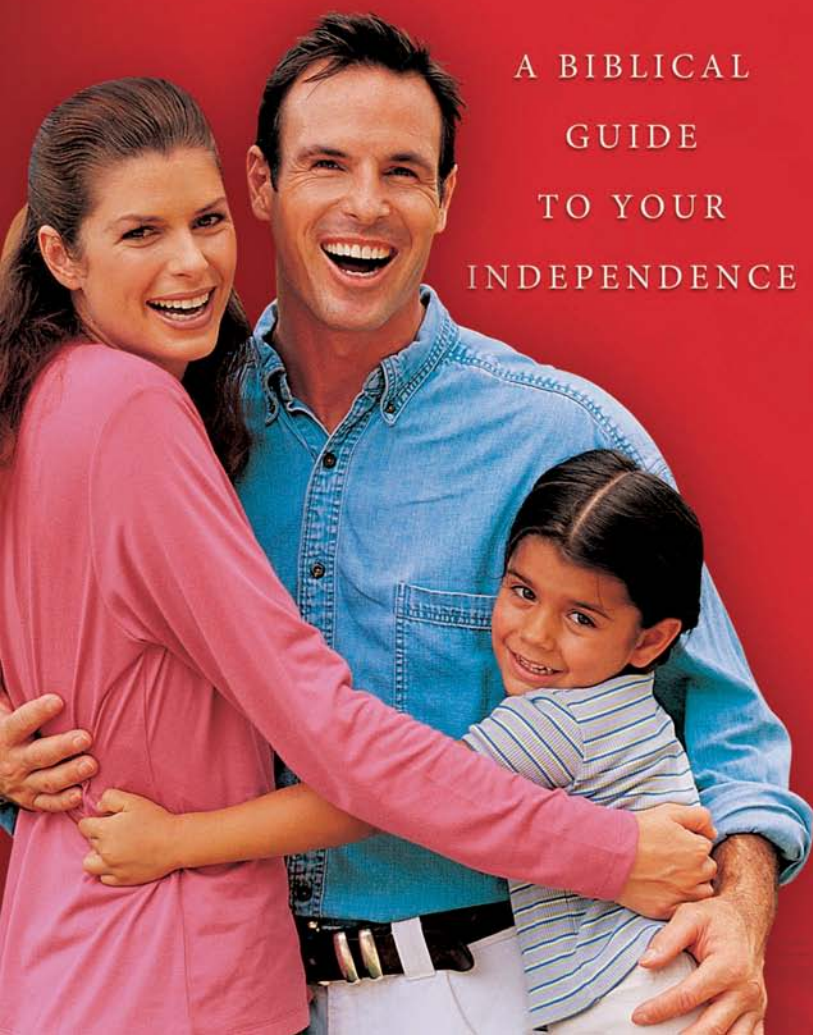


GRANT R. JEFFREY, CLU
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

FINDING FINANCIAL FREEDOM

A BIBLICAL
GUIDE
TO YOUR
INDEPENDENCE



FINDING FINANCIAL FREEDOM

THE
BIBLICAL
ROAD
TO YOUR
INDEPENDENCE

GRANT R. JEFFREY, CLU



WATERBROOK
PRESS

FINDING FINANCIAL FREEDOM
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Blvd., Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921
A division of Random House, Inc.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version*.

The financial advice in this book is intended to serve as a general guideline. Neither the author nor the publisher is engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other financial professional services by publishing this book. As each individual situation is unique, questions relevant to personal finances and specific to an individual should be addressed to an appropriate professional.

ISBN 1-4000-7105-4

Copyright © 2005 by Grant R. Jeffrey

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

WATERBROOK and its deer design logo are registered trademarks of WaterBrook Press, a division of Random House, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Jeffrey, Grant R.

