

WORDS OF WISDOM ON MONEY FROM JOHN WESLEY

Excerpted from an article by Dr. Charles Edward White (Spring Arbor College, Michigan) that initially appeared in Leadership magazine in Winter, 1987.

JOHAN WESLEY'S teaching on money offered simple, practical guidelines for every believer.

1. GAIN ALL YOU CAN.

His first rule about money was gain all you can. Despite its potential for misuse, money in itself is something good. There is no end to good it can do: "In the hands of (God's) children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked."

2. SAVE ALL YOU CAN.

Wesley's second rule for the right use of money was save all you can. He urged his hearers not to spend money merely to gratify the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, or the pride of life. He cried out against expensive food, fancy clothes, and elegant furniture: "Despite delicacy and variety and be content with what plain nature requires."

John Wesley (1703–91) was one of the greatest evangelists in the history of the Christian Church. A preacher of great power and an organizer of genius, he founded Methodism in the face of intense opposition and laid the foundations of future world-wide expansion.

3. GIVE ALL YOU CAN.

Wesley's third rule was give all you can. One's giving should begin with the tithe.

Beyond these broad strokes, Wesley listed four scriptural priorities to the use of money:

1. PROVIDE THINGS NEEDFUL FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY (1 TIMOTHY 5:8)

The believer should make sure the family has "a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on" as well as a place to live and enough to live on if something were to happen to the breadwinner.

2. BE CONTENT

"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). "Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place to lay his head, and something over, is rich," he said.

3. OWE NO MAN

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17) and "Owe no man anything" (Romans 13:8). Wesley said the next claim on a Christian's money is the creditors'. He adds that those who are in business for themselves need to have adequate tools, stock, or capital for the carrying on of that business.

4. DO GOOD.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). After the Christian has provided for the family, the creditors, and the business, the next obligation is to use any money that is left to meet the needs of others.

Wesley recognized some situations were not clear-cut. He accordingly offered four questions to help his hearers:

1. In spending this money, am I acting like I own it, or am I acting like the Lord's trustee?
2. What Scripture requires me to spend this money in this way?
3. Can I offer up this purchase as a sacrifice to the Lord?
4. Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?

