

"MONEY – How to Get it and Save It"

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I'm indebted to my friend Dr. Michael Andrus for the idea of this series and for much of the content.

Today I want to talk again about money.

But today I want to talk about how to get it and how to save it.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat."

In those verses God teaches us quite plainly how we are to get money.

There are few things in life to which we give more time and energy than the getting of money.

In a couple of minutes we will come back to the issue of how God says we ARE to get money; but first of all a contrast with how not to get money might be helpful.

1. We must not STEAL money.

Most of us are familiar with some of the words of the Ten

Commandments, in this context most particularly: You shall not steal.

We wouldn't think of robbing a 7-11 or stealing a car from our neighbor's garage.

But in our getting of money have we compromised the 8th command in a thousand little ways?

- Do we use postage stamps or meter at work for personal mail?

- Do we steal time from our employer?
- Do we take office supplies from work?
- Do we call in sick when we're not?
- Do we inflate our deductions at tax time?
- Have you been undercharged for something you purchased and you kept the money justifying it as either their dumb mistake or to make up for the times you had probably been overcharged?

I remember stopping one time with a busload of students at a gas station. One of the students found out that the pop machine was malfunctioning and would give him pop without inserting money. By the time I found out about it 40 students had "free" pop.

Was it free or was it theft?

Stealing to get money is clearly forbidden by God.

2. Another wrong way to get money is to just expect it.

Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Presumptuous sponges are not what God has in mind for his children.

Even adult children can retain an expectation that their parents will continue to support them.

Presumption of support can be an occupational hazard for missionaries and pastors.

Sitting around expecting God or others to hand it to us is not a right way to get money.

Dependence on God does not mean slothful inactivity.

Just expecting it is a wrong way to get money.

3. Another wrong way to get money is to extort it from someone.

When we think of extortion we might first think of the protectionist rackets of the mafia.

BUT Extortion is not only overt through the threat of force but can be subtle through the taking advantage of someone.

- It is offering much less for a house than it is worth because you know the seller has to sell.
- It is charging too much for something because you know the buyer desperately needs it.
- It's taking advantage of someone's ignorance or desperation to get just a little more.

That's not "shrewd" - that's extortion.

I remember a sales organization I got into when I was in college.

The idea was to find the poorer homes in the small town and convince them to purchase a set of encyclopedias because surely they didn't want their children to grow up with the same disadvantages they had.

I think that was a form of extortion.

Extortion is tantamount to stealing.

4. Yet another wrong way to get money is to GAMBLE for it.

When I say gambling I mean not only Las Vegas style high-stakes gambling but also lotteries, bingo games, golf bets, office pools, and every form of gambling.

Gambling violates many principles of godliness:

Gambling violates the very biblical work ethic I will describe in a minute because it nurtures a "something for nothing" attitude.

Gambling violates biblical stewardship because it takes money that belongs to God, as all of our money does, and it puts it at unnecessary and unreasonable risk.

Gambling violates biblical charity because it fosters greed, which is the fundamental motivation behind all gambling.

And most important of all gambling violates biblical justice because the only way someone wins is for others to lose.

In fact gambling is most evil not when you lose but when you win.

Because, as Christians, we are responsible for not taking advantage of others even in their ignorance or their sin.

Gambling is the wrong way to get money.

5. A FIFTH way not to get money is to borrow it.

I remember years ago Bob Knapp saved the credit card offers that came to him in the mail.

As I recall it, he gave me a stack of envelopes over a foot high that he had received over two year period of time.

He had been pre-approved for hundreds of thousands of dollars of borrowing.

Today it is far worse – Paul Edwards told me last week that credit card companies in 2002 sent out 66 billion pieces of direct mail.

Doesn't it seem that you got half of those?!

Everyone is begging us to borrow money.

In Proverbs 22:7 God says be careful; a borrower becomes a slave to the lender.

The Bible does not forbid all borrowing but it does forbid foolish borrowing that puts both the borrower and the lender at risk.

Borrowing to get what we want **now** because we don't dare ask God if it is something he thinks we should have **now** or borrowing because we won't trust God to provide us with the money before we buy, is probably wrong.

Borrowing is not usually a God-honoring way to get money.

So how does God say we are to get money?

2 Thessalonians 3:7-10 "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Honest work is God's primary way for us to get money.

Since creation God intended that people would work and it seems clear from what the Bible says about life on the new earth that work will be a part of it as well.

Work is not a result of the curse at the fall, but one of the blessings of God for humanity

The way we get money is to use the resources God has given us to earn it!

But today I don't want to just talk about getting money; I want to talk also about "saving money"

There were three accountants and three lawyers taking a train trip:

The accountants purchased three tickets but the three lawyers purchase only one ticket for the three of them.

The lawyers then crammed into one of the small train lavatories.

When the conductor knocked asking for the ticket, one arm reached out with one ticket satisfying the conductor.

On the return trip the three accountants thought they would try what the lawyers had done.

But unknown to accountants the lawyers didn't purchase any tickets at all.

