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God & Your Stuff

The Vital Link Between Your Possessions and Your Soul

W E S L E Y K. W I L L M E R
WITH MARTYN SMITH



NAV PRESS

Bringing Truth to Life
P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80935



Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	7
1. GOD'S MAP FOR YOUR STUFF AND YOUR SOUL.....	II
2. SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND YOUR STUFF.....	25
3. MARKS OF A MATURE STEWARD.....	39
4. HOW THEN SHALL YOU BECOME A FAITHFUL STEWARD?.....	53
5. LESSONS FROM EARLIER CHRISTIANS.....	67
6. HOW DID WE GET HERE?.....	81
7. WHEN EVERYONE HAS THEIR HANDS OUT ..	95
8. WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM YOUR CHURCH.....	III
9. WHAT FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS SHOULD BE DOING.....	127
10. KEEPING YOUR SOUL ALIVE.....	141
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION.....	155
NOTES.....	165
AUTHORS.....	175

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GOD AND YOUR STUFF



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Introduction

I place no value on anything I possess, except in relationship to the kingdom of God.

—DAVID LIVINGSTON

“OKAY CHRISTIANS, WE HAVE OUR FINAL EXAM TODAY,” THE teacher proclaims as most of the students gasp in surprise. “Put away your books and paper. Keep only a pencil in hand. The time has come for you to account for how you have used the stuff in your life.” The few who are prepared quickly and confidently put away their notes. The rest are shocked and angry, exclaiming, “What type of a teacher would do this after such a happy life?”

While few Christians seem to take seriously what they do with their possessions or stuff, Scripture makes it clear in Romans 14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we are all to give an account of our lives to God at the end of our earthly existence. We will be asked questions about how we used our money and possessions, such as:

- Where did it all go?
- What did you spend it on?
- What was accomplished for eternity with all the things God entrusted to you here on earth?

Scripture further points out that God has entrusted us with His possessions as a test while on earth to determine the status of our soul in heaven (see Luke 16:1-9). As a result of this test, God is able to determine our spiritual



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



maturity, and the character or condition of our soul for eternity. These are all serious issues of the Christian life.

My wife, Sharon, is a gifted teacher in higher education. She often talks about how differently students prepare for a final exam. Some study carefully over the duration of the term. Others never study until the night before the exam. Others act as though they have forgotten a test is even coming. Similarly, many Christians prefer not to consider how they will be judged at the end of life on earth.

It is a commonly held belief that the central focus of the Christian faith is to worship and walk with God in all areas of our lives. Lordship is the predominant topic of the sermons and Christian programs we listen to, the hymns and choruses we sing, the literature we read, and the small-group Bible studies we attend. From the Four Spiritual Laws to contemporary Christian music, putting God first in our lives through trust and commitment is a never-ending theme, “for there is within each of us a longing for love and intimacy that only He can fulfill.”¹

According to Scripture, one of the most important ways that we demonstrate the lordship of Christ in our lives is how we handle our possessions. By this God is able to measure our faithfulness on earth and determine our level of responsibility in heaven. How we handle our possessions is also a measure of our commitment to winning the world to Christ. Mature followers of Christ realize that how they handle their possessions is genuine evidence of godly spiritual formation in their lives. Scripture is clear that God entrusts us with possessions to teach us always to put Him first.

Despite this fact, most Christians struggle with the tension between their stuff and their spirituality. Philip Yancey speaks for many of us when he states, “I wish I did not have to think about money at all. But I must come to terms with the Bible’s very strong statement about money!”²

Randy Alcorn hits the topic even harder: “Large segments of modern evangelicalism have succumbed to the heresy that this present life may be lived selfishly and



INTRODUCTION



disobediently without serious effects on the eternal state. Never have so many Christians believed that our monies and possessions are ours to do with as we please.”³ As Robert Wuthnow has found through his research, today’s Christian finds little connection between faith and possessions: “There is a kind of mental or emotional gloss to contemporary religious teaching about money that prevents them from having much impact on how people actually live their lives.”⁴

Our stuff and the spiritual development of our soul, however, are very important topics to God—so important that seventeen of the thirty-eight parables of Christ were about possessions. Possessions are mentioned 2,172 times in Scripture—three times more than love, seven times more than prayer, and eight times more than belief. About 15 percent of God’s Word deals with possessions—treasures hidden in a field, pearls, talents, pounds, stables, and so on.⁵ Obviously God understood that believers would find this a difficult area of their lives to turn over to Him.

