

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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How to Teach about Money without Feeling Guilty

Mark Robbins, CPA

I recently received a call from a key layperson of a large church on the East coast. His church is operating a capital campaign, and he heads the finance committee. Though busy, the church leadership is still taking the time to minister to people in two important ways: cast a vision for what additional resources could accomplish and celebrate as commitments come in.

Lou called me to get my input on some important financial issues. As we concluded, he asked me a question I have heard many times before, "How do you answer those in the congregation who don't think the church should talk about money?"

Different Opinions

There are many well-meaning people who don't think that finances should be discussed from the pulpit because it is intrusive and self-serving. Others think that discussing finances is fine as long as you don't do it too often. Still others would contend that teaching on financial issues is appropriate when you are teaching through books of the Bible, and finances are mentioned in the passage at hand.

Jesus gave His perspective on the role of money. "*He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous riches, who will entrust the true riches to you?*" (Luke 16:10-11, NASB).

From Jesus' point of view, riches are not the best that this life has to offer. They are simply a test for the true riches – spiritual fruit and influence. The number of zeros is irrelevant. Jesus taught that if you can handle financial riches, you can handle spiritual riches and influence.

The Bible speaks extensively on the topic of finances. There are over 2,000 verses in the Bible relating to stewardship, while only 500 on our need for faith and 500 on our need for prayer. ⁱ A pastor would have to leapfrog a lot of verses to avoid the topic of finances.

Success

If financial management is important to God, then it needs to be important to us. Pastors do us a huge favor when they help us understand and apply biblical stewardship. What does faithful financial management look like?

- Developing habits (balancing the checkbook)
- Decreasing debt (especially credit card debt)
- Increasing savings (contingency fund)
- Increasing giving (investing in eternity)
- Establishing goals (house projects, retirement)

Can a pastor teach on money without feeling guilty? Yes! God knows two things that we forget:

- It is easy for us to have a wrong relationship with our money. (Matt. 6:19-24).
- Our money is really God's money (Ps 24:1).

In my experience, people make poor financial decisions due to greed and a lack of information. When a pastor teaches on biblical stewardship, he is offering God's help to our everyday problems. God does not simply tell us to be good stewards. He tells us how. God wants us to succeed in our stewardship.

What You Can Do

- If you are a layperson, do something radical. Tell your pastor that you want him to teach about biblical stewardship. Tell him to sit down first. He may faint.
- If you are a pastor, communicate with your leadership team your desire to regularly teach about stewardship. This may include an annual series on stewardship, having a special speaker each year, or launching a stewardship education ministry in your church. ⁱⁱ Keep it biblical and practical.

Financial magazines consistently have some of the highest subscription rates. People have financial questions. The Bible gives answers without even blushing. A pastor can too. ⁱⁱⁱ

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: foundation.bbc.edu e-mail: foundation@bbc.edu

ⁱ MacArthur, John. Quoted in *Master Your Money* video series workbook. Walk Thru The Bible Ministries, 1990, 10.

ⁱⁱ www.crown.org; www.goodsenseministry.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Good books that will educate you on stewardship:

The Treasure Principle, by Randy Alcorn (Multnomah)

Money, Possessions and Eternity, by Randy Alcorn (Tyndale)

God and Your Stuff, by Wesley Willmer (NavPress)