Finding financial freedom : the biblical road to wealth / Grant R. Jeffrey. — 1st ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-4000-7105-4

1. Finance, Personal. 2. Finance, Personal—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

HG179.J34 2005

332.024'01—dc22

2005011168

Printed in the United States of America

2005—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	1

PART 1: YOU CAN ACHIEVE FINANCIAL FREEDOM

1	Biblical Principles for Financial Success	11
	<i>The Attitudes That Lead to Financial Freedom</i>	
2	Building a Plan for Financial Freedom	23
	<i>Success Demands That You Set the Right Goals</i>	
3	The Importance of Tithing and Charitable Giving	37
	<i>The Key to Financial Success</i>	
4	Setting Up Your Budget	43
	<i>How Saving Builds Wealth Through Compound Interest</i>	
5	The Use and Abuse of Credit	47
	<i>You Can Get Out of Debt Forever</i>	
6	Getting Smart About Homeownership and Mortgages	69
	<i>How to Make Your Home Your Best Investment</i>	

PART 2: ACHIEVING FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

7	Investments Will Build Your Future	81
	<i>How to Win by Avoiding Major Losses</i>	
8	Protect Yourself Against Fraud	105
	<i>Don't Let Scams Endanger Your Wealth</i>	

PART 3: PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY'S FINANCIAL GOALS

9 Insuring Against Financial Disaster 127
Choosing the Best Policies to Protect Your Assets

10 The Necessity of Having a Will 149
Preserving Your Estate for Your Family

11 Powers of Attorney 167
Essential Tools to Protect Your Family and Your Property

PART 4: SUCCESSFUL RETIREMENT PLANNING

12 Plan Now for a Successful Retirement 175
*Making the Most of Insurance, Investments, Annuities,
and Pensions*

13 Tax Planning 193
How to Benefit from Tax Shelters

PART 5: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

14 Finding Your Financial Balance 199
How to Stop Worrying About Money

Appendix 205

Notes 207

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finding Financial Freedom is the result of many years of research in countless books, articles, magazines, and a variety of financial and investment courses, including the Chartered Life Underwriter degree that I earned from the University of Toronto. The practical strategies and advice in the following chapters are heavily influenced by the thousands of interviews I have conducted with clients in the course of eighteen years as a professional financial planner.

These interviews with professionals, entrepreneurs, and business owners provided deep insights into the role of setting and establishing sound saving and investment habits, as well as the need for lifetime study for those who wish to achieve and maintain financial independence.

Over the last four decades, I have benefited enormously from the financial and investment advice provided by investment counselors such as the late Larry Burkett, Ron Blue, David Ramsey, and Suze Orman. The valued sources of financial information and wisdom also include Strategic Investment, the Oxford Group, Agora Group, and the *McAlvany Intelligence Advisor*.

A special thanks to my beloved wife, Kaye, for her financial wisdom and business skills that made Frontier Research Publications Inc. successful.

Introduction

Finding Financial Freedom

*When I chased after money, I never had enough.
When I got my life on purpose and focused on
giving of myself and everything that arrived
into my life, then I was prosperous.*

—WAYNE DYER

Don't underestimate the power and impact of your financial decisions. Few choices that you make in life will affect your success—or your failure—as much as the decisions you make about your finances. If you fail to manage your financial life wisely, many other areas of life—including your marriage, your other relationships, and your overall happiness—will suffer. There is no area of life, other than your marriage and your relationship with God, that is more vital to your overall success and happiness.

Many studies of marriage and divorce have revealed that financial difficulties are the number one cause of marital breakdown. Financial problems are also a major cause of distress for those who are single. And tragically, a tremendous number of people graduate from high school and college with virtually no meaningful education in how to handle their money. They are

unprepared to achieve the goal of being financially independent by the time they retire. Very few have received even a minimum financial education on setting a budget, balancing a checkbook, acquiring a home, evaluating a mortgage offer, comparing credit-card offers, weighing investment alternatives, determining insurance needs and the value of a will, and retirement planning.

Most people, however, have the goal of achieving financial freedom—usually defined as an amount of guaranteed income generated from your investments sufficient to meet your family’s income needs for the foreseeable future. You will not automatically become a better or happier person if you achieve financial success. However, you will certainly have many more options available to fulfill your goals for yourself and your family, as well as the opportunity to assist others, including helping the church to reach out to those in need and share the gospel with them. My wife, Kaye, and I have met many individuals who have achieved financial independence and have then embarked on a second career in volunteer work or world missions. One of the greatest benefits of achieving financial freedom is that you will have the opportunity to assist those around you, because you will have extra assets beyond your family’s needs. While financial success will not lead to happiness, it can provide a peace of mind that will enable you to focus on other important areas in your family’s life.