Scripture repeats many times that if Christ is not first in the use of our money, He is not first in our lives. Our use of possessions demonstrates materially where we are spiritually. Is it possible that our checkbooks are a better reflection of our spiritual condition than the underlining in our Bibles? We are to be faithful managers and generous givers of what God has provided us.

The vision of stewardship in 1 Peter 4:10-11 (RSV) assumes that “good stewards of God’s varied grace” are men and women who are grateful, merciful, and faithful, and called to covenant responsibility for all of creation. When we talk about stewardship, it is not just a dictionary definition. It is God’s design for living as Christians in a nonChristian world through how we give of our time, talents, and money. Stewardship is God’s way of raising people, not man’s way of raising money.

The topic of faith and possessions is explosive—like walking in a snake pit or across a minefield. It is a “no-no” in many churches. We like to think that what is in our



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



pocket, wallet, or purse is our own business—no one else's. The purpose of this book is to lovingly reaffirm the essential role that possessions play in forming the spiritual life “so that the nature of Christ becomes the natural expression of our souls, bodies, and spirits throughout our daily lives.”⁶ As a result, we will experience joy by being generous.

To accomplish this, chapter 1 traces three primary ways God links our possessions and our souls. Chapter 2 builds on this framework by developing the important issues of spiritual formation and soul development as tied to our possessions. Chapter 3 takes this discussion a step further by providing a device to measure the correlation between maturity of faith and use of possessions. Chapter 4 outlines ways in which we are able to be faithful stewards, and chapter 5 takes us back in time to see how early Christians such as John Wesley dealt with possessions. Chapter 6 points out that Christianity is currently failing to reverse the culture and historically demonstrates how this decline has taken place. Chapter 7 provides a practical framework for dealing with appeals by developing a philosophy of giving. What we should expect from our local church is the topic of chapter 8, while chapter 9 talks about the essential stewardship education that should take place in Christian families, colleges, and seminaries. Chapter 10 provides suggestions for Christians and their ministries on how to revitalize the roots of stewardship.

To return to the analogy at the beginning of the introduction, there are no makeup tests when it comes to handling our earthly stuff. The consequences to our eternal soul are being molded now. Every moment brings us closer to eternity and the outcome of whether our treasure was stored temporarily on earth or forever in heaven.



God's Map for Your Stuff and Your Soul

Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money.

—RICHARD HALVERSON

Joy sits down for a moment and watches part of a television program that her two sons watch every day after school. The action and plots are typical, but during the commercials her kids light up, pointing out particular toys they want. "Mommy, can I get that?" they plead at various times.

Joy and her husband both work outside the home to make ends meet, but she feels badly she can't get as many things as she would like for her children. Now it's toys, but in junior high it will be designer clothes, and then in high school a car. For a moment she feels resentful of the television that daily imports new desires into the minds of her boys. With a little more reflection she might have realized that the same phenomenon is true of her. As she and her husband watch a favorite television program, they too are bombarded with images of the "good life." And they dream about getting a better car or that new electronic gadget.

Joy and her husband are both Christians and faithful



members of their church; yet neither of them was taught how to handle the materialistic demands of culture in terms of their Christian faith. And in this they are like the majority of American Christians—possessions seem important and seldom have a link to their spiritual life. How can we live out Christian financial values in the midst of a consumer-oriented culture that teaches us always to want more? Is there a way to break free of these ingrained values? Does God’s Word have anything to say about how a Christian is to handle his stuff in light of eternity? “As counter culture as it may seem, generosity is a virtue that’s absolutely essential for a soul that wants to remain free and to grow in spiritual health. For the attitude we have toward our money and possessions reaches to the depth of us, to the very nature of our existence.”¹

Many of us feel that if we only had a little more money or possessions, somehow our life would get straightened out. We could pay off our bills and have money left over to give to God. We could get out of our present financial mess; we could live with some security for once, maybe feel at peace with God. But perhaps something is fundamentally faulty with this strategy of getting more and more. Our lives are filled with anxiety and dissatisfaction. And even when we get that pay raise, we don’t give any more to God’s work.