When they all boarded the train the three lawyers got into a lavatory again and the 3 accountants did the same.

But before the conductor came, one lawyer sneaked out of their bathroom and knocked on the accountants' bathroom door and in a disguised voice said, "Ticket please."

That is one way to save money but it is not what I have in mind today.

I'm also not talking about coming home and announcing to your wife how much you saved on a new set of golf clubs you purchased on sale.

When I talk about "saving money" today, I'm talking about money put aside for later use.

Christian financial Counselor Ron Blue wrote that 85% of Americans have less than \$250 saved by age 65.

I can't vouch for that statistic but it does seem that many people don't save sufficient money to see them through the tough times.

How many of us live from paycheck to paycheck.

And if our paychecks stopped how long would we last.
God has something to say about saving money.

Another financial authority, George Fooshee, shared that he gave to his young children three little boxes.

On one box was written the word: Give

On the second box the word: Spend

and on the third box the word: Save.

Each week as they received money from whatever source they were taught to put 1/3 of the money in each box.

As they got older the percentage changed but all three boxes were to get money.

Those words represent the three subjects I am addressing in this three-part series on "MONEY".

How to spend it,

how to save it.

and how to give it.

I've already dealt with the first of those and next week I wish to address the subject of giving, but today I want to talk about "Money-How to save it."

I'm not qualified to talk about where you save your money – in stocks, bonds, real estate, etc, but I can remind you of the biblical principle that affects the issue of saving.

I wish to start our look at saving money by thinking of a foundational principle and its corollary.

The principle is one of OWNERSHIP.

Last week I spent time establishing this principle.

Every dime we have ever earned or ever will earn belongs to God.

Listen to Deut 8:18 "Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth."

There's problem when we talk about giving God his part, "God's portion", or when we talk about 10% of our income as God's money.

The problem is that we begin to think that **most** of the money belongs to us.

But according to the Bible, every cent we earn belongs to God and we are the managers of it.

The principle is: God is the owner of **all** we possess.

That brings me to **the corollary- The owner has the right to determine how his money is used.**

I also made that point last week when we looked at spending money but it is necessary to point it out again in the context of saving money.

With some exceptions there are two large groups of Christians when it comes to saving money:

Those who don't save enough, and those who save too much.

Both groups have the same problem:

They don't trust God.

Those who save too much certainly have greater discipline than those who don't save enough but both have the same master controlling the use of their money - themselves.

The Biblical principle is that **God** is the owner and **he** has the right to determine how **His** money is used.

In Matthew 25 Jesus tells the parable of the man who gave differing amounts of his money to three of his servants.

The important point was that the servants were judged on how they used the owner's money.

Because God has the right to determine how his money is spent - we must make certain that when we **save** money we are saving it to accomplish God's purposes for the money.

Someone might think: "I know where this is leading. We're going to be told to save or invest our money in the church and we will collect the interest in

heaven!"

No, that is not the direction of my remarks.

There is a phrase floating around these days that I think demonstrates the problem we have with who truly owns what we have.

The phrase is "Financial independence".

"Financial independence" seems to connote, to many people, the idea of having sufficient money so as to **no longer need to work** -

But that definition I think violates the Bible's commands for us to work.

Others think of financial independence as financial security - no longer needing to **worry** about money.

That I think betrays another problem - our temptation to trust in our wealth rather than in God.

Still others may think of "Financial independence" as having sufficient money **to do what I want to do** .

But that violates the Bible's teaching about God being the owner of it all and him being the one who should determine how the money entrusted to us is used.

When we think we have to watch out for ourselves we strive for "Financial independence".

But God didn't create us to make us miserable but to give us life - full and satisfying life.

God doesn't want us to be financially independent (even if there truly was such a thing).

God wants us to be dependent on him and for us is to have enough to accomplish his purposes

Now, as I pointed out last week, I can have **less** money than God desires me to have by spending it in unbiblical ways

OR, I can have exactly what God wants me to have to accomplish his purposes.

And last week we saw that the two purposes are:

to meet our needs
to meet the needs of others

We looked then at God's instructions on how to **spend** money for those purposes and now today we look at God's instructions on how to **save** money for those purposes.

First, we are to build a proper contingency fund.

We already know that God expects us to spend some of His money to meet our needs.

We spent time last week thinking about the difference between a need and greed but it **is** God's intention that we spend some of His money, entrusted to our care, to meet our needs.

And the Bible teaches that we are put some of that money away, save it, to meet those needs in the future.

Proverbs 6:6-11 Even the ant understands the need to plan ahead and make provision!

Proverbs 21:20 "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has."

How many in our midst never would have dreamed two years ago that today they would be unemployed?

The Bible makes it clear that God expects us to put some money away to provide for our needs in case of an unexpected time of no income.

I well remember the young man in our church who several years ago lost his job and much to my surprise was able to continue meeting his needs because he had saved money for just such an emergency.

He lived for many months on what he had saved.

I was impressed.

