

Money

The publishing ministry demands that we handle money on a daily basis, and handle it wisely. God expects good stewardship from us, both with our personal funds and with our business funds. Money is one of the resources lent by Him that He expects us to manage for His glory. God praised the diligence of the steward who took his responsibilities seriously and turned a good profit for his Lord (Matthew 25:14-30).

But in many business settings, money has gone from useful resource to ultimate, unquestioned good. Money is no longer a servant. It is Lord. Profit is king. The philosophy is that in business, only money deserves our passion and wholehearted commitment.

God declares that view shallow, short-sighted, and deceived. He calls it idolatry.

Stewardship

Financial profit is not the ultimate good of good stewardship. Remember what a steward was in New Testament times. With no quick communication and travel being slow and dangerous, many businesses had absentee owners. Daily operations were managed completely by stewards. The steward had the responsibility of making decisions on behalf of the owner. He was to best use the owner's resources for the owner's good.

Therefore as Christian stewards, it's vital that we understand what is important to our Owner and keep that uppermost in our minds. The longer I live, the more I realize that quantities and amounts mean little to Him. Remember that this Being created all the physical universe with a word, out of nothing. He simply expressed His will, and the universe appeared. In Psalm 50 He says:

*"I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know every bird in the mountains,
and the creatures of the field are mine.
If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine and all that is in it. (vv.9-12, NIV)*

Such a Being has no need for more money, more profits, or more copyrights. He can create such things with a word. If He needed them, He wouldn't need to tell us.

So what is important to this God? As His stewards, managing His resources for His benefit, we need to know.

God is love (1 John 4:8). *Love* is precious to Him. Our *trust* is precious to Him. *People* are precious to Him. Look at the way He spent His only Son.

If we want to please our Owner, we must treat people well. That means everyone: customers, writers, vendors, employees, and even our competitors. God is love. If we love Him, we will love those He loves. They are all unspeakably dear to Him. He asks us to love them all as much as we love ourselves.

This “golden rule” isn’t some secondary, optional commandment. It is the prime directive. There is no business exemption. He doesn’t say, “Treat people the way you want to be treated, as long as it doesn’t interfere with your bottom line.” Jesus said that loving God and loving other people are the two greatest, most important commandments in all the world. Everything...everything...hangs on these two commands. (Read Matthew 22:34-40.)

Further, if we want to please our Owner, we must trust Him. Trust Him with every need and every concern, both in our personal lives and in our businesses. Words of trust aren’t good enough. He wants us to prove our trust by the way we live. More on this below.

In summary, if we want to be good stewards and please the God who trusted us with His resources, we must use them to love people. We have to treat people right. And the way we live and do business should show God that we trust Him.

But the Bible gives us, His publishing stewards, yet more direction on handling money.

Two Masters

Jesus Christ had already spent an eternity with His Father before becoming a human being. Thus He is the only person who has seen and experienced all of life—this earthly life as well as eternal life in heaven. He alone has the whole picture. He has a complete perspective on what is important in life. When He talks, we should stop and listen. He said:

“No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.” (Matthew 6:24, NIV)

As Christian publishers, sometimes we think that as long as the general intent of our company is Christian, it's OK to let money guide our publishing decisions. In fact, it's only wise stewardship. We believe we can follow both God and money.

Jesus declares that wrong. He says it is impossible. We cannot be guided both by God and by money. There can be only one boss, not two. Inevitably we will please one and disappoint the other.

We have to ask ourselves: beyond our lofty missions statements, when we're really honest, what guides our daily decisions, God or money? Love or profit? What usually determines that final decision? It's a sensitive question.

A Necessity of Life

It's a sensitive question because in business, money is a necessity of life. It's like water and food. If we don't have it, we die. The business stops. The ministry stops. Everything stops. We're gone.

Hear what Jesus tells His followers about such necessities of life:

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink...your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things [that is, all the necessities of life] will be given to you as well.”
(Matthew 6:25, 32-33, NIV, bracketed portion added from context)

Jesus tells us that if we trust our loving heavenly Father, we don't need to be anxious about the necessities of life. Our Father has freed us from such anxieties so that we can focus on pleasing and serving Him. When we *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness*, all our needs will be supplied as well. This promise is for all God's servants, whether individuals or companies. If we keep first things first, everything else will fall in line.

When We Focus on Money

Let's look first at an individual. What happens when an individual focuses on money? Let's be honest--we've all been there. What happens? The process is gradual. We grow

anxious and self-centered. Joy and generosity go out the window. All our thoughts and energies are fixed on gaining more money. We are indifferent to the rest of the world. Only money makes sense to us. We become short-sighted, missing the bigger picture. We are blind to the deeper, richer possibilities of life. Money is the engine. The more we make, the more we want to make.

This same thing happens to companies and ministries that focus on money. We grow small-minded and self-centered. When all we see is our own profit, our vision is inevitably small. Our horizons are near and narrow. When we're focused on the bottom line, we're not focused on our task. We miss the ministry opportunities, and those ministry opportunities are our lifeblood.

That's why Jesus warns us about money. He says that even when the Word of God is alive and growing within us, *"the deceitfulness of wealth"* can *"choke it, making it unfruitful"* (Matthew 13:22, NIV).

The Apostle Paul tells his younger ministry associate, Timothy, that *"godliness with contentment is great gain."* He goes on to warn that *"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...Man of God, flee from all this"* (1 Timothy 6:6, 9-11, NIV).

Proverbs, which is full of practical wisdom for daily living, says: *"Do not wear yourself out to get rich...Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle"* (23:4-5, NIV). Psalm 62 adds, *"Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them"* (v.10, NIV).

All these serious warnings are just as important for Christian companies as for individuals. However we started, whatever our proud heritage, when our daily lives no longer pulsate with *"Father, may Your name be glorified, may Your Kingdom come and Your will be done,"* when our heart is no longer Christ's loving heart, then we have set a new course, and it is not toward God. Separation from Him has begun, and death has set in, no matter how healthy we seem. Greed eventually strangles all that it holds.

Christian individuals and Christian companies all have an instinct for survival. We all want to go on living. But our loving heavenly Father tells us that self-centeredness and anxiety are counterproductive. Love Him, trust Him, and live for His purposes. Focus on Him, not ourselves. Leave our lives in His hands, and He will provide for our needs. More than that, He will make our lives full and meaningful beyond our imagination.

Hymn: [The Rich Young Ruler](#)

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