What we need is a different starting place, a different assumption for our lives. More is never going to be enough. My goal in writing this book is to help you find a sturdier foundation for dealing with your stuff—one that gets you off the treadmill of “more.” It will happen when you rearrange the priorities of life to put God first.²

A TOOL, A TEST, AND A TRADEMARK

At the heart of ordering our relationship to God, our possessions, and our soul is understanding how God views this unique triangle. In the parable of the rich man in Luke 16, Jesus lays out three basic principles that would transform our lives if we only applied them. In summary, they are:



GOD'S MAP FOR YOUR STUFF AND YOUR SOUL



1. Our possessions are to be used as a *tool* to further God's kingdom here on earth;
2. They are given to us as a *test* to see how much responsibility we will be given in heaven;
3. They serve as a *trademark* to those around us that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.³

Let's unpack the Luke passage a bit before looking at each of these principles in more detail.

In Luke 16:1-9, Jesus tells His disciples about a wealthy man who does not want to deal with his daily financial affairs, so he turns them over to a steward or investment manager. The manager has held this position for many years and is able to handle the job with little effort.

One day at the wealthy man's club, a friend comes to him and says, "Hey, it's probably none of my business, but yesterday I was at the market and I saw your manager making some bad transactions with your money." Again, later that day, while the wealthy man is eating dinner at the local café, he runs into another friend who says, "I know it's none of my business, but I saw your money manager, and you might want to check up on him. I think he's robbing you blind."

So the wealthy man investigates and, sure enough, the person he entrusted with all his wealth is mishandling it. Shaken from his complacency and red with anger, he calls in the financial manager and tells him, "I have the goods on you. You have twenty-four hours to bring all accounts up-to-date. Then hand over the record book; you're finished."

Realizing that he's about to be out of a job, the manager calls on his cunning. He says to himself, *I too am a highly respected person in this community. I am not going to dig ditches or beg.*

The manager's plan is to reverse his record (see verses 5-7). He sends a runner to summon everyone in the community who owes his boss money. When the first of the debtors arrives, he asks, "How much do you owe my boss?" "Eight hundred gallons of olive oil," the debtor replies. The



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



manager counters, “Make it 400 and you owe no more.” At this, the debtor looks at him in amazement and says, “What a bargain. Thank you so much. If there’s ever anything I can do for you, let me know.”

The manager asks a second debtor, “How much do you owe?” “One thousand bushels of wheat,” is the response. The manager instructs, “Take your bill and cut it by 20 percent. You now owe eight hundred.” The manager has done the debtor a favor, but the debtor does not know why. And this sequence repeats itself until every overdue account is addressed.

Within twenty-four hours, the manager had surrendered his keys. On the street he meets one of the debtors, who greets him warmly. The debtor asks, “How’s it going?” The unemployed manager tells him a story of woe about the wealthy man coming on hard times and having to cut back his staff. The debtor, sympathetic to the man’s plight, immediately takes him in. When the money manager meets other debtors and relates his twisted tale, they all feel sorry for him. Soon, he has a new circle of friends promising to provide him whatever he needs.

By this time, the disciples must surely be thinking, *What a crooked, evil man. I can’t wait to see how Jesus will condemn this cheat.* However, Jesus surprises them by commending the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. Then Jesus pulls out of the parable and makes this statement to all of us about possessions: “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light” (verse 8). He goes on to apply the parable, noting three principles that encompass and communicate how God views not just our money, but all of our stuff.

He begins by saying: “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (verse 9). He is referring back to the money manager who has used his limited time and opportunity to leverage for himself a secure future. As children of God’s kingdom, we have



GOD'S MAP FOR YOUR STUFF AND YOUR SOUL



only a short time to serve as managers in this world. Our lives could end at anytime. We should use the stuff we have as stewards to affect people for eternity.

POSSESSIONS AS A TOOL TO ADVANCE GOD'S KINGDOM

In essence Jesus explains, "You need to learn how to use your worldly possessions in such a way that when you enter heaven people will welcome you because of your resourcefulness." In short: You have limited time on this earth and limited opportunity with your possessions—use them wisely! God is instructing us to leverage our possessions so that when we enter our eternal home, we'll meet people who will say, "You don't know me, but do you remember when you gave to that Christian college? Do you remember when you gave to that church or Bible society? Do you remember when you provided that spare room in your house? Do you remember? (*Well, barely, you think.*) Well, know that I am in heaven because of the way you used your possessions on earth to further God's kingdom."

The question becomes: How are we leveraging our possessions—our car, our home, our clothes, our stocks, our time, our talents, our collections—to glorify God? Wise stewards will assess all of their possessions to determine if they are being used wisely as tools on God's behalf. The point is not about giving a percentage of income or giving away what we have, but what we are doing with what we have to advance God's kingdom.