Unfortunately, too many people never stop to consider or pray about the type and quality of life they wish to pursue. Instead of making thoughtful decisions, they simply drift through life waiting for God to “open or close a door” to let them know how to make the most critical decisions. This is a tragedy, because the major decisions we make will determine the course and quality of the rest of our lives. God promises to give wisdom to anyone who sincerely asks Him for guidance, and we need to learn how to discern the wisdom of God concerning our major decisions.

THE BENEFITS OF FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Financial freedom and financial independence—how could achieving these goals affect the rest of your life? What would you do if you had a guaranteed income for you and your family so that you no longer were required to work every day? Imagine what you would do if you were truly free! Would you take a one-year sabbatical with your spouse to travel and assist in worldwide missions? Would you finally take that trip to Europe or Asia to explore the wonders of our diverse world? What would you do if you were finally free to follow your heart's desire? Who would you help if you had the resources to make a difference?

There are three major decisions that will impact the rest of your life: Whom will you live your life for? Whom will you live your life with? What will you live your life in?

1. Whom will you live your life for? Will you live for yourself as your own “god”? Or will you choose to accept that your life is not really your own but rather that it belongs to God? The decision to submit your will to faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and God will transform your life and your purpose forever. This is the most important decision you will ever make, because it will determine your eternal destination, and it will also play a major role in every other decision in your life.

2. Whom will you live your life with? Far too many people marry the person they happen to be dating when the rest of their friends start deciding to marry. Your choice of a wife or husband as your lifetime companion will have a profound effect on every other area and decision of your life. It is vital that you wisely choose God's will for your life companion.

3. What will you live your life in? Your choice of a career in a particular business or profession will have a tremendous impact on every other element of your life. Too many people spend their working years in a business

or profession simply because that was their first job or because a relative influenced their decision. We need to seriously pray for God's wisdom and guidance in this vital life decision.

The income that covers your daily expenses is produced either from your labor or from capital you have invested. Initially we work for money so that money can ultimately work for us. Either a person will continue working to produce an income to provide for his daily needs, or he must accumulate an amount of money (capital) that will produce an income stream to provide for his needs through the retirement years.

It is tragic that the average North American citizen, after working a lifetime in the most prosperous society in history, will retire with far less income and assets than he will need to support a comfortable lifestyle. The problem isn't that people plan to fail; it's that people fail to plan. My hope is that the principles and knowledge presented in this book will enable you and your family to achieve financial freedom.

FINANCIAL IGNORANCE

By the time the average adult begins a career, he has invested between twelve and sixteen years in formal education. The average student will complete more than fifteen thousand hours of study in a great variety of subjects. However, the vast majority will graduate without a single hour of financial instruction on the practical facts of life needed to achieve financial success. Millions of Americans graduate from high school without receiving practical information on banking, mortgages, credit cards, home ownership, insurance, and wills.

The Charles Schwab Foundation conducted a fascinating study on typical American teenagers' financial knowledge. The study revealed an amazing level of ignorance in young people as they began their careers. The study discovered that "one in five American teenagers doesn't know that if

you take out a loan, you must pay it back with interest. One in four thinks that financial aid will pay for all college expenses. And one in three thinks monthly Social Security payments will be all they need to retire.”¹

One study indicated that up to 40 percent of Americans believe that the best chance they have to accumulate \$500,000 for their retirement is to win the lottery.² When you consider that the likelihood of winning half a million dollars in the lottery is far less than your chance of being hit by lightning—less than one in ten million—you realize there is a serious need for people to become realistic about planning and investing for their retirement.

