

# Does God want you poor or rich?

## ***What the bible says about money and wealth***

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### **This message covers**

- Is it biblically okay to be rich or poor?

### **Information notice board**

- 1) **About me.** Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life pursuing money and position. God however humbled me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017. Since then, he has given me a message, to go and preach the gospel as a preacher and an evangelist. You can read my full testimony [here](#):
- 2) **About these series.** The Lord Jesus gave me a single word "Go". This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church in order to develop mountain moving faith. This message is one of those topics.

*(Information notice board continued at the end).*



Start



Grow



Mature

## Introduction

Let me cut to the chase: Having money or wealth can be very dangerous for a Christian. *"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."* (1 Tim 6: 10 NLT). Even worse, money can cause you to lose heaven. Jesus said: *"Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."* Matthew 19: 24 (NIV).

So, you Christian must watch money very carefully, like a hawk lest it wraps its iron claws around you..

### **...and yet the dilemma is:**

- The bible shows that God wants us to be prosperous, often financially. A popular bible verse says: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).
- We need wealth to do Christian work such as feeding the poor, treating the sick, visiting those in prison (see Matthew 25:37-39) as well as evangelising to make disciples of all nations (See Matthew 28: 19-20) particularly for many remote areas!

So how do we resolve this dilemma? What does the bible teach about wealth?

## Poor Christ of Calcutta

Jesus seemed to especially love the poor. For example, when he began his public ministry, quoting from the scriptures he started thus: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."* Luke 4: 18 (NIV).

In another place, after Jesus praying all night, power was coming from him and healing everyone. That is the time when he said these anointed words, commonly referred to as the beatitudes:

*Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.  
Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.*

*Luke 6: 20- 21 (NIV).*

Jesus himself was born to poor parents who couldn't afford a lamb for sacrifice and so instead offered pigeons. Infact, the traditional view has been to associate Jesus with one is poor and cares for the poor, perhaps like Mother Teresa in the slums of Calcutta.

## The God of prosperity

Many people today however increasingly say Jesus was wealthy and he likewise wants you to prosper financially. Those who say Jesus was rich are often called "the prosperity gospel" preachers.

One *Washington Post* article even calls the prosperity gospel one of the "worst ideas of the decade". It mentions its promoters to be many of the popular ministers you probably know. Names such as Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K.C. Price, Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, T.D. Jakes and the appropriately named Creflo Dollar.<sup>i</sup>

Another article says that the prosperity gospel has its roots in an American occult tradition called "New Thought" and that a 2006 Times poll found that:

- 17% of American Christians identify explicitly with the prosperity gospel movement
- 31% espouse the idea that "if you give your money to God, God will bless you with more money."
- 61% agree with the more general idea that "God wants people to be prosperous."<sup>ii</sup>

A prominent bible college I looked up says: "*Poverty is not godly, if poverty were godly, then the homeless people living on the streets would be the godliest people on the face of the earth. And that's just not true. God doesn't want you poor. He died to make you rich! (2 Cor. 8:9)*"<sup>iii</sup>

Are the prosperity teachers right? Does God really want you rich?

From the bible we can see that. For example, in the Old Testament there are many verses which seem to show that wealth is evidence of God's blessing. For example:

*"You will be called priests of the Lord, ministers of our God. You will feed on the treasures of the nations and boast in their riches. Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours." Isaiah 61:6-7 NLT*

In the New Testament, Jesus occasionally attended public parties and feasts (see Luke 5:29-32; John 2:1-11), accepted invitations to dine with the rich and powerful (see Luke 11:37; 14:1-6), used investment banking analogies in order to illustrate His parables (see Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27),

and on more than one occasion, graciously received costly gifts from his followers (see Luke 7:36-39; John 12:1-3).<sup>iv</sup>

Also, several wealthy people were instrumental in advancing God's kingdom for example: **Matthew** (Luke 5:27-29), **Joanna** (Luke 8:3), **Joseph of Arimathea** (Matthew 27:57), **Zacchaeus** (Luke 19:8), and **Lydia** (Acts 16:14-15) were all individuals of great means who were called by God for a special work and who used their wealth for a righteous cause.<sup>v</sup>

## How does the bible resolve the dilemma of wealth?

The bible in a famous Chapter on Faith describes how "ancient people", heroes in the bible lived. It starts: *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for."* Hebrews 11: 1- 2 (NIV).

So, first the bible says the "ancients" were commended for their faith.

The word "commend" means to "praise formally or officially" for example "*he was commended by the judge for his courageous actions*".

Who was commending these ancients for their faith? It was God.

Who were these ancients? These were Old Testament heroes. They included the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Hebrews 11 describes the faith of these 3 wealthy patriarchs. It says:

*"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Hebrews 11: 8-10 (NIV).*

Now one of these 3 men who lived in tent was Abram, who God later renamed Abraham. The bible says this about his wealth: *"Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold."* (Genesis 13: 2).

As an example, 1 kg of gold today is worth \$57, 548.5.<sup>vi</sup> If Abraham had just 20 kg of gold, he was worth about \$1.15m. He was wealthier than the average American whose net worth today is about \$750,000.<sup>vii</sup>

If we return to Hebrews 11, there is something significant about these ancient heroes. Even if they had great wealth, **they seemed to live in a state of migration, in a set of transition**. Tents typically represent a short-term stay. The bible shows us that even if they had great wealth – they lived in tents.

