

Prosperity and the Christian.



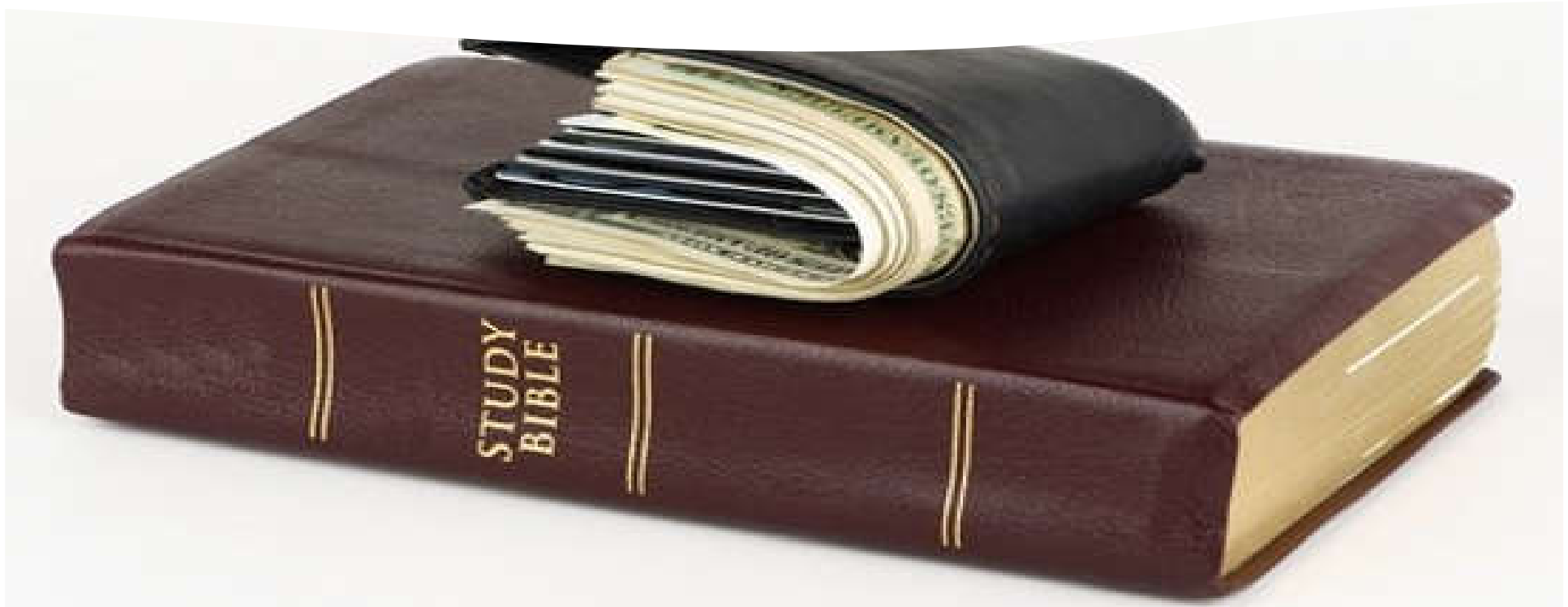
When you talk about money in a secular environment people's eyes light up and you have their attention, but when you speak about money in the Church, people get uncomfortable.

However, as I was returning from my Limpopo trip on Thursday, I was thinking about this subject because of a conversation that I had with one of my customers.

He has been having to put 50k a month into his business to keep it afloat, having lost government contracts because he won't pay bribes and the state of the economy etc

I started wondering about what we are investing in Heaven and why there are so many preachers that have promoted a Gospel that stands in stark contrast to the one that Jesus and His Apostles preached.

The message they preach is the very opposite to the example of the lives of the Apostles and of the lives of many great men and woman of God who in recent centuries have sacrificed all to go out as missionaries to an unevangelised world.



(Niv) Devotional 7 August 2021.

Mark 8:36. *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*

Thoughts on today's verse.

