

Financial Success in a Depressed Economy Giving for all the Right Reasons

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

—[Matthew 6:24](#)

Money is a powerful tool in the right hands. At the same time money is so alluring that people murder for it, couples fight over it, some will steal for it and nations have gone to war over it.

Chuck Swindoll’s story of the man who sent the IRS a check for back taxes because with a note that he could not sleep with the guilt. At the bottom was a P.S.: “If I still can’t sleep I will send the rest!”

Jesus and Money – What financial guidance did Jesus give us?

Jesus recognized the importance of money and the proper use of it, and He spoke of that principle many times.

When the **rich young ruler** came to Jesus asking what he could do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all he had, and the young man went away sorrowing ([Luke 18:18-23](#)).

Jesus used this incident to teach "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Why it is impossible?

Serving God and Money are not compatible.

Money is the closest idol commanding our worship and totally loyalty. Only Jesus commands our worship and total loyalty.

Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." ([Luke 18:24-27](#), NIV).

How is it possible? Jesus offers those who trust him a new worldview of money and how to use it for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Two truths Jesus wants us to understand and live by in this new worldview of God and money.

First: Money is a tool not a goal.

Second: Too many use God in an attempt to get more money instead of using money to serve God.

What about taxes and the government in regard to money?

The position of Jesus and money in regards to taxes and giving to God is also made clear through Jesus' teaching.

When the Pharisees tried to tempt Jesus to speak out against Rome, Jesus gave them a principle that holds true today when he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" ([Matthew 22:21](#), NIV).

In other words, be subject to the powers over you ([Romans 13:1-7](#)) and pay taxes or tribute, as it is required. At another time, God supplied the money for Jesus' tribute or tax through the mouth of a fish ([Matthew 17:24-27](#)).

Jesus also gave us a parable about the correct stewardship of money in [Matthew 25:14-30](#).

Two of the servants who received their master's talents were wise stewards, gaining more from what they had been given, and were thus rewarded.

The one foolish servant who misused the master's talents, lost that talent and his reward.

The principle is that all that we have belongs to the LORD and how we use it, as wise and good stewards will either commend or condemn us before Jesus.

These "talents" are inclusive of all of the details of our lives: time, money, relationships, and gifts.

All we have is by the grace of God and being a wise servant who does all to the glory of God is our "reasonable service" ([Romans 12:1](#), KJV).

Jesus' teaching on the details of life, which includes money, was that God the Father would provide for all of the believer's needs.

Here **is Jesus imperative:**

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." ([Matthew 6:33](#), NIV).

This truth is certainly illustrated by the widow's two mites ([Mark 12:42](#)).

She gave to the Lord all that she had. Equivalent of **two pennies**.

There were some rich who cast into the temple treasury from their abundance just for the show of it.

The lesson that Jesus gave is that this widow gave more than all of the others.

Her attitude is that she gave her all to the Lord and trusted Him to supply her need.

Listen to Jesus' word:

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

—Matthew 6:24

Jesus tells us no one can have it both ways. No one can serve both God and Money.

Sounds extreme and it is meant to sound that way because the temptation of money and the false security it brings is the enemy of faith.

Most don't believe these words and most don't practice this truth even if they claim Jesus as Lord.

The story is told of a farmer who one day reported to his wife and family that their best cow had given birth to twin calves, one red and one white.

And he said, "You know, we must dedicate one of them to the Lord.

We will bring them up together, and when the time comes we will sell one and keep the money for ourselves, and we will sell the other and give the money to the Lord's work."

His wife asked him which one he was going to dedicate to the Lord. "Don't worry about it now," he replied. "We will decide when the time comes."

A few months later the man entered the house looking miserable and unhappy.

When his wife asked him what was wrong, he answered, "I have bad news. The Lord's calf is dead."

"How can that be?" she said, "when you had not decided what was the Lord's calf?"

"Oh no," he said, "I decided long ago the Lord's calf is the white one. It is the white one that has died. So the Lord's calf is dead."