Instead of using their money to build cities and empires for their own glory, like the kings and princes around them, instead, they remained in tents, looking forward to a heavenly city built for them by God – for his glory.

Now where else do we see a teaching building treasures in the heavenly city of heaven rather than earth? That's right, Jesus himself said this: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6: 19 – 21 (NIV).*

The bible teaching therefore shows us how the ancients lived their lives:

1. They had great wealth
2. But they walked by faith.
3. Walking by faith meant they didn't store money/wealth for themselves on earth.
4. They instead stored heavenly treasures – spiritual blessings.

**You must go and do likewise.** You must have the same attitude to money as them and this attitude must be so radical such that that if money is stumbling you, perhaps causing you to become covetous or greedy, then give it away and follow Jesus! He showed this radical attitude to righteousness and holiness this way:

*If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Matthew 5: 29 (BSB).*

Jesus further seemed to indicate that an abundance of possessions can indicate greed and in introducing the parable of the rich fool, he said:

*“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” Luke 12: 15 (NIV).*

The big issue or problem with wealth according to Jesus is that **accumulating possessions can lead to greed** and so you must guard yourself, watch out!

In another place, Jesus' warning to wealthy people is even more radical, Jesus didn't mince words, he said: *Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 19: 24 (NIV).*

The bible shows us that when Jesus said it, it was such a shocking statement, infact the very next verses record this:

*When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19: 25 – 26).*

Jesus was showing us that money is so powerful, it is virtually impossible for a rich person to enter heaven – unless God helps them do it and the only way to do it is by taking a journey of faith and considering all things including money to be garbage, filth, for the sake of gaining Christ (see Phil 3:8).

## How can you overcome the risk of wealth snaring your heart?

The bible contains a number of teachings to help you protect your heart from covetousness.

The bible cautions: *“Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them” (Psalm 62:10).*

*Proverbs 30:7–9* also provides a middle ground in a prayer you could adopt: *“Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; 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.”*

Finally, an appropriate warning and teaching from the Apostle Paul:

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6: 17-19 (NIV).*

This teaching shows us that rich people or those aspiring for it need to do 3 things:

1. **Be humble.** Have the right attitude of humility. Don't be arrogant, it is God who gives you wealth, not yourself.
2. **Put your hope in God – by faith.** The God who allows you to enjoy wealth.
3. **Become rich in good deeds** – use your money to generously help others.

It is in doing these things that you lay for yourself a treasure in heaven – like the ancients, the heroes of faith.

## Conclusion

Jesus seemed to have had a special compassion for the poor. He was even anointed by the Spirit to preach to them the good news and yet, he also had many faithful followers who were rich -after all, he is also the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – wealthy patriarchs.

This shows that God accepts both the poor and the wealthy.

The unifying factor between the poor and the rich is however faith – for without faith it is impossible to please God, **but** the rich have additional warnings from God because accumulating wealth very easily leads to greed and to forgetting God, for money is a god, seeking to steal and kill and destroy your heavenly inheritance.

The path to eternal life is narrow, but even more so for those who are wealthy and in fact it only seems to be accessible to the rich through doing 3 things: don't be arrogant instead, be humble, put your hope in God – not in your money and become rich in good deeds. Then you will store for yourself heavenly treasures.

If there is any teaching about wealth, I honestly think it should come with a warning label, just like we see on cigarettes. The warning on any teaching on prosperity should probably say:

**Warning: Accumulating wealth can cause you to lose eternal life. Without God, it is impossible for the wealthy to go to heaven, so be humble, trust in God and be rich in good deeds.**

## Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- **You are a believer but money has become a snare.** God in his love is warning you to flee from greed before something worse happens – turn back to him before money becomes a god for you.
- **You have never received the gift of Christ,** being eternal life and neither have you received his Holy Spirit who is a guarantee that you will receive a heavenly treasure.

Write to me so I can pray further for you: [dwasake@shaweleroad.com](mailto:dwasake@shaweleroad.com)

## Next steps

- Visit our website which shows the steps it takes to get to know Jesus and be saved from this wicked generation. <https://www.shaweleroad.com/what-must-i-do-to-get-saved>
- Our work is freely given for we received freely from the Lord. If you however like what we are doing: [Then you can partner with us by giving to our work.](#)

### **Information notice board (continued)**

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*The Gospel Coalition seeks to help people know God's Word with their minds, love God fully with their hearts, and engage the world with grace and truth.*

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> [The Worst Ideas of the Decade \(washingtonpost.com\)](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

<sup>ii</sup> [The prosperity gospel, explained: Why Joel Osteen believes that prayer can make you rich - Vox](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Poverty Is Not Godly | Charis Bible College](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [What Did Jesus Really Teach about Wealth and Poverty? | Intersect \(intersectproject.org\)](#)

<sup>v</sup> [What Did Jesus Really Teach about Wealth and Poverty? | Intersect \(intersectproject.org\)](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [Gold Prices Today | Live Gold Spot Price | Price Charts per Ounce/Gram \(monex.com\)](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [The Average Net Worth in America by Age, Race, Education, and Location \(businessinsider.com\)](#)