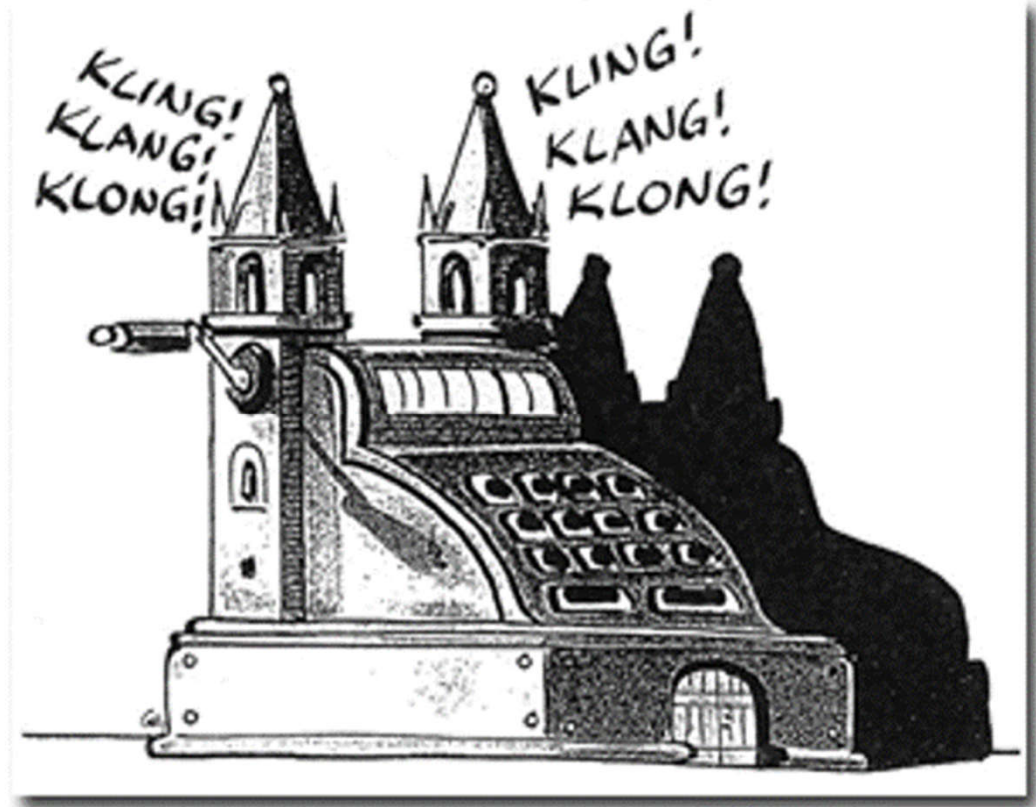
We chase after so many different things. Only one thing is needful. Having a fistful of dollars, a great estate, and lots of prestige doesn't mean a whole lot if you've gone to your ultimate address without the Lord. Even worse is to find that in the middle of your busyness, you awake to find yourself in the barren land where Christ does not dwell, and life is not found. Let's not lose our life, our soul, our meaning, chasing after what is not lasting.

My prayer:

Father help me to keep my priorities right, my life holy, and my heart open to your will rather than being blinded with my own self seeking. In Jesus precious name I pray. Amen.

I don't agree with the emphasis and doctrine of some churches or ministers with regards to money and prosperity and I believe the problem with many Pastors and professing Christians, is that they cannot serve two masters (and they have chosen to love money).

Money and the Church.



Each Christmas, Christians tell stories about the poor baby Jesus born in a lowly manger because there was no room in the inn. But the Rev. C. Thomas Anderson, senior pastor of the Living Word Bible Church in Mesa, Arizona, preaches a version of the Christmas story that says baby Jesus wasn't so poor after all.

Anderson says Jesus couldn't have been poor because he received lucrative gifts -- gold, frankincense and myrrh -- at birth. Jesus had to be wealthy because the Roman soldiers who crucified him gambled for his expensive undergarments. Even Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, lived and traveled in style, he says.

"Mary and Joseph took a Cadillac to get to Bethlehem because the finest transportation of their day was a donkey," says Anderson. "Poor people ate their donkey. Only the wealthy used it as transportation."

CNN (25 December 2009)

THE SON OF MAN DID NOT
COME TO BE SERVED,
BUT TO SERVE.

MARK 10:45

In reading the Gospels, we can focus on Jesus' poverty. There is a sense in which Christ's incarnation itself was an impoverishing act. Indeed, in order to take on human flesh and dwell among sinful people and the filth of this world, Jesus had to set aside the wealth of heaven. This was Paul's teaching in **Philippians 2:7**, where he wrote that Jesus "*emptied himself [of his privileges], by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*"

2 Corinthians 8:9.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Intersectproject.org

Jesus was born in a stable.

We can also see the level of poverty that Jesus experienced by looking at the material state of his family. Most people are familiar with the details of Christ's birth since they are recounted and celebrated every Christmas.

Jesus' nativity story includes being born in a foreign city (presumably without family and friends), being placed in a manger (literally a feed trough) and being visited by shepherds, strangers who were considered by most people to be the outcasts of society (Luke 2:7).



