Faith and Finances: Are You Committed to Contentment?

The apostle Paul said he had learned to live humbly and to live in prosperity: “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil. 4:12, NKJV). He was committed to being content in various circumstances of life and ministry as he followed our Lord.

The foundational principle to all of life is to make God the source of supply for all our needs. Jesus taught in Luke 9:23 (LSB), “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Peter declared that our Lord provides what we need for walking the way of the cross with Him: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3; NIV).

Surrendering Control of Our Finances

We must accept that God’s ways are not always ours. His wisdom and plans for our lives may not always include financial increases. They may include some financial corrections for our learning and good. Some of life’s negative circumstances will drive us to our knees, where we can find personal peace in the process of obediently following our Lord.

Paul taught we should “not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

Contentment is aided by daily acknowledging God’s ownership of all things. He is the owner; we are to be His stewards and will be accountable for what we have done with our master's resources. This is illustrated in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. There, "after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them" (v. 19). The master (God) gave out financial resources to each servant "according to his ability" (v. 15c). To those who had used the resources wisely, the master declared, "Well done, good and faithful servant! … Come and share your master's happiness" (v. 21). The fearful and sluggardly servant did not steward the resources well and was subsequently condemned.

Generous Giving Provides for Generous Living

Surrendering back to God the "first fruits" or a "tithe" (10%) of our income is an age-long principle (since Abraham, Gen. 14:18-20) and should be the minimum evidence or testimony of God's ultimate ownership. He alone can make our retained 90% go further than we could with the 100% and still give us seed for sowing into the needs of others. The prophet Malachi was quite clear about this:

> *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, "How have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, your whole nation, for you are robbing Me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:8-10, MEV).*

Pastor Jack Hayford wrote: "Tithes are not a gift to God. He 'claims' them as His own (Lev. 27:30). While it is our privilege to comply with tithing and ours to present in anticipation of experiencing the joyous benefits that come from such alignment to His kingly throne, the truth is that our tithes are actually God’s to begin with.”

Treasures in Heaven

Jesus spoke about eternal rewards as “treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20b). The prudent disciple on earth will pursue principles of biblical stewardship as a means of following a treasure map to rewards in the life to come. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21).

Anglican evangelist and founder of the Methodist revival movement John Wesley is credited with these words of wisdom for biblical stewards as we await our Lord’s return: “Earn all you can; Save all you can; and Give all you can.”

Earning money through diligent, honest work that benefits others is a way we can participate with God in His redemptive work in our world. Managing that money may focus on short and long-term goals and commitments and involve prudent saving and generous giving (2 Cor. 9:1-15). Paul said he had to keep himself disciplined, lest having preached to others about stewardship and rewards, he would himself be rejected for the prize (1 Cor. 9:27).

Among the final verses of the Bible, Jesus says, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12). May I underscore that? Jesus will give out rewards in heaven “according to what [we] have done” on earth.

Salvation is a free gift from God and is received by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). But the treasures in heaven are related to our good works of faith, godly service and a consistent testimony to Jesus Christ before others.

Our commitment to contentment now will impact the kind and quantity of rewards we will receive in the future. “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Amen!{eoa}

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

Gary Curtis *served for 27 years as part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, California. Since retirement in 2016, he has continued to blog at . Gary and his wife live in Southern California and have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*