

# Proper Use of God-Given Wealth

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The ten-year old boy burst through the door, erupting with excitement, “Mom, the neighbor gave me two dollars for shoveling the snow off her sidewalk!” He opened his hand to reveal eight shiny quarters stuck to the palm of his glove.

“Pretty good,” his mother responded with a smile. “Why don’t you put the money in your bank and save it for something you might want later?”

“But Mom, I want to use it for something right now! What should I spend it on?”

“Spend it on what is in your heart,” was the retort the child heard from around the corner in the living room. It was Grandpa or “Packie” as everyone called him.

“What did you say?” the child inquired of his grandfather.

“I said, spend it on what is in your heart!” replied Packie, amused that he had caught the attention of his young grandson.

“What does that mean?”

“You figure it out.”

Later, after removing his winter clothes, the boy returned to his mother and asked her what Packie had meant by his statement. She explained to him that when Packie was a young man there were times when two dollars was a whole week’s wages. She related to her young son a story of her childhood. “One time when I was a small girl my mother was given some Christmas cookies by one of our neighbors. The next day when we opened our lunch bags at school we each had one sandwich, and on the sandwiches were the Christmas cookies. Grandma was too poor to buy anything to put on the bread, so she used the cookies.”

“I think Packie wants you to understand, first of all, that the money you earned is a gift of God to you. Secondly, I think he wants you to understand the need of using your money properly and responsibly. Do not spend it on something frivolous and unnecessary.”

Her son walked away pondering the wisdom of his aged grandfather.

Six years later this same child had grown into a young man. His muscles had grown large and firm from the many hours spent on the farm. He had been earning regular wages for some four years already, and therefore was able to pay his school tuition with a little left over.

“Say, Mom, I was thinking of buying a good used car,” contemplated the youth.

“Are you sure you really need one?” his mother warned. “You are free to use the second car whenever you need to go someplace.”

“Yah, but I have a little extra money. What else can I use it for?”

“Use it for what is in your heart,” boomed a voice from the living room.

“Packie, don’t lay that one on me again. I have already heard all your stories of the Depression. Besides, haven’t you ever heard the saying, ‘you are only young once, so enjoy yourself?’”

“In what book of the Bible is that one found?” questioned the old man.

“Come on, Packie, all I did was ask Mom if Dad would let me buy my own car. Don’t get heavy on me. Lighten up a bit.”

One month later the old man died. All the family was around his bed as he breathed his last; all, that is, except one. The young man was out of state on a canoe trip and was unable to make it home on time to be near his beloved grandfather as he passed from this life into heaven. Even though the youth knew that what he was doing at the time of his grandfather’s death was

far from wrong in itself, he felt badly that he was out doing something frivolous while his grandfather lay in bed wrestling with his last enemy.

Years later, after he was married and raising his own family, the young man remembered his grandfather's advice and attempted to apply it to the use of his God-given wealth: Spend it on what is in your heart. Elaborating on what his mother had explained to him when he was ten, this is what he discovered Packie had meant.

First of all, I must believe in my heart that everything that I have, including my money and what it buys, comes as a gift to me from God. The money I earn is just a means which my heavenly Father provides me and my family to live in this world. Never can I boast in my own ability, foresight, drive and achievements. God is the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift (James 1:17). He owns the earth and all it contains (Psalm 50:12), and He imparts to every man as He wills (Deut. 16:17). And when I in my vain imagination begin to think (as I so often do) that by my own arm of flesh I have acquired all my possessions, then I better ask myself some questions. Who provides me with the talent and ability to do my work? Who gives me my strength and my health day by day? Who has worked out all the circumstances of my life—the place I work, even the country in which I live, etc.—in order that I am able to earn a living for myself? God, of course! In my heart must be found a deep awareness that all I have and will acquire is **God-given** wealth!

“Use your money for what is in your heart.” This means, secondly, that all my wealth is only vanity and vexation of spirit. I intend to keep Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 2:4-11 above the desk where I work on my finances.

“ I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house...I gathered me also silver and gold, and peculiar treasures of kings and of the provinces...So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them... Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor I had labored to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

All my wealth is here today and tomorrow fades away into nothing. Money and pleasure are like the illusive butterfly which lands but a moment then quickly flutters away. Naked we came into the world and naked we shall leave it. We took nothing into this world and it is certain that we will take nothing out of it (Job. 1:21).

How then will I use my wealth properly? Using my sanctified and Bible-guided common sense I will distinguish between what is truly need and what is pleasure. Is it not true that I often find myself saying I need something when really the proper word would be I **want** something? Is it not true that too often I find myself saying “yes” to my desires and “no” to what is required of me? It is so easy to spend my wealth on comforts and pleasure and so difficult to give to kingdom causes. Is it not true that often I feel it easier to give to a kingdom cause if I get some sort of fun or pleasure in return? What are my needs? The Bible is clear enough. The father must labor by the sweat of his brow to care for the needs of his household and the church. (I Timothy 5:8; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Ephesians 4:28). I use my wealth for these. The Bible does not condemn the use of my money for recreation. But I must not make this my idol. I must remind myself that, despite what modern psychiatrists say, recreation is **not** a need—it is a pleasure, and therefore must be placed on the bottom of the list of priorities.

Packie was right after all: if my heart is bound up in seeking the pleasures and treasures of this world I will use my money wrongly and the kingdom causes will suffer. If my heart is filled with a love of God and His kingdom then I will use my money properly. How do I use my God-given wealth? Exercise my heart into a deeper love for God and His kingdom. Then...spend my money on what is in my heart. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:21

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