In describing Jesus' circumcision, Luke reports that Mary and Joseph offered two pigeons as a temple sacrifice for Mary's purification.

Luke 2:22–24. *When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as it is written in the Law of the Lord, every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: a pair of doves or two young pigeons.*



Jesus was born into a poor family.

Leviticus 12:7–8.

These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.

Apparently, then, Jesus' parents were too poor to offer the customary lamb.



Jesus was born into a poor family.

Jesus had no home and
relied on the hospitality
of others.



When a man
wanted to follow
Jesus, this was His
response:

Matthew 8:20.

*Foxes have holes,
and birds of the air
have nests, but the
Son of Man has
nowhere to lay his
head.*

Jesus did not have any material possessions.

Jesus:

- preached from borrowed boats,
- multiplied borrowed food,
- rode on a borrowed colt,
- and was buried in a borrowed tomb.



In fact, most of Jesus' material needs,

as well as those of his disciples, were apparently met by donations from a group of devoted women who accompanied him.

In his Gospel, Luke refers to “Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for [Jesus and his disciples] out of their means”

(Luke 8:2–3; Mark 15:40–41).



Mark 15:40–41.

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

In Galilee, these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Jesus was supported by the women who followed him.

Luke 8:1-3.

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others.

These women were helping to support them out of their own means.



Jesus was supported by the women who followed him.



**It was these
women who
went to Jesus
tomb to prepare
His body.**

Luke 24:10.

*When they came back from the tomb, they
told all these things to the Eleven and to
all the others. It was Mary Magdalene,
Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and
the others with them*

Jesus did not have money to pay the temple tax.

Matthew 17:26-27.

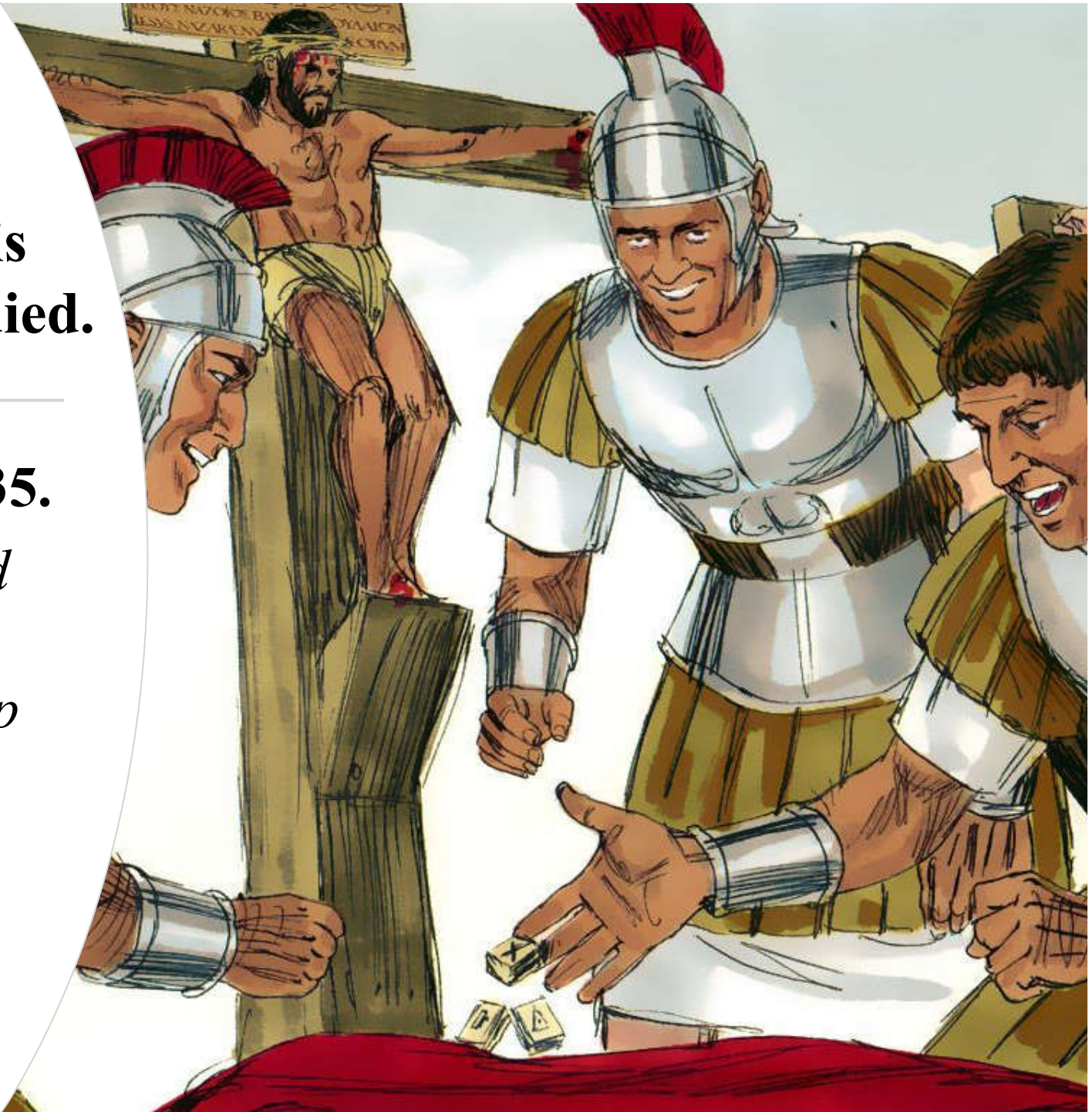
Then the children are exempt, Jesus said to him. But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.



