

Prosperity Has Its Place

Our character is revealed in the way we handle the finances God entrusts to us.

I think the church has often failed to communicate a balanced view of prosperity. On the one hand there are the hyperspiritual who say money is altogether evil. Get it away from you. Give it away. Do not have anything to do with it. It is nasty, dirty and filthy, and it has a spirit in it that will get you.

Then when a need arises to pay for something in the church, they will ask folks to give money. You see, having told them how bad it is, they now ask God to give the congregation enough of it to support the church.

On the other hand, others say that God is a God of riches. God wants to bless you, and if you are right with God, you are going to be rich. Therefore, if you are not rich, it must be because you are not right with God.

Stranded in between these two extremes is the great body of people who are living day-to-day on the money that they can earn while trying to provide for their families and improve their lives. What can we say to them?

MONEY IS NOT EVIL There is nothing inherently evil about needing or having the finances to get by in this life. John Wesley had a magnificent equation for this. He said to earn all you can. Earn it righteously. Earn it in a way that brings no shame to people and no shame to God. Earn all you can.

Second, save all you can. Now, saving all you can does not

mean hoarding it. It means setting limits on your lifestyle so that more is made available to the kingdom of God and doesn't go up in the smoke of mere consumerism. Saving all you can is crucial to frugality.

Earn all you can. Save all you can. Then Wesley adds the missing element: Give all you can. Frugality saves to give. Greed gives to get. Frugality plots and plans, schemes and denies self, and sacrifices in order to give more next year than this year.

I want to suggest that you have a family meeting. Ask yourselves, "What can we do to give more than we gave last year? Is there any way we can live a more modest life, something we can do without, some excess we can lay aside to make a greater investment in the kingdom of God than we have ever made?"

I believe that is pleasing to God. It will focus your family's attention on the things of the kingdom and draw their eyes away from the power of mammon.

FREE TO BE FRUGAL It may not be immorality that finally erodes our national character. It may be the price of designer tennis shoes. Frugality is the strength of character that will set us free from the terrible grip of mammon.

The prosperity of God is a great blessing—a dangerous one, but a great one. If properly used, prosperity can do much good. Hoarded or squandered, it corrupts character and destroys families. The right way is to work hard, serve folks joyfully, save frugally and give generously.

Read a sample chapter from Character Matters, from which this article was adapted. Log on at