

A walk with Mr O (30)

Money matters

I've got some good news for you, Mr O! I've been promoted to a position that's just right for me. And it comes with a lot more money!

Congratulations! I know how hard you've worked. And it's wonderful to be happy in your job. But please be careful. Money is a blessing. It's a necessary part of daily life and no society can function without it. But it's also something which is extremely dangerous.

I realise that, and that's why I want to talk to you about it. What are the most important things for me to bear in mind?

Unconverted people look on money as something they have earned, which belongs to them, and which they can spend as they like. This is true even of generous people.

Unfortunately, when it comes to money, many Christians have an unconverted mindset. Little by little this mindset ruins them, until they are spiritually fit for nothing.

So, what is the biblical position relating to money?

The Bible has a very great deal to say on the subject. Biblical Christians do not believe that they own any money at all. What they have in their hands is what Christ has given them. It is the Lord's money. It is to be used as He wants. And, supremely, what He wants is that His money should be used for the good of others.

So, you are saying that unconverted people are mostly getters and that biblical Christians are givers?

That's a bit stark and it makes a good sound-bite! It's all a question of ambition. Worldly people believe that having lots of money will give them pleasure – and, of course, that pleasure may include the 'buzz' of being generous. Biblical Christians don't mind getting lots of money. But their ambitions are entirely different. Their burning desire is to go through life giving away as much money as possible! This is true of all Bible-lovers. They believe that helping the needy glorifies God.

They believe that supporting the Lord's work also glorifies Him. After all, they follow a Saviour who says, 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.'

So, Mr O, how does all this work out in practice?

Well, first of all, it's impossible to be responsibly generous unless you know exactly how much you've got coming in, how much is going out, and where it is going. Handling the Lord's money properly requires some simple book-keeping. Maybe our church deacons could give some help to church members who don't know how to do that.

Quite honestly, that's something I've never thought about.

That said, we must be careful not to give each other a set of rules. The aim for everybody is to glorify God by thankfully accepting what He has given to supply our needs and comfort, and then to give away as much as possible to His church, to His work, and to the needy.

There must be no uniformity about how this is done. Some people who have large families, or who have a particular ministry of hospitality, need large houses. Others don't. People who travel for their work, or who have lots of children, or who ferry people around, need large cars. The rest of us don't.

And do all believers really need to wear designer labels, own the very latest technology, and spend so much on holidays? The world needs to see that we are a people who give away the maximum, not the minimum. Of course we are! This is how the Lord has treated us!

On several occasions you have mentioned giving to the needy. But I don't think I know any really poor people.

That's because you haven't looked for them! Forgive me for being so blunt. There are really poor people all around us. The 'cost of living crisis' is not an invention of the media. Weeping with worry is the daily experience of countless individuals and families in the U.K. If you have no contact with the poor, give to those who do. And what shall we say about the needs abroad? What does Jesus want me to do with His money? It's time to stop ducking the question.