It is always the Lord's calf that dies, isn't it?!

When money becomes tight, the first area we cut back on is the Lord's work.

It is always the first thing to go.

Perhaps I should not say "always", for that would be unfair; but with so many it is the first thing to go, and the things we really like are the last to go.

As Jesus puts it, "You cannot serve both God and Money."

It is a sign that we theologians have run out of ways to ponder the existence and being of God when we start naming our theologies after animals but here goes:

I would like to present a Squirrel theology.

First, consider that squirrels are so good at what they do they have generated a whole anti-squirrel industry — the manufacture of "squirrel-proof" bird feeders.

If you have ever attempted to feed just birds and not squirrels from your backyard feeder, you know that no one has yet succeeded in creating a truly "squirrel-proof" feeder.

Products designed to Baffle don't baffle them for long.

Weighted feeding slots don't get them discouraged.

Now Squirrels aren't rocket scientists.

But they use all their squirrely attributes to get to the prize.

They dig in with their toes.

They balance on precarious perches.

They use their tails like anchors.

They use their front paws like a surgeon's skilled hands.

The squirrel's tactics aren't necessarily perfect, but they are always persistent.

All squirrels antics are centered on a single-minded purpose. **NUTS!**

And because of that single-minded purpose, they find joy in every moment as though it is the only one that matters.

By the way, I think the 4-letter words NUTS is an acronym for **Never Underestimate The Squirrel.**

Money is the number one thief of our only devotion to JESUS.

Why? Money is like NUTS!

We live for it, we dream about it, we desire it, we put all of our efforts into getting more of it.

Jesus summarized this problem very well.

Matt. 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I have learned that I am my own worst enemy.

I am quite capable of fooling myself.

I can justify my actions and behavior even when I know they are wrong.

What I place as of highest value I will expense enormous amounts of energy, time and resources on.

This is why Jesus reminds us that where you treasure there will be your heart.

I'd like to ask you twelve treasure identifying questions about money. As I read each one I want you to pause, think and answer in your heart as honestly as you can.

Ready:

Twelve Questions to Check Our Motivation

- 1. When I give money or time am I sometimes attempt to make a bargain with Jesus.**
- 2. When I give I secretly hope for a financial return on my giving or am I giving without expectation of return?**
- 3. When I give am I letting go or do I still want to control the outcome?**
- 4. When I give so I do so out of fear or obligation?**
- 5. Do I resent giving or is there joy in my heart?**
- 6. Do I compare what I give with what others give?**

7. Do I give to Jesus out of thankfulness alone?
8. Do I give to Jesus' mission first or do I give after I pay all my bills?
9. Do I give because I feel guilty?
10. Do I plan to give regularly or it is haphazard?
11. I give because my pastor makes me feel guilty?
12. I have already made a plan to give of my estate to Jesus when my life in this world is over.

As your pastor I have no concern about how much you give or if you tithe.

I am concerned about your heart and motivation.

I want to share with you a philosophy that I believe is true and biblical.

If we give for the **right motivation, out of thankfulness to Jesus alone, giving without control, giving without hidden motivation, giving because of what Jesus has done for us:**

Then Jesus will miraculously multiply your gift and miraculously move you to give beyond your ability.

You will become a conduit for Jesus' generosity and miracles.

Your giving will be used to change hundreds and hundreds of lives.

You will be given more to use because you use it in the right way.

On the other hand, if we give with the wrong motivation, look at giving as our dues, give with strings attached.

Jesus will not bless that giving, there will be no multiplication effect, and you will always struggle to give because you are convinced you don't have enough.

If you find that your motivation is for any other reason than
THANKFULNESS TO JESUS.

THEN STOP. Put your offering away.

Instead offer your heart and life to Jesus this very moment and ask him to give you a heart of thankfulness.

Yellow Card

 From this moment on I commit myself to pursuing Jesus and him alone.

 I will seek to view money as a tool on loan from Jesus.

 I will not give another dime in order to get back from Jesus. I will give out of thankfulness for what he has already done for me.