QUALITIES THAT TEND TO LEAD TO FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Thomas J. Stanley in his book *The Millionaire Mind* published an intriguing study on the attitudes and characteristics of a number of people who are multimillionaires. Based on in-depth interviews with numerous millionaires, the study found these factors were vital in their financial success:

- Integrity—honesty in all relationships
- Discipline—using self-control in every area of life
- Social skills—friendly relations with people
- A supportive spouse
- Hard work—a willingness to work harder than most people³

In his comprehensive study, Stanley discovered that those who achieved true financial independence lived substantially different lives from those who had a high income, high consumption lifestyle that was dependent on credit. For example, more than 90 percent of those who had achieved financial success without acquiring huge debt lived in traditional families with several children and a marriage lasting many decades. Less than 10 percent had inherited a significant part of their wealth. Ninety-seven percent of those surveyed owned their own high-value homes and generally had relatively small mortgages (7 percent of the house’s value, on average).

Most millionaires in this group (53 percent) had not moved to a new home in the last ten years.

It is interesting that although they admitted to working hard at a vocation they loved, they stated that spending quality time with family and friends was a significant commitment. Almost one in three of the millionaires owned his own business. Finally, 37 percent of those interviewed stated that their religious faith was a significant influence in their life and their economic success.⁴

Overall, the most significant factor that separates those who achieve financial independence from those who live high income, high consumption, high debt lifestyles is their attitude toward debt and their use of credit. While the high-net-worth millionaires were happy to use credit for their home mortgage and business loans, they generally avoided consumer credit, waiting until they could buy depreciating items such as cars, electronics, and appliances with cash.

I believe that financial bondage to debt leads to spiritual bondage as well: “The borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7). Furthermore, I believe that financial freedom leads to spiritual freedom. To begin the life-long process of achieving financial independence, you need to understand the biblical principles that will guide you through the difficult decisions we all confront in the stages of life. If you are married, you need to discuss with your spouse your finances, goals, and plans. Honestly assess exactly where you are today in income, assets, debts, and net worth. You must first get hold of your debt and credit decisions before you can move toward investment success.

In our materialistic culture, far too many people spend their lives buying products they don't need with money they don't have to impress people they don't like. It's not what you earn that results in your ultimate financial success; it's what you manage to keep and invest that will enable you to build up your assets to achieve financial independence.

Most North Americans will earn well over \$2 million in the course of their employable years (between ages twenty and sixty-five). However, the vast majority will retire around age sixty-five with very few personal financial assets beyond their company pension plan and their Social Security payments.

In this book we will examine a variety of investments that can help lead you toward financial independence. In addition, we will look at some of the financial risks that lie ahead, including the dangers of lost income from disability and premature death. We will explore various tools you can use to protect your goal of financial freedom, such as insurance, wills, and powers of attorney. Financial success is a journey, not a destination. We will follow a biblically based path that will help you and your family achieve the financial independence that will enable you to have greater success in every other area of your life.

Why should you work and plan to achieve financial independence? The first reason is to escape the paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle and financial bondage that oppress most Americans. The second reason is to allow you and your family the financial freedom to enjoy the lifestyle you desire, to pursue educational opportunities for yourself and your children, and to enjoy quality leisure time with your family and friends. Finally, financial success will allow you the pleasure of giving significant funds to assist your church and favorite charities, as well as friends and family who would benefit from wise financial assistance. Giving wisely to others is a great challenge as well as a great joy.

Part 1

YOU CAN ACHIEVE
FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Chapter 1

Biblical Principles for Financial Success

The Attitudes That Lead to Financial Freedom

*Where I was brought up we never talked about
money because there was never enough
to furnish a topic of conversation.*

—MARK TWAIN

Many people of faith are ambivalent toward the need for financial planning, with most Christians tending to downplay the importance of money. Christians often assure one another that “money isn’t everything” and that “money can’t buy happiness.”

But there are exceptions. Some people focus so exclusively on their finances that they have almost made their financial prosperity the sole measure of whether God is blessing their lives. Clearly, there is a need for balance.

Christians need to develop a biblically based attitude about finances. Obviously, money is important because it affects the quality of our family’s life and the opportunities available to those we love. However, we need to

recognize that financial resources—including our salary and our assets—are simply tools that the Lord has placed in our hands as a trust to be administered. Someday we will give the Lord an accounting of our stewardship of the finances He has entrusted to us.

