

## Should all of us be rich?

We suggested in last month's Money Matters column that a voluntary rejection of wealth does not necessarily indicate a balanced Christian life, but neither does a display of material success.

### Me first!

Our society has been dominated by a philosophy that says, "Seek worldly pleasures, spend with reckless abandon, and borrow to get what you can't afford." This pursuit of worldly pleasures is not a new thing. Solomon described it very well in the book of Ecclesiastes. *"I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless."* (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Selfishness, ego, and pride are about as opposite from biblical concepts as light from darkness. Therefore, it's important to discern the difference between the pride of wealth and the wealth itself. Christ never condemned the wealth—it belongs to God. But he did condemn the wealthy-minded of this world. God has made many people wealthy (spiritually and materially), but wealth is never a guaranteed sign of His blessing (1 Corinthians 4:9).

### A separated life

One of the evidences of Christianity is that we desire to keep and obey God's statutes and commandments (John 14:15). Nowhere does God say that to follow Him we are to live like a king. In fact, He says that the tug of this world and its pleasures will be the greatest threat to our walk with Him.

*"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money"* (Luke 16:13).

### A balanced life

God places Christians at both ends of the material spectrum and everywhere in between. It is His right to determine how we are to be used. *"But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' "* (Romans 9:20).

The danger of affluence has been a real threat in every generation of Christians, but today it has become an epidemic. Many people consider themselves worse off financially than their parents but the reality is that as a nation our wealth has grown substantially over the last generation. We have bigger houses, a much higher rate of car ownership and our houses are filled with many appliances that few owned 30 years ago or did not exist then. But our debt has exploded, creating financial stress for many who are struggling to make ends meet to pay for all the things they now own.

Most Christians are familiar with the parable of the rich farmer in Luke 12:16-20, but it's also necessary to remember the preceding passage. *"Then He said to them, 'Watch out!. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions' "* (Luke 12:15).

Without a surplus, little could be done in God's work. So, obviously, some Christians must have an abundance. God allows us to use a part of that abundance for ourselves and our families. That amount will vary according to His unique plan for each of us. But when our attitudes become more controlled by our possessions than by God's Word, we're no longer useful to God.

*“Jesus told his disciples, ‘There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, for you cannot be my manager any longer’ ’ ” (Luke 16:1-2).*

This warning is one that all Christians should consider well. It's a shame to let Satan deceive us into trading an eternity of riches for a few shiny trinkets.

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