



In 2006, Warren Buffett pledged the largest philanthropic gift in history; 30-40 billion. Lessons from Buffett's strategies, coupled with sage advice from Scripture, provide a base for a biblical approach to money management. Realistically, how can God use you to change the world if you can't manage your own financial affairs?

**Ecclesiastes 5:10-18** The lover of money will not be satisfied with money; nor the lover of wealth, with gain. This also is vanity. When goods increase, those who eat them increase; and what gain has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of labourers, whether they eat little or much; but the surfeit of the rich will not let them sleep. There is a grievous ill that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owners to their hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture; though they are parents of children, they have nothing in their hands. As they came from their mother's womb, so they shall go again, naked as they came; they shall take nothing for their toil, which they may carry away with their hands. This also is a grievous ill: just as they came, so shall they go; and what gain do they have from toiling for the wind? Besides, all their days they eat in darkness, in much vexation and sickness and resentment. This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.

## Reflections

We've been thinking of getting a larger mailbox at our house lately. We are quickly coming up to the holiday season and the catalog retailers have been very busy as of late sending out countless catalogs to our home. There is one catalog, I must admit, that I do linger over and enjoy. I'm not sure how they do it, but those Harry and David people with their holiday catalog filled with the most amazing fruits and other wonderful foods, has me hooked. It began with those pears.

My grandmother had a pear tree, and we would enjoy climbing it into late summer. We would grab a pear and eat it while sitting above the ground, no worries in the world. To be honest, the pears were ok, the environment was the attraction. A boy in a tree is a happy person. So pears were ok, not great, to me as I grew into adulthood. Then one day a box of Harry and David pears showed up at our home.

After eating the first one I spent a whole night looking for where they injected the honey into this incredibly wonderful treat. The pears are amazing, sweet, wonderful texture, juicy and irresistible. A whole box of this amazing treat was mine; I guarded my treasure like it was a box of gold coins. Pears, however, as fresh fruit do not last long. By the end of the box a few soft spots could be seen, they were less than their best. So the last wasn't as good as the first.

Another holiday season came and another box of pears showed up. Too cool! But I looked around me this time, noticing family for the first time (isn't it amazing how 'wealth' whatever form it takes can blind us to others?) and gave a thought to sharing one of my precious Harry and David pears. So I did. The look of enjoyment on my wife's face as she tasted her pear made me realize that a gift is most often better if shared. I enjoyed my pear and her pear. If you visit me during the holidays

and there are pears, you'll be asked to have one; I want to share that wonderful taste with everyone!

We are to enjoy the wealth and gifts that our labor produces, as they are precious gifts from God. The writer of Ecclesiastes, known as the Teacher, wrote this lesson thousands of years ago. We know it as Ecclesiastes 5: 18-19. Jesus Christ builds on this assurance and adds in the joy of giving away generously of our wealth. John 6:1-12 shows that when we give away what we have, we can take care of all of God's people. We are then able to live in the light of Christ, pleasing Him who saved and redeemed us, showing him our love by caring for His people.

There are 8-12 pears in a box. Can you find joy in sharing your treasure with one or two of those who have not tasted that sweetness? God yearns that we all share our wealth!

- Karl Berland

## Readings

*Don't have a Bible? Access the readings at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).*

### Sunday, November 11

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20. In what ways would recognizing the gifts that God gives you bring you 'gladness of heart' instead of anxiousness from wanting more?

### Monday, November 12

Acts 3:1-10. God gives us what we need, which often is different than what we want. Here a man lived a life expecting that money was the only solution to his crippled legs. Peter, in the name of Jesus, commanded to him that he walk, and he did. Where does God give you what you need and how do you respond?

### Tuesday, November 13

Exodus 16:11-20. God provides what we need. We may have much or we may have little, but God provides fully what we need. How can this text help you understand that what you have is what God intends for you to have?

### Wednesday, November 14

Exodus 20:1-18. Verse 3, which we know as the First Commandment, establishes a relationship that God expects us to honor. Yet in 2007 the temptations of acquiring stuff, filling our homes with all kinds of things, and our thoughts always on getting more, present a challenge to this. How can keeping His Commandment alive in your mind and heart help you to deal with the temptations of the world you live in?

### Thursday, November 15

1 Timothy 6:6-10. St. Paul describes the evil of loving money before loving God. As sinners many of us have been tempted, some have given in to this love of money. Think of ways you can respond to that loving care of God, who Jesus teaches us forgives us all our sins as we repent (turn away) from them.

### Friday, November 16

Luke 18:18-27. Jesus understands our hearts. We cannot hide any of our thoughts from him. Here he challenges a rich man who has done all the visible signs of being 'good' yet his heart has fallen to the love of money. When we hold our wealth closest to our heart we do not allow Jesus to be there. How will your heart be owned by Jesus and Jesus only?

### Saturday, November 17

Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul prays for the Ephesians in this text, that they know the 'glorious riches' of God, through Jesus Christ. Here Paul defines what riches and wealth truly are, being in relationship to the Lord God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and sustained daily with the Holy Spirit. How can we as the church help proclaim and live this message in our world?