INCORRECT ATTITUDES TOWARD MONEY

Many Christians have never seriously evaluated their attitude toward money and financial planning in light of the principles found in the Word of God. As a consequence, they often possess erroneous and even harmful attitudes that hinder their financial success and peace of mind. Here are four of the most destructive attitudes toward money.

1. Money Is Purely Worldly

Some have suggested that those who are truly spiritual should not be concerned with worldly matters, such as our finances. Many believe the Lord is unconcerned with mundane matters such as money, investing, and financial planning. Nothing could be further from the truth. Money is such an important part of our daily lives that God has given us instructions throughout His Word concerning our finances. The Bible provides detailed instructions on how a believer should handle his money, as well as warnings about financial pitfalls that we should avoid.

2. Money Is Separate from Our Spiritual Lives

Some believe that their spiritual life is disconnected from “worldly” matters, such as money. They have created an artificial division between the sacred life and the earthly. Some say, “This 10 percent of my money belongs solely to God, but the other 90 percent belongs to me to spend in any way I please.” They believe it is somehow fanatical or extreme to involve God in every area of their finances. However, *everything* we have

belongs to God. All we now possess or will ever own is simply given in trust to us by the Lord. We are to use our finances according to the balanced principles taught in the Scriptures.

3. Financial Success Is Unspiritual

Some suggest that financial success is incompatible with a true spiritual life. They believe that prosperity is suspect and that the poor are inherently more spiritual than the prosperous. Many believe that Christians who succeed financially reached that point by making money their god.

Curiously, the truth is almost exactly the opposite. As a result of thousands of interviews with my clients over two decades as a professional financial planner, I have found that those who are in deep financial trouble actually spend far more time each day thinking about money than those who have achieved a measure of financial success. Once Christians have achieved financial stability and are on the road to financial independence, they can focus on far more important things than worrying about how they will pay their bills. Achieving financial success can be spiritually liberating, enabling you to focus on the spiritual goals in your life. Note the biblical figures who were financially prosperous. There were many prosperous Christians in the early church, including Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. And almost all of the Old Testament leaders—including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job—prospered and used their wealth wisely.

*The only thing money gives
you is the freedom of not
worrying about money.
—Johnny Carson*

4. Financial Planning Indicates a Lack of Trust

Some believe that we should leave it all to God by refusing to plan financially or to set goals. Many spiritualize this passivity to justify their lack of

financial discipline. They claim that if God wants them to succeed, they will wake up one day and find they have supernaturally acquired financial independence. Obviously, the Bible does not support the idea of passively awaiting a financial miracle. The Lord commands us to work and plan in order to provide for our families' needs.

A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD MONEY

In the area of finances, the attitudes of man and God often differ markedly. While man's attitudes are usually self-centered, the Lord calls on us to base our lives on eternal values in light of our future life in heaven. In the words of Jesus, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). As an example of these profound differences, while the Lord tells us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), most people live as if it is more blessed to receive than to give. God tells us, however, that those who sacrifice for Him in this life shall "receive an hundred-fold now in this time...and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:30).

In the parable of the rich man and the beggar, the Lord taught that those whose sole desire is to accumulate riches will ultimately lose everything they value. In contrast, our materialistic age encourages people to measure their value and that of others solely on their ability to make money or acquire investments and possessions. During a trip to California, Kaye and I noted a bumper sticker that summed up this cynical and empty philosophy: "Whoever dies with the most toys wins!" In contrast, the Word of God reminds us that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

We need to evaluate our attitudes toward our finances, investments, and possessions in light of the teachings of the Word of God. Are we truly the owners of the property and money that pass through our hands? Or

instead are we stewards who have been entrusted to administer these possessions for the true owner, God, who will someday demand from each of us a full accounting? For Christians, the answer is clear. All we own today and all that we will ever possess in this world should be held lightly, because our possessions are not our own. The Lord commands us, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19–20).

