



Managing Your Money According to Biblical Principles

By Michael James

“If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life.”

—Billy Graham, *“Our Daily Bread,”* Spring 2008

This is the first in a series of articles aimed at helping us manage our money according to biblical principles so that we may enjoy financial freedom.

To start with, some preliminary reflections on money:

- Many people worry about their finances, without knowing whether their concern is justified or not
- For couples, money is a major source of problems and a primary source of divorce
- For single people, money is also not easy to handle
- Debt is a major concern for many people

The way we regard our money is a good thermometer of our relationship with God. Jesus said money is the first spiritual indicator of our lives. In Luke 16:10 we read “He who is faithful in a little is also faithful in much.” Jesus also indicated that money is the first danger to our hearts. In Matthew 6:21 we read “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Managing personal possessions is the most talked-about subject in the Bible, second to redemption. The Bible tells us we do not own our possessions; we are only stewards.

Money, like time, has limits. If we spend inconsiderately, one day we will realize there is none left or, worse, we owe huge sums to banks or to others. Therefore, we need to set aside regular times for personal money management.

How do you decide personal goals or ambitions? How do you decide on household expenses? To do this, start with a plan for the year ahead by constructing an **annual budget**. Your budget includes regular and irregular (quarterly or annual) expenses; it anticipates key events throughout the year such as holidays and birthdays, and includes investments for the future (savings).

In a normal working life, most of us will earn approximately one million dollars! It is worth investing the time to properly manage such a sum. A well-constructed budget will allow you to resist sales pressures, tempting advertising, and even your own desires.

Married couples should discuss money together. This may be easier said than done because each partner brings into the marriage pre-existing habits and ideas. It is important to share your thoughts peaceably as you communicate different points of view. It is imperative that the husband and wife agree on a budget and decide who will keep the accounts. It seems to me that this is part of what the Bible means when it says that “the two shall become one.”

If you live alone, I encourage you to share your concerns and questions about

money with a trustworthy friend to avoid the many pitfalls that each of us face.

We need to see money management from God’s point of view. Consequently, we may need to unlearn bad habits and bad attitudes. If your money management situation is currently uncomfortable, you might need to start over again. Perhaps you will also need to modify some of your practices to improve the way you manage money and, at the same time, improve the quality of your life.

Debts are an example of these bad habits. In our consumer society, overspending (credit purchases) is often the cause of debt. We need to be very determined not to give in to credit card offers, and unneeded items that are advertised so persistently. They are very dangerous for our finances and can quickly become an endless source of worry. If you are in debt, I highly recommend you stop taking on further debt and begin to see how you can reimburse existing debts.

Finally, we are given the enormous privilege by our Lord to participate in His work. Jesus said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20 v 35). Below are a few suggestions on how to give:

- Never give before praying about it
- Avoid giving impulsively
- See how the money you give is used
- Give by faith and according to your faith
- Give cheerfully

Do you desire to put God first in your life as you manage your finances? If so, I encourage you to read God’s Word so that you may gain wisdom.

In the next several issues of ROC you will read more about biblical principles and money management. In the meantime I suggest you list any debts and also keep a log of how you spend your money each day.

Michael S. James is Director of the Business and Organizational Leadership Program at Columbia International University (CIU). Prior to joining CIU, Michael spent nearly 30 years serving bi-vocationally in France. He is married to Elizabeth. They have four children and four grandchildren.

This adapted article by Michael James was first published in Alliance, the magazine of AEEI (Association of Interdependent Evangelical Churches), France, June 2006.

RECYCLE your ROC—
pass it on