**Jesus only
possessed his
clothes when died.**


Matthew 27:35.

*When they had
crucified him,
they divided up
his clothes by
casting lots.*





Paul and Money. Philippians 4:10-19.



I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Paul and Money.

Philippians 4:10-19.

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.

Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God, and my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus

Paul and Money.

1 Corinthians 4:9-13.

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings.

We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world, right up to this moment.

Manual labour in Paul's day.

Handworkers were unimportant in ancient society.

They were badly educated, horribly poor, and had to work from dawn to dusk with their hands to eke out a living.

The upper classes despised them because they were just one step above slaves and beggars.

Anyone who had to work with their own hands for a living was a social nonentity, and no one with any class would do anything that was manual.

(Pauline Dogmatics, Kindle 4858)



Acts 18:1-3.

Paul and Money.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.



Paul and Money.

Acts 20:34-35.

You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul and money.

1 Timothy 6:5-19.

People of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's.



Prosperity.



The danger of the prosperity message that swept the Church in the last four decades, was that Godliness was seen by some as a means to financial gain in spite of the clear warning in Scripture in **1 Timothy 6:5-19.**

The poor were despised and looked down on, viewed as been out of God's will. Once again not in line with what we see in **James 2:2-13.**

The rich and the poor.

James 2:2-13.

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in.

If you show special attention to the man in fine clothes and say:

Here's a good seat for you, but say to the poor man, you stand there or sit on the floor by my feet, have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?



The rich and the poor.

James 2:2-13.

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor.

Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture:

“Love your neighbour as yourself”, you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.



The Early Church.

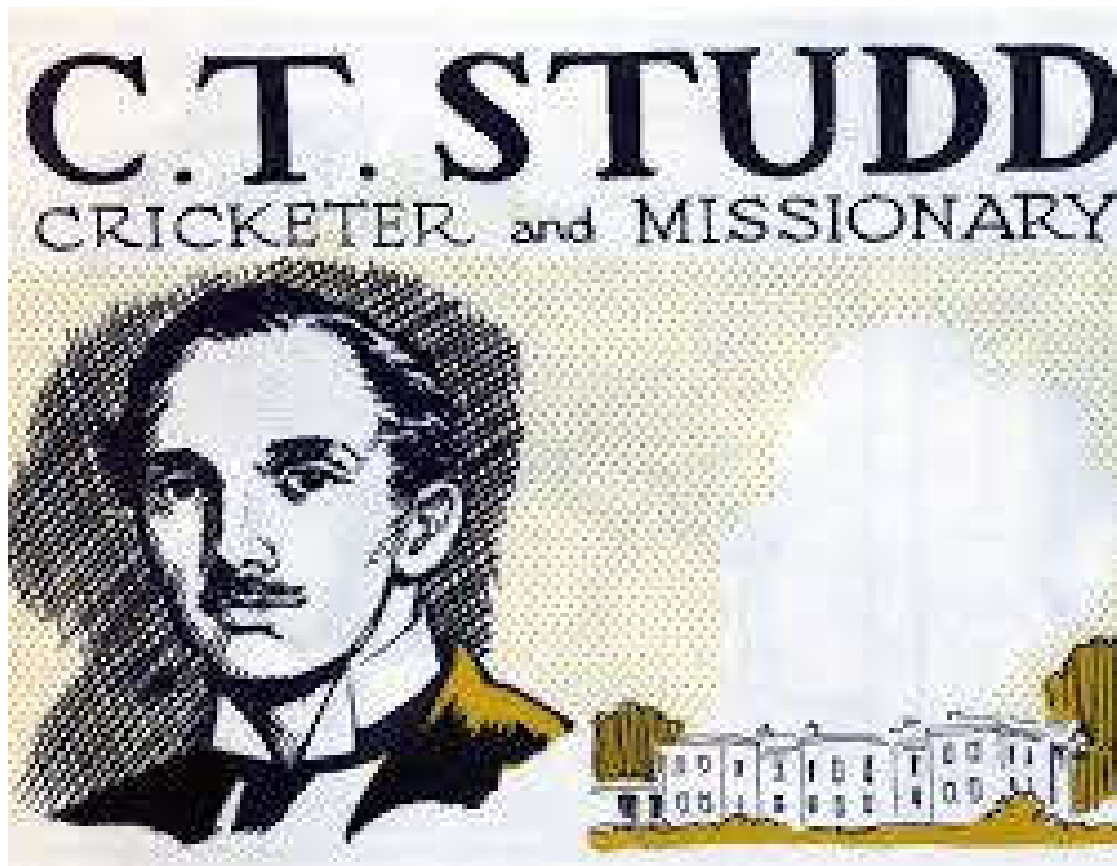
Acts 2:42-47.