POSSESSIONS: A TEST WITH ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES

The second principle is that our possessions are a four-part take-home test. This test is to:

1. determine who is master of our life
2. assess how much responsibility we will be given in heaven
3. determine how faithful we were in dispensing God's grace



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



4. see what honors we will receive at commencement into heaven.

As Randy Alcorn states, “God makes it apparent that it is His business to watch us with intense interest to see what we do with the money He has entrusted to us. We are being tested and what we do with our money will influence the course of eternity.”⁴ This final exam is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. There is no calling in sick, no retake, no rescheduling, no appeals to the department head or dean. When time is up, the game is over, and we have no excuse. How will you score on the final exam? (Chart 1-1 provides a practice test for you to see how prepared you are and what changes you may want to make in your life.)

Luke 16:10-12 states, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?” It is as easy to shortchange someone with a \$10 bill as with \$10,000. One does not need to mismanage a high-tech executive’s fortune to prove oneself a poor steward; poor use of a weekly paycheck will serve to demonstrate the point as well. This is why our character is associated with our use of money.

God in heaven is looking down and saying, “For the span of your earthly life, I’m watching to see whose kingdom you’re really committed to. And if I cannot trust you with worldly, temporary wealth, then why do you think when you enter my kingdom I will be able to trust you with true riches—riches that last forever? Besides it’s not really your house, your car, your dining-room table, your 401k. If you died today, it would remain here and you would not. It is not yours; you are simply a steward.”

Part one of the test, then, is to determine our lord and master—God or stuff. We cannot serve both God and money (Luke 16:13). Each moment of our lives we are



GOD'S MAP FOR YOUR STUFF AND YOUR SOUL



making choices to leverage and use the possessions we have to either benefit our lives on earth or to invest in heavenly stock. This is why our checkbook and credit card statements are a better reflection of our soul's health than any Christian service we could render. This life on earth is the preface, not the book. There is no cheating on this test, for God knows our attitudes and our actions better than we know them ourselves.

The second part of the take-home test is to demonstrate how much responsibility we are worthy of assuming in heaven. Do you remember in grade-school gym class when the teacher selected someone to be captain? The captain had earned the right, through responsible behavior, to select who would be on his or her team and what positions they would play. The captain's leadership would by and large determine the team's success. Similarly, here on earth we are demonstrating to God what we are able to be responsible for in heaven.⁵

What if at the judgment seat of Christ we are shown to have been irresponsible with the money entrusted to us? And what if our assignments in the world to come are meager because of our ineffective management here? This brings our possessions into focus as a Christian trust, not merely a medium of exchange to serve our own private ends. Our possessions are something that God gives us; then He steps back and allows us to work. As a result of the decisions we make on earth, God will assign us proportional responsibilities in heaven.

The third part of the take-home exam is to assess how well we have shown ourselves dispensers of God's grace. This facet of the test arises from a passage like 1 Peter 4:10, which instructs us to be "good stewards of God's varied grace" (RSV). Or, as other translations suggest, we are called to be "good managers" (TEV) or "faithful dispensers of the magnificently varied grace of God" (PH).

The thinking behind being dispensers of God's grace is threefold: (1) God creates abundance; therefore, we sense ourselves as overwhelmingly gifted; (2) God is gracious;



Chart 3-1

Take-Home Practice Test to Final Exam

God has entrusted us as stewards of His possessions while we are on earth, as a multipart test (Luke 16). After assessing how we use our possessions, God is able to determine our spiritual maturity, character, and how much responsibility we will be given in heaven for eternity. Your answers below will help you predetermine how prepared you are for the final exam at the end of your earthly life.

1. Who is master of your life—God or your stuff? (Luke 16:13) After reviewing your credit card statements, your checkbook, and looking over your possessions, take a sheet of paper and list specific examples that demonstrate that God's eternal kingdom and your soul are your highest priority (Luke 16:1-9).
2. Make a list of all the possible people who will welcome you in heaven and thank you that they are there because of how you used your stuff to accomplish God's work of winning others to Christ. This list will be two parts: one is the direct result of what you did, and the other is the results of a person or ministry who was doing God's work because of your support—for example, a missionary who leads people to Christ.

therefore, we celebrate God's grace; and (3) God is generous; therefore we are sent into the world to be imitators of God.⁶ Our giving is reciprocating God's grace. Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37 show how the early Christians shared all they owned and even liquidated their possessions to give to others as they had need. "Much grace was upon them" and "There were no needy persons among them" because they gave sacrificially. How common is that today? Are we imitators of God in dispensing His grace to those around us?

