

Lesson Eight: Stewardship of Our Wealth/Money, Part 2

Objective: To understand the teachings of the New Testament regarding stewardship of our possessions, specifically about money.

Read: 2 Corinthians 8–9

Introduction

We live in a wealthy country, yet most of us think we could use just a little bit more. Statistics compiled during 2023 tell us that the average American household's monthly income after taxes was \$7,322. That same year, the average American household's expenses were \$6,440 per month, with \$2,120 of that being spent for housing. Of course, some spent even more than this, while others spent considerably less. Nowadays debt can be a big problem in many American households. Turn on the radio or the television and you are frequently met with advertisements from companies promising good advice on how to consolidate your debt or to assist in the management of your money.

The Bible has a lot to say about managing our money. More than 2,000 verses address a wide range of financial topics. When it speaks about our financial stewardship, it is practical and accurate. Let's take a few moments to see what the Bible says about being a good steward of the finances God has entrusted to us.

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke about material possessions (money) more than He did any other subject. In fact, many of His statements regarding possessions cause great conflict in many Christians' minds.

Our attitude toward money is greatly affected by our concept of ownership. If we believe that all we possess has been entrusted to us by God and that we are to manage it on His behalf, we will have a much easier time negotiating Jesus' teachings in this area than if we remain committed to a "getting and keeping" vision of ownership. Many people in our culture as well as our pews are made uncomfortable by Jesus' strong and highly judgmental comments about those who have wealth.

Bible Study

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul attempts to encourage the Corinthian church to give financially to help needy Christians. He first points them to the example of the Macedonian church.

- What was the attitude of the Macedonians in giving their money to God (2 Corinthians 8:2-5)?

- Why is giving money an important part of our Christian life (2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:12-13)?

- Ask yourself, "Is my heart attitude one of joy and gratefulness as I give?" How do you express your attitude?

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Paul gives believers some principles to guide them in their giving.

- What guidelines can you glean from this passage to help you in your own giving?

One of Jesus' most well-known encounters was with a young man who was a member of a local ruling council and who was very rich. When he asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus finally told him to go and sell everything that he had and to come follow Him (Matthew 19:21).

- Why did Jesus make such a demand of this man? Is this example still valid for Jesus' disciples today?

Financial freedom involves not only freedom from excessive worry about financial things, but also freedom from the constant pursuit of more. The Bible says this spirit of contentment is of great value.

- What do the following verses teach us about the secret and source of a Christian's contentment: Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5-6?

Personal Reflection

Paul encourages generous giving from the Christians in Corinth by holding before them the example of the Christians in Macedonia. The Macedonian Christians were not wealthy, yet they gave generously (2 Corinthians 8:2). Their giving was not only generous but sacrificial because they wanted to contribute as much as possible to support the very poor Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:3). Paul also encourages the Christians at Corinth to give generously by referring to the supreme example of generosity and sacrifice—the giving of God in the person of Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9).

How do we measure generosity?

In what ways do we make sacrifices in the course of our daily lives? Why are we willing to make these sacrifices?

Should our giving to God to support the worship, mission and service of the Church go beyond generosity to sacrifice?

In what ways does our level of giving to God relate to our level of trust in God?