



Money — It's an Integrity Thing



This issue of *WILLOW* is devoted to the topic of integrity. It's safe to say that money is very often a factor in situations involving integrity. So let's look together at the subject of integrity in the context of money.

A starting place is to realize that in and of itself, money is neutral. It's simply a medium of exchange. It can be used for great good or for great evil. However, to stop there would be incomplete.



The fact that so much of Jesus' teaching was about our relationship to money and possessions suggests there is something unique about money. Why did he single out money as the one thing we could not serve and still serve God? Why did he indicate that the deceitfulness of riches chokes out God's Word in our lives and makes it unfruitful? Some authors suggest that it was because money has a spiritual force or power that attempts to draw our allegiance to itself and away from God.

Furthermore, as leaders who wish to live with integrity, what would be helpful to understand about money and our relationship to it?

- **Understand that money is a powerful thing.** It can become the idol that makes it harder to enter the Kingdom than for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle ... or that can cause us to build bigger barns to store our surplus only to be labeled by God as "fools."

- **Understand that our culture assigns money god-like powers.** The culture says, "Money is all powerful, it makes things happen" (Perhaps true in some circles of influence but not in the truly important arenas of life.) The culture says, "Money provides ultimate security" (On paper my future may seem monetarily secure but earthly treasures are subject to rust, moths and thieves — not to mention economic downturns!)
- **Understand that the best way to break money's hold is to be generous with it.** The act of giving money away in God-honoring ways that advance the Kingdom, dramatically breaks the hold it can otherwise have on us — while blessing the receiver and providing us a joy found in no other way.
- **Understand that money and possessions are simply entrustments.** God is the owner, we are trustees. Trustees have the responsibility to use the resources entrusted to them in ways that the owner has designated, not in ways that satisfy the trustee's whims.
- **Understand that sacrifice is often blessing in disguise.** Maybe Jim Elliott said it best, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Think of your own example of giving up something that seemed like a sacrifice at the time only to have it become, often unexpectedly, a blessing in disguise.

Those understandings will help us as leaders to relate with integrity to our money and possessions while giving us freedom and joy in an area of life so often fraught with anxiety and bondage. |w