

# FAITH & FINANCES

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ESSENTIALS FOR THE  
FINANCIAL HEALTH  
OF CHRISTIANS



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If we had the opportunity to look at your calendar without knowing you, we could quickly learn vast amounts of information about you, such as:

- What is important to you.
- Who is important to you.
- Where you hang out.

The same parallels can be drawn if we were given an opportunity to look at your bank statements and credit card statements. We would discover:

- What is important to you.
- Who is important to you.
- Where you “do life”.

People’s financial records tell a lot more about their spiritual maturity than their behavior in church does. Our gifts show our ministry, but our giving shows our maturity. It is incredibly easy to act like a Christian when we pray or praise our way through Sunday morning, but you simply cannot impersonate the lifestyle of a giver.

**You Either Give Generously and Cheerfully, or You Don’t**

*And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

**Matthew 22:37-40**

We are constantly exposed to a barrage of advertisements enticing us to buy in to the notion that we want and need more. Whether it is through television commercials, obscure advertisements, or the annoying smartphone ads on Facebook and Instagram, this world is screaming loud and clear that you need and should want more.



Our culture encourages us to covet and act greedily. If we allow this greed to go unchecked, we are setting ourselves up for catastrophe down the road. If we seek beyond what our income and expenses can afford, beyond what God has created for us, and beyond what our financial goals have set as off-limits, we will be consumed with greed.

## Desires Are Not Bad

God has given us these desires; however, we must learn to enjoy His provision within His loving and safe boundaries. Adam and Eve were afforded the luxurious bounty of a literal paradise; however, they were unable to bridle their greed and couldn't enjoy what God had provided.

Covetousness means worshiping desire, committing my life to pursuing my wants and desires. That is sin. As Americans our culture professes to be obsessed with the management of two things:

- Our Health
- Our Money

In actuality, many Americans manage both their health and their money poorly.

Our entire being (mind, emotions, spirit, body, and finances) would be much healthier if we loved God with all our being. A heart passionately in love with God is the starting point of a healthy life. When God is no longer our first love, our lives are in danger, including our finances.

Our financial habits are all punctuated by the voice of God asking:

- Do you love me?
- Do you trust me?
- Do you live for me?
- Do you want more of me?



A deep, captivating relationship with God comes when we become incredibly intentional about our relationship with Him. Once we settle the issue of a relentless pursuit of God, order will be brought to our spiritual lives, thus facilitating financial order.

*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

Psalm 42:1

## Craving God

We should begin to crave God like never before; prioritizing faith and devotion over the materialism and self-preservation that culture is all about. It isn't about me, and it never has been.

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life[g] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

Matthew 16:24-28

Taking up your cross will bring you to a place where your contentment and fulfillment will not be derived from wealth and the accumulation of material substance. Rather you will find wholeness in Him.



Spiritually, we are being distracted. Every distraction a blatant attempt to move our eyes from the importance of the foundation building that we have been talking about for weeks now. You hear about what that church is doing across town? Did you see what happened to Bro. and Sis. So-and-So? I can't believe they did, said, tried something like that.

Every precious moment we spend focused on the speck in the eyes of our brothers and sisters that are trying to do their best, we lose out on the valuable time that should be spent reaching and helping the people whose lives are falling apart in front of us.

The more time we dedicate to talking about the shortcomings of others, the more likely we are to fall into the same kinds of traps. I don't know about you, but I'd rather spend my time looking for ways that I can improve the church and people's relationships with God.

Richard J. Foster author of *Celebration of Discipline* considers discipline to be the door to liberty:

- "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people."
- Spiritual disciplines encourage us to explore who we really are and challenge us to give hope to a broken world.
- Our disciplines are not just for people we believe to be super spiritual. Each of us is called to grow spiritually.

Do you realize that you have a very active relationship with money? You probably don't think about it in this light; however, you should.

- How do you and money interact when you are stressed?
- How do you and money interact when you are with certain people?
- Are you selfish or selfless when it comes to your relationship with money?

