

IN THE MARGINS: People who say money isn't important will lie about other things, too

By Tony Martin

Editor

Proverbs 30:7-9 offers a humble but profound prayer: "Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."

Let's be honest – talking about money can feel tricky, even uncomfortable. But the Bible never shies away from it. Did you know there are over 2,000 verses in the Bible that deal with money, wealth, and possessions? Clearly, God cares deeply about our relationship with finances.

So, let's get personal. How healthy is your relationship with money? Are you constantly stressed about not having enough? Or perhaps your worries come from trying to manage and protect what you already have? Maybe you're somewhere in the middle – comfortable but feeling guilty about enjoying your blessings.

Proverbs gives us a wonderful balance to aim for: neither poverty nor riches, but simply "enough." Easier said than done, right? But the heart of this prayer points us toward the ideal of contentment. Contentment doesn't mean complacency or a lack of ambition. It means trusting God to provide what you need while being grateful for what you already have.

So, how do you know if you're being a good steward of what God

has entrusted to you? Here are a few simple indicators:

- **Peace vs. Anxiety:** When you think about your finances, does it bring peace or panic? Stewardship isn't about the size of your bank account; it's about the state of your heart. Good stewardship should cultivate peace, not fear.

- **Generosity vs. Hoarding:** Are you generous with what you've been given, or do you hold tightly to every dollar? Stewardship isn't just about saving and investing – it's also about sharing and blessing others.

- **Purpose vs. Consumption:** Do you manage money intentionally, knowing it's a tool for greater purposes, or is it simply for satisfying immediate wants? Good stewardship sees beyond instant gratification to long-term kingdom impact.

Now, if you're thinking, "Well, I might have a few issues," that's okay! Improving our relationship with money is a journey, not a one-time event. Here's how you can take positive steps forward:

1. **Start with gratitude:** Every good thing you have is from God. Regularly thanking Him helps shift your focus from scarcity to abundance.

2. **Budget prayerfully:** Yes, budgets aren't glamorous, but think of them as spiritual exercises. Budgeting prayerfully acknowledges God as your ultimate provider.

3. **Practice generosity intentionally:** Even small acts of giving can break the hold money might have over your heart.

4. **Seek wisdom over wealth:** Proverbs continually encourages wisdom. Prioritize wisdom, and financial balance often follows naturally.

As Christians, what is our bottom-line behavior when it comes to money? Simple – it's trust and generosity rooted in gratitude. Trusting God means believing He sees your needs and will provide accordingly. Generosity flows naturally from a heart that understands everything we have is God's gift to us, entrusted to manage well and share freely.

Remember, money itself isn't the problem; it's our attachment to it that creates tension. Proverbs reminds us of the dangers of both extremes – too much, and we may forget our reliance on God; too little, and we may dishonor Him through desperation.

Here's the encouraging news: God cares deeply about your heart and your financial well-being. You're never alone in figuring this out. He gives guidance, wisdom, and grace generously. Ask Him to help you find the right balance, the peaceful place where you can honestly say, "Lord, thank you – I have enough."

And perhaps this week, challenge yourself to reflect on Proverbs 30:7-9. Let it inspire a prayerful conversation about your relationship with money. Because in the end, our goal isn't simply financial security – it's spiritual health, joy, and contentment in trusting the One who provides it all.