When we examine the Scriptures, we discover a number of biblical principles that should guide us regarding our financial strategies, principles, goals, and plans. As in every area of life, we need to find the biblically balanced position based on “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

God Will Supply Our Needs

My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory
by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

One of the most fundamental biblical truths is that God is vitally concerned with the practical, daily economic needs of faithful followers who trust in Him. Within the pages of Scripture, we find a complete set of principles that should form the foundation of our basic financial strategies during years of prosperity as well as difficult economic times. While Christians await the return of the Lord, we must realize that if He tarrys for a number of years, we may likely have to live through an economic roller coaster. Therefore, we need to understand that our ultimate financial source is not our salary or our investments but rather our Father in heaven.

If we ask the Lord, He will guide us with practical financial strategies through His Word and through His Holy Spirit. He will show us what we

need to do to protect our families, our businesses, our churches, and ourselves in the difficult days that may lie ahead. King David described God's unchanging faithfulness and loving care for His children: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25). This affirmation from King David confirms God's promised care for those in need who appeal to Him.

God Commands Diligence and Hard Work

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. (Proverbs 27:23)

Throughout the Scriptures, God commands us to be diligent in handling our business affairs and our finances. Note that you cannot find a single biblical hero or "man of God" who is weak, indecisive, or lazy. While it is God who prospers our efforts, He expects us to do our part. In Proverbs we find a number of passages that describe this principle of financial accountability. The Scriptures promise God's blessing if we diligently and faithfully work to accomplish our task: "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread" (Proverbs 28:19). The Scriptures also declare, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded" (2 Chronicles 15:7).

The Word of God commends our diligent efforts to prepare for our future needs by directing our attention to the prudent actions of the lowly ant. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Proverbs 6:6–8).

Although God has promised to care for us, in the parable of the servants and the talents, the Lord instructs us to invest the financial resources He places in our hands to achieve the maximum return. In the Lord's

parable, the two faithful servants who invested their master's talents and achieved a positive return were commended by their master and honored for their faithfulness. However, the servant who passively hid his single talent in the ground was severely reprimanded by his master for his laziness and lack of financial stewardship. The master of the unfaithful servant told him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant...: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 25:26–29). This parable commands us to be good stewards and also clarifies Christ's teaching on interest and saving money at financial institutions. While God condemns criminally high interest rates, He commends the master who rewarded his faithful and diligent servants for investing the master's money with bankers to gain a good interest return.

As You Sow, So Shall You Reap

In Christ's parable of the sower and the seed, He taught that the results we achieve are directly related to the seeds we sow and the quality of the soil we choose. Some Christians believe that we should simply pray with faith and expect the Lord to supply our every financial need, whether or not we have acted as good stewards through following biblical principles, diligent work, planning, and investments. However, the Lord expects each of us to work faithfully and to wisely invest the fruits of our labor: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Once we have faithfully and diligently done our part, we can then prayerfully and confidently ask the Lord to bless our efforts and give us wisdom regarding our investments.

A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD POSSESSIONS

The Law of Giving and Receiving

If we hold on to our possessions too tightly, we will almost certainly lose them. Every possession we have is simply a trust to be administered for the Lord. Those who accept this principle will be open to helping their family, friends, and neighbors through gifts and practical assistance. After more than eighteen years of professional financial planning with clients and almost four decades as an entrepreneur and investor, I find the evidence compelling that those who are generous in their gifts to the Lord and who assist their neighbors will receive abundant blessings from God.

Our Lord promised that those who joyfully give to others will receive in return many times the amount they give: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). While this is clearly a biblical principle, our motive should be to give in obedience to God’s command, not to give in order to get something in return.

Understanding Money as a Tool

A biblically balanced attitude toward our finances and possessions is vital. Money and possessions are important tools that provide for our practical needs. Unfortunately, we live in the most materialistic society in history. Television and advertising seduce the values of many people to the point where they believe their own happiness and worth depend on their having the latest car, the finest house, and the most stylish designer clothing. We must consciously resist the sinful materialism of our age that would have us make money and possessions our god.

