

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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The Personal Piggy Bank

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Can investors be outraged? You bet they can. No investor likes it when his or her stock declines in value, but most people recognize that this will happen from time to time. However, what truly outrages investors is when executives steal money or assets from a company and, in essence, steal money from the owners of the company.

On Wednesday, July 24, 2002, the founder of Adelphia Communications (John Rigas) was publicly carted off to jail along with his two sons and two other company executives. The lawsuit claims that the Rigases "used their domination and control of Adelphia and their isolation from the scrutiny of the outside world to engage in one of the largest schemes of self-dealing and financial wrongdoing in American corporate history."

In essence, these individuals used Adelphia as a personal piggy bank. When you own a company's stock, you are an owner of that company. When management steals money from the company, they are really stealing money from the owners of the company. Per USA Today (7/25/02) Here is a partial how the Rigases stole money from Adelphia and its owners. They

- Used a company jet for an African safari vacation in 2000.
- Used company planes to bring guests to a wedding.
- Lived rent-free in company-owned apartments.
- Spent \$13 million of company money to build a golf course on personal property.
- Used more than \$252 million of Adelphia money to pay for personal stock margin calls.

The owners (stockholders) are outraged. A manager (steward) cannot use company assets for personal pleasure. Justice will include jail time, repayment of

debt and inability to ever serve on a publicly traded company again.

Shift gears in your thinking. Did you know that God is an owner? Listen to Psalm 24:1. "The earth is the LORD's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it" (NASB). God is the owner of everything. We sometimes think that we own things. God says that we are wrong. He really owns what we have, and we just manage it for Him.

Since God is an owner, do you think that He ever gets outraged if we use His resources in a way that He has not authorized? Adelphia owners did. Would God? I have a feeling that He does. What type of things does God want us to spend His money on?

- Contented living (1 Tim 6:8)
- Giving (2 Cor. 8, 9)
- Saving (Prov 13:11)

Mismanagement has consequences. Listen to the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous riches, who will entrust the true riches to you?" (Luke 16:11, NASB) Money is not the best that this life has to offer. God is testing you with money. If you pass the test, you are ready for even greater riches than money.

Continue to be outraged at corporate fraud. But use those examples as a means to examining your own stewardship. Does your lifestyle represent God's ownership and your stewardship?

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org