

# Summary of Wesley's Sermon “The Use of Money”—Based on Jesus’ Parable of the Shrewd Manager

John Wesley insisted that the point of the parable of the Shrewd Manager was that the money he gave away was not his, but his master's. Christian giving is grounded on the biblical conviction that God alone is the Owner of all. We live in His world, not as masters, but as managers. As His stewards, God has entrusted us with assets of various kinds. But they remain His property. We do not even belong to ourselves. We are to offer ourselves and our substance to Him as living and holy sacrifices, acceptable to Him through Christ Jesus, to serve Him and those for whom Christ died.

For Wesley, the parable reminds us that the way we handle our personal assets determines our eternal destiny. If we believe—as we profess we do—in the world to come, we will give careful attention to how we use our resources in this world. Money is never to be an end in itself, but always a means to an eternal end.

Wesley noted that the people of this world are wiser in their own way than most Christians. They are more consistent with themselves; truer to their principles; more committed to their goals than the people of the light. Jesus urged His followers to learn from the shrewd manager to make wise and timely use of wealth. Gain friends by doing all the good you can by all the means you can, so that when you and your wealth are gone, God may welcome you into heaven.

In Wesley's day, as in ours, worldly people were more apt to discuss the use of money than were believers. Wesley protested this neglect by publishing far more sermons about the right use of money than about holiness.

Wesley acknowledged that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). But he insisted that money itself is not evil. The fault does not lie in the money, but in those who use it. It may be used badly. And what may not? But it may be used well. It is equally applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. Money is an excellent gift of God, serving noble ends in the hands of God's children. It may be food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, shelter for the homeless, husband to the widow, father to the fatherless, defense for the oppressed, health to the sick, relief to those in pain, eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. Indeed, it may lift the gates of death!

To **gain all we can** applies not only to money. Wesley insisted that it is a shame for Christians not to improve on whatever they do. We should continually learn—from the experience of others or our own; from reading and reflection—to do everything better today than we did yesterday.

By **saving all we can**, Wesley did not have in mind wise investments in the stock market. The virtue he recommended was frugality: Do not waste any of your God-given assets.

But Wesley continued: If we stop here, all is for nothing. We do not save anything, if we only pile it up. We either use money wisely, or we effectively throw it away. If we are to use it to gain friends for ourselves, we must add a third rule. Having, gained all we can and saved all we can, we must **give all we can**.

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