Part four of the test is God's assessment of what honors or crowns we will earn in heaven. Scripture points out that we will receive rewards in eternity according to what we do on earth and that the degree of rewards will vary (Proverbs 24:11-12; Matthew 19:27-30; Luke 14:12-14). It may come as a surprise to many Christians, but the Bible indicates our reward levels in heaven will differ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)—not all of us will have the same position of authority (Luke 19:17,19,26). We will not all have treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21), and unfortunately, not all Christians



will hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (25:23).

Not only can we fail to receive rewards, we can forfeit rewards already in our account. So we are to guard our own crowns (Revelation 3:11) because we can be disqualified from earning them (1 Corinthians 9:27), lose them (3:15), or have them taken away (Matthew 25:28-29). John warns us, "Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully" (2 John 8).

In summary, God will reward you according to how you pass the test of what you do with your money and possessions, and it will affect your experience in heaven. The choice is yours: pleasures here or rewards later.

TRADEMARK OF WHO MADE US

We live in a culture of brand loyalty and market shares. Businesses spend huge amounts of money to persuade us what to drink, drive, and wear. Each of these products has a trademark well-known to all of us. In fact, companies will pay millions of dollars for mere seconds to

Take-Home Practice Test to Final Exam (cont'd)

3. Cite five ways that you are leveraging the use of your possessions on earth to glorify God in heaven.
4. List ten examples from the past year that demonstrate you are using your generosity to grow God's kingdom.
5. How much responsibility will you be given in heaven (Luke 16:1-9)? If you were sitting in a room with God today and He asked you to justify how much responsibility you should have in heaven as a result of being a faithful steward of your stuff on earth, what would you say?
6. Write a one-page essay, citing specific examples of how you are an imitator of God's grace through how you use your possessions (1 Peter 4:10).
7. List specific examples throughout your life of what you have done to earn crowns in heaven as a "good and faithful servant," by how you have used your stuff on earth.
8. Make three lists—one each for neighbors, friends, and coworkers—that demonstrate specific evidence (by how you use or don't acquire stuff) that your trademark is that of a Christian (Luke 16:13).



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



promote their trademark during prime-time television.

As your neighbors, friends, or colleagues look at you, what brand or trademark do they see? Are you “of this world” in how you use the possessions entrusted to you or are your values reflective of someone created by God and striving to serve Him?

Luke 16:13 brings us back to this truth: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” We either serve God or we worship our things.

Try taking inventory of all you have. Ask yourself, “Am I using this room for God or myself?” How about that car or timeshare? The second home, spare room, or the abundance of food in the refrigerator? This is serious business in God’s sight, and if we take these truths to heart, it is sobering to consider how we must reorder our lives so that our neighbors, business associates, and friends will know we are committed Christians by how we use our earthly possessions.

IT IS POSSIBLE!

If this all seems overwhelming and impossible, don’t despair. While it is not easy, it is possible to turn your life toward God in the use of your possessions. The following is the story of one man and his family who found a way out of the maze of conflicting demands from the world and silence from the church to the promised land of financial freedom.

Brian and Sandy Kluth are similar in many ways to millions of baby boomers: they live in suburbia, own a home, and have three children. Both are college graduates; they are committed Christians, attend church regularly, have two cars, and live on a middle-class income. What makes them different from millions of other such couples is that they have gained control of their financial life. They have made a conscious choice to put God first in all their financial decisions. In recent years they have



GOD'S MAP FOR YOUR STUFF AND YOUR SOUL



given away between 20 and 40 percent of their income each year. They are now coming to a place where they will set a certain income as being enough for their needs, and anything over and above that amount will be given for causes that build God's kingdom.

Just as important as the fact that they are generous givers is the fact that their possessions do not possess them, and they have been transformed in this spiritual discipline. They realize the link between their faith in God, their possessions, and their souls. They understand that possessions are a tool of God, a trademark of their faith, and that their choices are a heavenly test.

No one, of course, is born a giver. Just as sharing does not come naturally to a young child, so giving money is not an automatic act when that child grows up. Brian Kluth did not grow up as a Christian. And he had imbibed the belief of our culture that somehow happiness could be had if only he had a little more money or a few more things. These values led Brian to steal from friends and employers (and even family). Every time he took something it seemed that the goal had skipped one step further away; satisfaction lay always just beyond his grasp. Before he could give, he had to find a way to break free of the controlling power of money. He needed a new foundation for his life, a new organizing principle for his financial choices.

