

God is concerned with our attitudes about money and possessions. Neither our abundance nor lack of money affects our relationship with Him, but our attitudes do. We do not reflect His character when we are angry or depressed because of our financial situations.

As Christians we must learn to trust God in every circumstance. How we use the material resources He has blessed us with is a testing ground that reveals our true priorities. Wealth is neither moral nor immoral. It is not God's will for His people to live in poverty. There is no inherent virtue in poverty. There are dishonest poor as well as rich and there are honorable rich as well as poor. God opposes the misuse of or the preoccupation with wealth, not wealth itself. In fact (**Rom. 12**) lists the gift of giving as a spiritual gift. Having the ability to develop and produce financially is implied in exercising this gift. "¹ *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* ² *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* ³ *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.* ⁴ *Just*

as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Please read the following scriptures and summarize or discuss in your own words their meaning to you!

(1st Tim. 6:17) ¹⁷ *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*"

(Prov. 11:4) ⁴ *Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*"

(Prov. 21:20) ²⁰ *In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.*"

(Prov. 22:4) ⁴ *Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.*"

(Prov. 3:4-6) ⁴ *Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.*⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*⁶ *in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*"

(Prov. 3:16-17) ¹⁶ *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.*¹⁷ *Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.*"

(Prov. 8:18) ^{“18} *With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity.”*

(Prov. 9:11) ^{“11} *For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.”*

(1st Tim. 6:10) ^{“10} *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

(Matt. 19:23-26) ^{”23} *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved? ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”*

The one wealth item with which we all are blessed with equally during our life here on earth is time. It, (time) is of equal value until it is utilized. How we choose to invest or spend our time is equally as important as are those decisions having to do with material resources, such as money or material goods. **Think about it!**