

December 5, 2008

Is Your View Of Money Sinful Or Biblically Solid?

You may have noticed over the years as you've read through your Bible that some parts are **informational** — you're glimpsing the historical backdrop of what was taking place. Other parts involve **teaching**, in which God gives His commands. You find as well the **prophetic** parts in which our caring and compassionate Lord warns His people when they've gone astray. In contrast to the other parts, the prophetic areas are intense and often filled with emotion! God speaks with deep determination through His prophets—sometimes imploring, sometimes berating, but always forewarning about the consequences if people press on in their sin.

You've probably noticed in this series of Lifebytes and recent e-mails that our Lord has called us to write in a prophetic mode. You may have found that these challenges to help you live daily in both personal and communal righteousness have made you somewhat uncomfortable. However, others from whom we've received feedback have thoroughly been enjoying the cleansing and renewed intimacy with our Father — our heart's desire and intent for all who use these materials!

We're gloriously amazed by the numbers of those whom the Spirit has been drawing to the website to use these resources He's given us. Most of the people are unknown to us but wholly known to our Lord! We hope you'll rejoice with us that over 71,000 files were downloaded from our website this past month. What is especially gratifying is that so much of the feedback we receive is from outside the United States. That's actually no surprise to us. When we were leaving Israel after our stay there in 1993-94 to carry this prophetic message back to the United States, we were warned by our Israeli Christian friends, "You're going back to the hardest place on earth for this message to be received. Christians there **don't need God** and they **don't need each other**." Over the intervening years, their sorrowful words have proven even more true.

Why do we say this? Ever increasingly, the Nicolaitan system of established religion and the individuals who rule it have become an idol unto themselves. Contemporary western church culture is steeped in an organizational framework that mirrors the business style of corporate institutions. What a tragic departure from the biblical pattern of extended spiritual family who fulfill the 54 "one-anothers" as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. If the called-out ones of Jesus were about His business of strengthening and encouraging one another in His Spirit while they were serving the poor and needy as He did, don't you think that His Kingdom would be reaching more lives?

"Streams of living water" who cling in loving obedient trust to Jesus and live to fulfill God's purposes on earth get noticed, whether by those who detest His own as "narrow-minded" or those who rejoice to see His Presence as they are His hands and feet and heart. On the other hand, most of the effort in corporate-style religious establishments is devoted to using people's time, energy and finances to keep the system running. How tragic that Older Testament history has to repeat itself! God's prophet Jeremiah so earnestly warned his contemporaries to heed and obey God's words and turn away from the soulish gratification of "following the dictates of their own stubborn hearts" (see 13:10). As with today, few had ears to hear...

While we were living in Israel, our Lord warned us that what we'd be sharing would not be readily embraced by those who were satisfied with western religious systems and

practices. Only a relative few would recognize the Hebraic foundations as emanating from His Spirit until the “Dark Days of Chastisement” come on the United States. There’s little doubt that these days are soon coming, and may even be commencing as we write!

One of the keen joys as we've served our Lord in a ministry capacity over the years has been to discover others through whom the Spirit is flowing in the same direction. For instance, so often during our 11-year sojourn at a retreat center (1983-93) we'd send out a monthly teaching letter — only to receive one from David Wilkerson a few days later writing on the same theme He'd given us! This situation is repeating itself now, only this time from another source. In Lifebyte 58 we wrote about the dire consequences of loving money (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Right after we sent out that Lifebyte, we read an insightful book by Randy Alcorn entitled, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*. This book is the most exhaustive biblical understanding of money and wealth we've seen, packed into 500 pages (thankfully indexed and chaptered by topics).

Randy convictingly discusses the follower of Jesus' pilgrimage to salvation and the hindrance to the person who is saddled with an unbiblical view of money and wealth. This is a very user-friendly resource. Just by going to the table of contents you can find specific areas that apply directly to your life. For example: • Are you controlled by materialism? • Do you have a correct biblical view about tithing? • Are you in debt in any form, and is it nullifying your trust in our Lord? • Are you saving for retirement in accordance with God's Word? • Are you a leader in a congregation or ministry, and are you handling the finances according to God's Word?

The key issue is not whether you have a lot of wealth or even a little, but whether your view of it hinders your relationship with our Lord and your obedient trust in Him. Randy makes a strong biblical case that many Christians are heading for hell by permitting money and wealth to become idols which replace God in their lives. So many Christians in this country are tragically unaware that they've done this — and you may be one of these...

You may find the book at your local library or Christian bookstore. Or you can order "Money, Possessions and Eternity" but going to: http://www.epm.org/books/money_posSESSIONS_and_eternityDetail.php

Eager to meet each of you at our Lord's coming banquet,
Mike & Sue