When he became a Christian at age twenty-one, he realized that stealing was wrong, and he stopped such overtly sinful behavior. But he still didn't know how to find true happiness. He approached life in much the same way, only now he charged those items on his credit card instead of stealing them. And he found himself accumulating an unmanageable debt. Brian began to realize that although he was a Christian, he was not living his life according to Christian principles. As he began to be exposed to more teaching about giving, he concluded that he needed to get serious about this area of his life, and fundamentally to turn around his ideas as to where happiness and satisfaction lay. At that point he felt God



GOD AND YOUR STUFF



calling him to commit at least 10 percent of his income to spiritual things.

This basic commitment to be honest with God in his personal finances led to some basic lifestyle choices as well. Brian's eye-catching Chrysler Cordoba began to look a little different to him. Realistically this gas-guzzling car was simply too expensive for him at this stage in his life, his mid twenties. He sold it for cash and bought a less expensive vehicle. It wasn't quite riding in style, but it did more accurately reflect his financial means. And this was just one of many such choices that his newfound commitment to God brought about.⁷

These choices, which inevitably come when we get real about our financial life, are the tools by which God shapes our material and spiritual lives. As we learn to reorder our lives and make service to God our highest priority, we make financial choices that begin to reflect that new internal value system. As Brian found out when he made the choice to sell his sports car and get a more modest vehicle, these choices are not necessarily easy; but by making them we slowly begin to bring our lives into conformity with Christ, which is the ultimate goal of the Christian life.

Brian Kluth's story is proof for other Christians that a way exists out of financial frustration. Of course, there is no one way to escape frustration. Americans are accustomed to the "dieting" mentality, which looks for ten easy steps to lose frustrations. The answer to frustration is not to copy the steps that another person has taken. At the root of most financial troubles are spiritual battles that must be dealt with before external actions can be changed.

Like Brian, many Christians mistakenly believe that more money will bring financial security and freedom from anxiety. This internal attitude controls our financial choices. Once and for all, that inner stranglehold must be loosened by Scripture's clear teaching. As that inner orientation is changed, God's values become the primary motivator, and we can then take concrete steps to bring life into line.

Notes

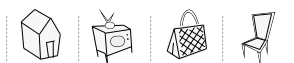
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CHAPTER ONE



Authors

WESLEY K. WILLMER IS VICE PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSITY Advancement and a professor at Biola University in La Mirada, California, with responsibility for enrollment management, alumni, marketing communications, development, intercollegiate athletics, and university planning. His career in Christian higher education has included serving at Seattle Pacific University, Roberts Wesleyan College, the Billy Graham Center, and Wheaton College. From 1986–1996, he served on the board of the Christian Stewardship Association, serving as chairperson the last four years.

In 1987 he initiated and directed the national conference “Funding the Christian Challenge,” which attracted nationwide media attention in such publications as *Christianity Today*, *U. S. News and World Report*, *Fund Raising Management*, and *The Washington Post*. He has initiated and obtained grants of more than \$1 million to study and improve nonprofit/faith-based management practices.

In addition to addressing various conferences and consulting with nonprofit organizations, he has been author, coauthor, editor, or editor-in-chief of twenty books and many professional journal publications. One recent book is *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God’s Kingdom*, published by Jossey-Bass. *Fund Raising Management* magazine selected him to write on the future of funding religion for its 25th anniversary issue. He is also on the editorial board of *Boardwise*.

In 1986 the Council for Advancement and Support of Education selected Willmer from among its 14,000 individual members at more than 2,800 institutions to receive



its annual award for significant contributions in research and writing. In 1993 he was chosen from the same membership to serve on the National Commission on Philanthropy, and in 1999 he was asked to serve on the editorial board of *CASE International Journal of Educational Advancement*. In 1999 the Christian Stewardship Association honored him as the 1999 Outstanding Stewardship Professional. His alma mater selected him as one of one hundred “alumni of a growing vision” out of the more than 40,000 alumni.

Willmer earned a B.A. in psychology and an M.Ed. in counseling and guidance at Seattle Pacific University. His Ph.D. in higher education was granted by the State University of New York at Buffalo. He resides in Fullerton, California, with his wife, Sharon. They have three grown children: J. Brian (wife Lindsay), A. Kristell, and Stephen.

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