The Word of God teaches: “For the love [lust] of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10). The

danger lies in the evil of greediness, a sinful desire to focus solely on the accumulation of money. In other words, if we allow ourselves to fall in love with (or to have an unwholesome desire for) money instead of using it as an essential tool of life, then it will corrupt our lives. A balanced view of money as taught throughout the Word of God reveals that our financial security is a gift from God that allows us to bless not only our families, but also our churches and those around us. God repeatedly commended the faithfulness and financial stewardship of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, King David, King Solomon, and many others. After Job's long trial, the Lord restored Job's huge fortunes (see Job 42:12).

Knowing Whom You Serve

Each of us must answer this question regarding our finances: whom will you serve? Ultimately, you will choose to serve Jesus Christ as your Lord God, or you will choose to serve yourself. Jesus warned, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [money]" (Matthew 6:24).

Will we serve Jesus Christ through our diligence and faithful stewardship, or will we allow materialism and lust for money to overtake us and rob us of the true joy of the Lord? We need to handle our possessions and finances faithfully and prayerfully, knowing that we will someday give an accounting to our Lord Jesus Christ for how we handled our financial life, decisions, and priorities.

Further, we must put our trust in God and not in money. The Bible declares that God wants His followers to prosper and enjoy His blessings. The Lord promised Israel great economic blessings if they would obey His commands: "And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall

open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:11–12).

We must place our trust in our heavenly Father, prudently follow His principles, and look to God to direct our paths. My parents instilled in me a profound principle that I have tried to follow throughout my life: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR FAMILY’S NEEDS

Some Christians avoid serious insurance planning and preparation of their wills because of a mistaken notion that such planning is unnecessary since “God will provide.” The Bible’s teaching is clear that, as much as possible, we are responsible for protecting our families from financial difficulties stemming from our premature death. If we live in such abject poverty that we are truly unable to protect them, we can safely trust that the Lord will intervene to take care of our families. However, the Lord will hold us accountable if we are able to provide financial protection but refuse to do so.

Wills and insurance policies are financial tools to protect our families in the event of a premature death or a disability that destroys our ability to provide an essential monthly income. Since none of us has a guaranteed lease on life, we need to provide for the possibility that we may not live or work long enough to accumulate sufficient assets to guarantee a monthly income that will support our families. The apostle Paul commanded Christian believers to provide financially for their spouses and children: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8).

In chapter 9 we will explore how we can best protect our loved ones with a guaranteed income while simultaneously saving money on our insurance and taxes. Preparing separate wills for a husband and wife is an absolute necessity. If you fail to provide legal and financial instruction for the distribution of your estate to your beneficiaries in your will, then the government will redistribute your assets according to its rigid legal formula. In Proverbs we read these approving words about those who faithfully plan and provide for their family's future: "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children" (13:22).

In these uncertain times, it would be easy for Christians to lose their sense of peace under God's protection and surrender to despair over the potential economic upheavals facing our world from threats of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, stock market disruptions, and inflation. However, as believers in Jesus Christ, we can confidently look to the Lord to protect us.

Since God's nature does not change, we can be confident that the Lord still watches over each of His followers. While this does not guarantee that we will never suffer a devastating accident, illness, or economic loss, we do know that nothing can happen in our lives unless God allows it to occur. Satan acknowledged God's supernatural protection of Job with these words: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land" (Job 1:10). While God expects each of us to be diligent and prudent in our finances, our financial prosperity and economic destiny ultimately lie in His hands.

A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD GENEROSITY

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. (Proverbs 28:27)

There is one other vital biblical principle regarding financial success, and that is giving generously to those in need. Our joyful willingness to open our hearts and bank accounts to people in great need, whether through ministries or directly to individuals, will open the blessings of heaven upon our own financial condition. And bear in mind that generous giving to others is not limited to financial gifts that are blessed by the IRS with a tax-deductible receipt.

The Lord specifically commands us to give to others as well as to God's storehouse, His church, if we wish to receive His supernatural blessings from heaven. Jesus taught about the relationship between faithful sowing and reaping in His parables. The apostle Paul also wrote, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6–7).

God connects His promise to bless and prosper our financial endeavors directly to our generous giving to the Lord's work and to others in need. The prophet Malachi wrote: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). Christians who obediently follow the directions in Scripture to carefully arrange their financial affairs according to godly principles can reasonably expect that God will bless their financial dealings to produce financial independence.