

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Surprise! Finances is a Spiritual Topic

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Have you ever been truly shocked? This happens when something is said or done that is extremely unexpected. Reality TV is very popular right now. Let's examine an event in the life of Christ where He truly shocked His listeners while traveling to Jerusalem.

"And behold, one came to Him and said, 'Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?' And He said to him, 'Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Matt 19:16-17, NASB).

Jesus knew this man was very rich (19:22), although the man did not introduce himself that way. Jesus was about to use a series of responses to turn this man's thinking away from good works and help him confront the inner reality of his heart.

Jesus went on to list very virtuous acts - avoid murder, adultery, stealing, lying; honor your parents, and love your neighbor as yourself (19:18-19). The ruler and the crowd were not shocked to hear that these acts are righteous.

After the man stated he had followed these, Jesus pushed the point. "'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property" (19:21-22, NASB).

Jesus' teaching shocked many people. I'm not sure if He meant to or if His hearers were simply not used to looking at life like God does. Perhaps both. One thing is clear - the truths that Jesus taught turned some people's worldviews upside down.

Is our attitude toward wealth to be placed on par with murder or adultery? Jesus dealt with each person where he or she was. With a greedy man, He discussed finances in order to challenge a heart attitude. Jesus was not offering eternal life for a price. He was showing that greed can be a stumbling block to spiritual transformation.

Surprise! Finances is a spiritual topic. The young, rich ruler was shocked, and from their response, Jesus' disciples were too (19:25). In a Gospel that offers grace, we are shocked to learn that the love of riches can actually prevent eternal life.

Both the ruler and the disciples heard the same message about having a right relationship to wealth. The young ruler disliked the message and stopped following Christ. The disciples decided to stay even though it significantly affected their everyday lives (19:27).

Following Christ affects our finances. Knowing that, will you stay with Christ or leave?

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