

BEING STEWARDS OF GOD'S MONEY

Principles & Practices: Principle Two

I will love God, not money

CONTENTMENT

What brings peace to my heart?

The key word in the second PRINCIPLE is “CONTENTMENT.” This PRINCIPLE flows out of the foundation of the truth that we are called to STEWARDSHIP. Because Jesus is King and since we have chosen to be His servants, we reflect these truths in the peace of our hearts, called CONTENTMENT.

The two sides of the coin that mints this PRINCIPLE is our choice to love God, and our choice to not love money. The question that probes our lives with regards to the renewing impact of these biblical insights is, “What brings peace to my heart?”

We must look into the Scriptures to see how the love of God and the love of money manifest themselves, since most of us would immediately say that we really don't love money.

1 Timothy 6:5-10 (ESV)

⁵ . . . and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

As we decide whether we love God or money, we realize that we must ask who we choose to believe. According to verse 5, what do some people choose to believe?

How does that contrast with the belief choice of verses 6-8?

How is verse 7 a great summary of what it means to believe God and not money?

In what ways might we betray that we are not convinced that “we can't take it with us?”

Money invites us to endorse a statement like, “I only believe in what I can see today.” How is this not trusting God?

How does this text address the many who “want to get rich” so that they can be generous? Is there a provision to make such a longing OK if you plan to give a lot away?

Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

When we ask if we love God or money, we must ask if whether we TRUST God or money. Will we choose to trust the Lord when He says He will be faithful?

What is the parallel thought to "be content"?

What are the grounding points of the command to keep our lives free from the love of money?

How does this trust in God contrast with the temptation to trust only that which I can touch?

Hosea 13:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. ⁵ It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; ⁶ but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me.

What is the progression that leads to forgetting God (in verse 6)?

How might this help us understand Jesus' words about being blessed if we hunger and thirst? Or His words about how hard it is for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God?

Proverbs 19:23 (ESV)

²³ The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.

Colossians 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Part of our choice to love either God or money comes down to whom or what we fear. Will we choose to reverently fear God when He says He is King? According to Proverbs, what does the fear of the Lord lead to?

The other choice is to fear what we can lose today. Covetousness (or greed) is idolatry in what way?

Philippians 4:11-13 (ESV)

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

A final way to know if we love God or money is to ponder which one we ask to give us security and satisfaction. This ties into PRINCIPLE two's question, "What brings peace to my heart?"

Robert Morris has said that "giving is important because it does a supernatural work in our hearts." How is that work described in the passage above from Philippians?

Jeremiah 2:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

If we don't ask God for the provisions of our needs, especially for contentment, then we will probably seek satisfaction in what we can secure for ourselves. How does Jeremiah picture such "self-provision?"

Luke 12:13-21 (ESV)

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

How might this teaching of Jesus be instructing us regarding the correlation of loving God and living with an open hand? Versus loving money and dying with our fists clenched?

Ecclesiastes 5:10-15 (ESV)

¹⁰ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹² Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. ¹³ There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. ¹⁵ As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.

In his excellent book on the principles of biblical stewardship, Money, Possessions, and Eternity, Randy Alcorn paraphrases some of the principles Solomon taught in the passage above. Link the paraphrases to the text.

“The more you have . . . The more you want!”

“The more you have . . . The less you are satisfied!”

“The more you have . . . The more people come after it!”

“The more you have . . . The more you realize it does not meet your real needs!”

“The more you have . . . The more you have to worry about!”

“The more you have . . . The more you can hurt yourself by holding onto it!”

“The more you have . . . The more you have to lose!”

“The more you have . . . The more you will leave behind!”