No one other than God can tell you how much of God's money you should put aside as a contingency fund because every family's NEEDS are different.

The counsel I read from financial planners is 3-6 months worth of money put away to meet our actual needs in case of an emergency.

It seems reasonable to me that since God also desires us to meet the needs of others, our contingency fund should also have some money in it to respond to at least some of the unexpected needs of others.

How great it is to be able to draw from resources you have saved when you hear of the special need of some family or some ministry.

God has a second purpose for us saving some of His money.

I think it is supported by the same reasoning as the "contingency fund".

That second purpose is saving for "short-term spending".

Many call it a "savings account" but it should more accurately be called a short-term "**spending**" account.

In Genesis 41 we are told that when Joseph learned of the 7 years of famine that were coming in Egypt he also learned of the 7 years of plenty that would precede the famine.

He therefore saved.

He knew of a need that was coming and he planned to meet it.

Because there are needs you know you must meet in the **near** future such as transportation, education, maybe housing etc, it seems proper to plan to meet these needs by putting some of God's money into a "short-term spending account".

The "**Short-term** Spending Account" is the money you save knowing you will spend it in the near future.

A third purpose for saving some of the money God entrusts to us is what I call a "Long-term spending account".

Ron Blue in his book Master Your Money wrote that "only 2% of Americans reach age 65 (with sufficient funds to meet their needs).

And 11 out of 12 women will become widows, and the average Age of widows...is 52"

Listen to Proverbs 27:23-27 “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. You will have plenty...”

The wise writer is telling us to plan for the future.

Some might want to call this a retirement fund but I think there are some distinctions.

Retirement, as Americans usually think of it, doesn't seem to fit the Bible's teaching on work.

All of Scripture seems to indicate that God's people will stay as productive as they can for as long as they can.

But when we are unable to meet our own needs with our current income or when we choose to work in ways that don't yield an income we will need money to meet our needs and to continue to meet the needs of others - that is a long-term spending account.

But that seems quite different from what many people strive for today with retirement funds.

The purpose of too many retirement funds is to finally be able to spend lavishly on ourselves in ways we couldn't or didn't when younger.

When I listen to many people talk about their retirement plans it sounds like delayed materialism.

Some people discipline their spending now only planning to be undisciplined later.

But a "long-range spending account" operates under the same Biblical spending guidelines as our spending today should.

We are responsible to save some of God's money to meet our needs in the future.

A fourth purpose for saving some of God's money should be to establish a "long-term giving" account.

Some people call this leaving an estate or an inheritance but again I want you to note the differences.

Sometimes God allows us to have more of his money than we can rightly use in meeting our or our family's immediate needs or even the immediate needs of others.

And sometimes God allows us to have more of his money than we should rightly put away as a contingency fund, or a short-term or long-term spending fund.

What we have left, beyond what we give away now, maybe we should put into a "long-term giving account".

Maybe it is proper for us to leave an estate to our children.

But as I look at the Scriptures and at examples down through the centuries it appears that leaving children too much money is far more damaging to them than leaving them too little.

In Proverbs 30:8-9 we read, "...Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

In past centuries, for the most part, an inheritance was land or some other means of earning a living.

In other words the children were left not with a lot of money but with the means to make a living – the family farm or business.

Today, in too many cases, an inheritance may allow children to never work or just to spend more lavishly on themselves.

Remember this is a long-term **giving** account not a hoarding account.

We don't want our children to hold money for the sake of holding it.

In keeping with why God entrusts His money to us, it seems that a "long-term giving" account should be used primarily for two things:

To give to family members who can't meet their own needs and/or to give to meet the needs of others.

In other words even our "long-term giving" account should be used to meet God's purposes not just our selfish purposes or even our children's' selfish purposes.

If any man or woman has an estate, assets greater than their needs, it seems that they should give it away according to God's purposes or else make certain they have children who will give it away for those purposes.

How sad for a man or a woman to discipline themselves all their lives, earn, spend, give and save according to God's purposes and then have an estate, maybe larger than all the money they previously gave away, go to a child or children who either spend it wrongly or hoard it.

If you leave an estate for your children are you certain they will use it as God intended?

Based on Scriptural instruction that teaches us to use some of God's money to meet our needs and the needs of others I have suggested there are four proper purposes for saving:

1. A contingency fund to meet unexpected needs of our own and others.
2. A short-term spending account for our needs and the needs of others that we know are coming.
3. A long-term spending account for when we are unable to earn enough to meet our own needs.
4. A long-term giving account to give to our children if we should die before they can meet their own needs, or to give to meet the needs of others.

It all belongs to God and he has the right to determine how we use his money.

There are hundreds with no adequate contingency, spending or giving accounts.

There are hundreds of families in debt, and hundreds of families with little or no savings.

To be faithful to use God's money for God's purposes, some of us need to change the way we handle money.

I highly recommend the “Crown Ministries” courses we offer here at SGC. I also recommend Dr. Richard Swenson’s book, Margin.