

## **“What Have You Taught Your Children About Money?”**

### **I Timothy 6:17-19**

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Do you talk to your children about money? Perhaps I need to rephrase the question. Every parent talks to children about money. What are the three most important things you want your children to know about money?

First of all, let me say that I talk to my children a lot about money. I think I am in good company, though, and have a biblical mandate to do so. Jesus talked to his disciples about money and possessions more than all other subjects combined. There had to be a good reason and there was. He knew that the love of money would be the greatest competitor to his Lordship in their lives. “You cannot serve two masters,” he said. The rival he was referring to was money.

Allow me to be autobiographical this morning. Let me share with you three things I am still teaching my adult children about money.

At the top of the list is this. **Nothing you buy will satisfy your deepest needs.** Nothing. You can buy things to satisfy your needs for food, clothing, shelter, transportation and entertainment. These will not, however, come close to satisfying your deepest needs for meaning, purpose, guidance, direction, peace, security, respect, self-esteem, courage, confidence, strength, faith, hope, love, forgiveness and eternal life. These needs are met through healthy relationships with God and those around you. “Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself,” as Jesus said and you will discover this.

The biggest lie we have ever accepted is that there is something in this world that can meet our deepest needs. If we believe this, we are imposing expectations upon money and possessions they were never meant to fulfill and setting ourselves up for major disappointments.

This is why Paul instructed Timothy to, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” I Timothy 6:17.

What good advice. Only a fool would replace God with money.

**Secondly, financial problems will make you miserable.** Live within your means. Curb your appetite. Discipline your desires. Draft a budget and stick to it.

I grieve when I think about the debt that many Americans are living under, especially young adults. Forty-three percent of American families spends more money each year than they take in. American consumers owe almost two trillion dollars, a figure that does not include home mortgages.

The average household has eight credit cards and is carrying over \$8,000 in credit card debt. If you pay only the minimum amount required each month, as many do, it will take thirty years to pay off this debt, assuming you add no more to it. You will pay \$25,000 to your lender.

You want to know why you are mailed credit card applications almost daily. Americans are carrying 683 billion dollars in revolving credit card debt. This is the outstanding unpaid balance on which people pay interest, which averages 14.7%.

Even the average college student graduates owing over three thousand dollars on credit cards and this does not include student loans. No wonder the age group that is declaring bankruptcy the fastest in our country is 25 to 34. They have been dubbed by many as “Generation Broke.”

It appears to me that we have many luxury-loving families choking and dying under a crushing load of possessions and pleasures. How tragic. Our culture really is blessing itself to death.

“Money is a wild bull,” my good friend tells me from time to time. He is right. It is dangerous and needs to be handled with care. The failure to do so can rupture relationships, destroy marriages, erode happiness and undermine health quicker than anything I know.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul never said that wealth was evil but a great responsibility. Managing it wisely would require rigorous discipline. It still does.

**Thirdly, what you give away will bring you more happiness and pleasure than what you keep.** “It is more blessed to give than receive,” Jesus said. I wish more people believed him.

I have no doubt that Paul did. Listen to what he instructed Timothy to teach. “Command the rich to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life” I Timothy 6:18-19.

I believe what Jesus and Paul taught about sharing, especially about it leading to “the life that is truly life.” This is why I have encouraged my children, when drafting their budgets, to begin with what they intend to give away. Don’t begin with monthly bills or fixed costs such as utility bills, house payments or even retirement accounts. Begin with what you feel, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, you should share.

Why would I challenge them to do this? There are two reasons. “It is more blessed to give than receive.” Fulfilling and lasting joy is directly related to generosity. The more you give the more blessings you receive. It’s that simple. Each person determines his or her level of happiness in this world and unselfishness is the determining factor.

Secondly, deciding what you want to give away at the beginning of the budget process will combat selfishness. I know human nature. Money not designated for charity will be spent on desires and pleasures. Sometimes it is hard enough to give money designated to charitable causes to those projects. It is even tougher to do so when not designated.

A person that has not determined how much he or she will give away will more than likely succumb to the temptation to buy more things every time he or she walks into a mall or shopping center. This will result in merely giving away the leftovers after selfish appetites have been fed and the leftovers will grow smaller each year.

My daughter, Amy, is now twenty-seven years old living in New York City. When she was seven, she received some money along with gifts for her birthday. This led to a talk with Amy about stewardship. Let me share with you what I wrote about that experience twenty years ago.

*“I want to buy a pair of skates, a cabbage patch doll, a new bicycle and lots of candy. Do I have enough money?”*

*This quote was from my seven-year-old daughter, Amy Blair. She recently had a birthday and received about twenty dollars from relatives and friends. Her mother and I were talking to her about what she was going to do with her new treasure.*

*We told her that she did not have sufficient money to fulfill all her fantasies. Then we shared with her our philosophy of money management.*

*“If the money were mine,” said her mother, “I would give two dollars to the church, put one half in a savings account and spend the other half on something I had been wanting for a long time.”*

*Amy looked disappointed. “Give two dollars to the church? Why?” Then came an unexpected question. “Will I ever get it back?”*

*Jackie started preaching. Her sermon focused upon the blessings one receives from tithing. She told Amy of the happiness that comes from honoring Jesus, the joy that comes from helping to feed hungry children and the delight that comes from helping to support missionaries. Jackie told Amy that she would not get back her two dollars, but she would get more than two dollars could buy.*

*Amy was not convinced. She did not respond when the invitation was given by her mother to put two dollars in her offering envelope. She did put one in, however.*

*I am encouraged. I believe with more explanation and personal testimonies from us, sound instruction from her church and the persuasive powers of the Holy Spirit, Amy will become a tither.*

*By the way, Jackie and I are also talking to Joshua about tithing. He is five. He wants a car. Pray for us!*

I hope you talk to your children about money, even if they are adults as mine are now. Share with them what you have learned that has helped you. I believe their happiness is at stake along with everyone around them.