

Column

We are now several weeks away from the beginning of Lent, a 40-day season in which Christians anticipate and prepare for Easter, the Queen of all Christian feast days. During this period, many seek to refocus their lives on being all-out soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ. Lent might be thought of as “Christian bootcamp”.

One area of life that could use attention is our attitude toward money. Some Christians believe (or at least act as if they believe) that God is not interested in money. To their way of thinking, He is only interested in "spiritual" things.

Not so! The real God is the One who made heaven and earth. . . . who orders and sustains the universe . . . who has intersected with the world of physicality in the person of His Son Jesus. Hence, the totality of life belongs to God. He is vitally concerned with all of life, and this includes what we do with our money.

A church newspaper contained an article entitled, "What's your style with money?" Six styles people adopt to money were highlighted. They include:

Security Style. Money for those who adopt this style represents security and a safeguard against future crisis. Their motto is: "A penny saved is a penny earned." The upside is that they are prepared for the unexpected. The downside is that thrift drifts into miserliness. They can become so busy preparing for a rainy day that they miss the flowers and sunshine of today.

Reward Style. Those who adopt this style spend money in response to frustration or a sense of deprivation. Their motto is: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." These people experience temporary enjoyment, but their actions can be irresponsible and immature.

Happiness Style. Money for those who adopt this style is a way to purchase happiness. Their motto is "Diamonds are a girl's best friend." These people tend to be optimistic and exuberant in their spending, but these two can evolve into an addiction.

Success Style. Self-worth is equated with net worth. Their motto is: "Whoever dies with the most toys wins!" These people set high goals for themselves and work hard to achieve them. The downside is that human and spiritual values are often lost in the quest for profit.

Problems Style. These who adopt this style would rather not deal with money at all. Their motto is: "Money is the root of all evil." On the positive side, their focus is on human values and feelings. On the negative side, they can become "ascetics" who fail to enjoy the good gifts of creation.

Balanced Style. Those who adopt this style seek a healthy balance drawn from the styles already mentioned. For them, money is a means, not an end.

Obviously, this last style fits best with the Christian profession and worldview. Material things matter. They are gifts from a good God, but they are not to be made ultimate. Rather, they are to be gratefully received, used and shared.

Lent is a time for doing this, for bringing every area of our life under the lordship of Christ. Let us seize this opportunity. Get ready to go into training!

Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess; Grant us grace that we may honour thee with our substance, and remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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