

# What God Thinks of Money

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**A** YOUNG WOMAN, AMY, APPROACHED HER parents near the end of her seminary education. Both parents were in the midst of successful careers, and both made very good money. Amy admired them both, and was eager for them to help her sort out her career options.

For some time now, she'd been preparing for overseas missions, though she couldn't say with the certainty others had that God was calling her into that field specifically. It was merely the job that interested her most during her college years, and had led her to seminary.

Amy was a very determined and thorough young woman. Once she'd set her sights on the mission field, she did more than the average person would do to prepare. Not only did she attend seminary, but she also became fluid in the language of the country (China) where she intended to work. Even that wasn't enough for her, though. She also studied carefully the history and the government, attending workshops and seminars to keep herself current.

At one of those workshops she struck up a conversation with a recruiter who eventually brought her two offers from financial services firms about to launch their businesses in Beijing.

The money stunned Amy. Never before had she

considered finances in making career decisions, but these offers really made her think twice. What's more, both jobs still offered her the chance to be in the country—with more resources than she'd ever have as a missions employee.

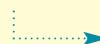
Puzzled by this sudden turn of events, Amy didn't hear any direct response from God when she prayed about the matter. While her Christian friends tended to criticize the offers as temptations to distract her from missions, she wasn't so sure that was true.

Moreover, her parents had never been particularly pleased with her plans, and she expected they'd be utterly delighted by this turn of events.

Money, they always told her, did more than ideas. If she really wanted to change the world, then she needed to conquer it on its terms. Only then would she have the resources to get people to pay attention to her.

On the other hand, neither parent wanted Amy to be unhappy. So the family had decided to go away for the weekend and talk through Amy's choices.

What factors should they consider? What role should money play in the decision? If you were Amy's parents, how would you advise her?



## Scripture Passages

I Timothy 6:8-10

Luke 12: 15-21

## Study

So far in this series of studies, which seeks to take us from being self-serving to serving God and others in our jobs, we have learned the following:

1. Knowing where God wants us means listening to Him, and listening to Him means we must know His Word.
2. Ambition for anything but kingdom goals is sinful, but once we're sure we're doing the work God wants us to be doing, we should do it with zest, earnestness, gusto, and commitment to excellence.
3. While God cares about the work we do, He cares more about the people around us. He wants us to manage our time so we're able to tend to the needs of our relationship with Him, and the needs of our relationships with His children.

Next, as we sort through managing the resources God gives us to serve Him; we examine His views on money. Let's begin by looking at the views Scripture takes of money. Write out what you think these verses say about God's view of money.

– Proverbs 10:15

– Proverbs 23:4

– Ecclesiastes 5:10

– Mark 4:16-19

- Luke 12:34
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Matthew 6:24
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- I Timothy 3:2-3
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- I Timothy 6:10
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Hebrews 13:5
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- I Peter 5:2

Having read all these passages, discuss the overall impression you get of how the Bible views money, wealth, riches, etc.

In one of the most famous cultural expressions to emerge from the Bible, we learned when we were young that “money was the root of all evil.” As we got older, though, we were taught, no, that’s not what the Bible says, but rather “the love of money is the root of all *kinds* of evil.” What’s the difference?

That difference lies at the heart of God’s view of money: Creation of wealth is not sinful. In fact, the creation of wealth can be one of the most significant ways a follower of Christ can honor God. What changes that creation from faithful stewardship to sinful self-indulgence are at least three factors. First, the reason we’re creating it; second, the time,

energy and focus we give to creating it at the expense of other matters; and third, how we use it once it's created.

If the “chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” as we've reminded ourselves throughout these studies, then the chief reason for a working Christian to seek to create wealth is to glorify God. This is done not merely by creating wealth competently and with integrity, but setting out to create wealth with a purpose, adding value to the corner of the creation God calls us to tend. While this includes provision for our families (a command made clear in Scripture), it can be skewed quickly when provision shifts to comfort as a primary objective. In this case, the focus has shifted from God to self, a dangerous spiritual condition Jesus warns against often.

Read Luke 12:15-21 for a caution from Jesus about money and wealth. What are the primary points Jesus is making in this passage about our attitude toward wealth?

Now examine I Timothy 6:8-10. React to these phrases:

- *Those who want to get rich:* What characteristics might describe someone who “wants to get rich?”
  
- *Fall into temptation:* What does this phrase say about what happens when our focus shifts to wealth-generation? Is the fall purposeful, or a consequence?
  
- *Plunge men into ruin and destruction:* While the fall may be because we're not paying attention, this phrase suggests once we've fallen prey to the temptation, the plunge is inevitable and unavoidable. React to this idea.

What is Paul's antidote? I Timothy 6:11.

Even when our wealth is used prudently to further the kingdom of God, the generation of that wealth can be sinful. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?” Scripture asks. *How* we create wealth is as important to God as the results of that activity. If workaholic and selfish ambition are the hallmarks of our wealth generation, then not only have we not honored God, but we’ve also ceased to tend the other assignments He’s given us—loving others, parenting responsibly both physically and spiritually, evangelizing and making disciples, to name but a few.

Finally, we must also always be mindful that God owes us nothing, and nothing we receive here on earth can be seen as a sign we’ve merited special privileges from him. To suggest that is to malign the Christians whom He calls to sacrifice. Wealth to a Christian is never to be viewed as a reward, but rather as a continuous tool God offers them to be re-invested in His creation.

In a culture where wealth is often the measure of our worth as humans, Christians must be constantly on guard so their own lives aren’t selling this lie to their coworkers, their children, and themselves.

## *Common Sense and Eternal Principles*

- The Bible offers some of its strongest cautions against the lures money and wealth offer in drawing us away from Christ, or, failing that, in drawing us away from our work for Him.
- We can glorify God by wealth generation, but not if the purpose of generating that wealth is to serve ourselves.
- Money and wealth are additional tools God makes available to some Christians to use in their work in His Kingdom.
- Success in generating wealth does not make us more important than others.
- Money is not a barometer of God’s love for us, nor is it a sign of His pleasure with us.