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

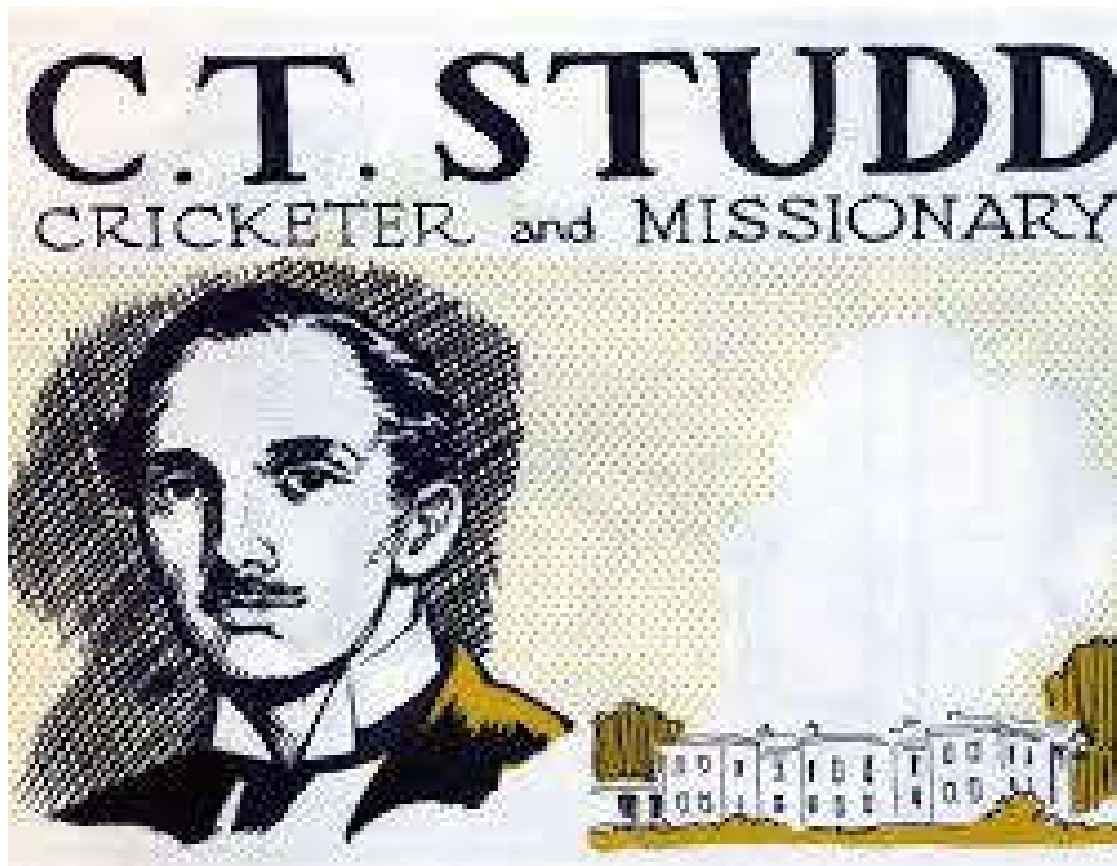


**From a short
biography on C.T.
Studd.**

As someone said of Studd - "'His life will be an eternal rebuke to easy-going Christianity'."

Studd said: 'If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him'.

It was while he was in China at the age of 25 that Charlie's full future financial inheritance came to him. He decided, after prayer and searching the Scriptures, that he was to give it all away.



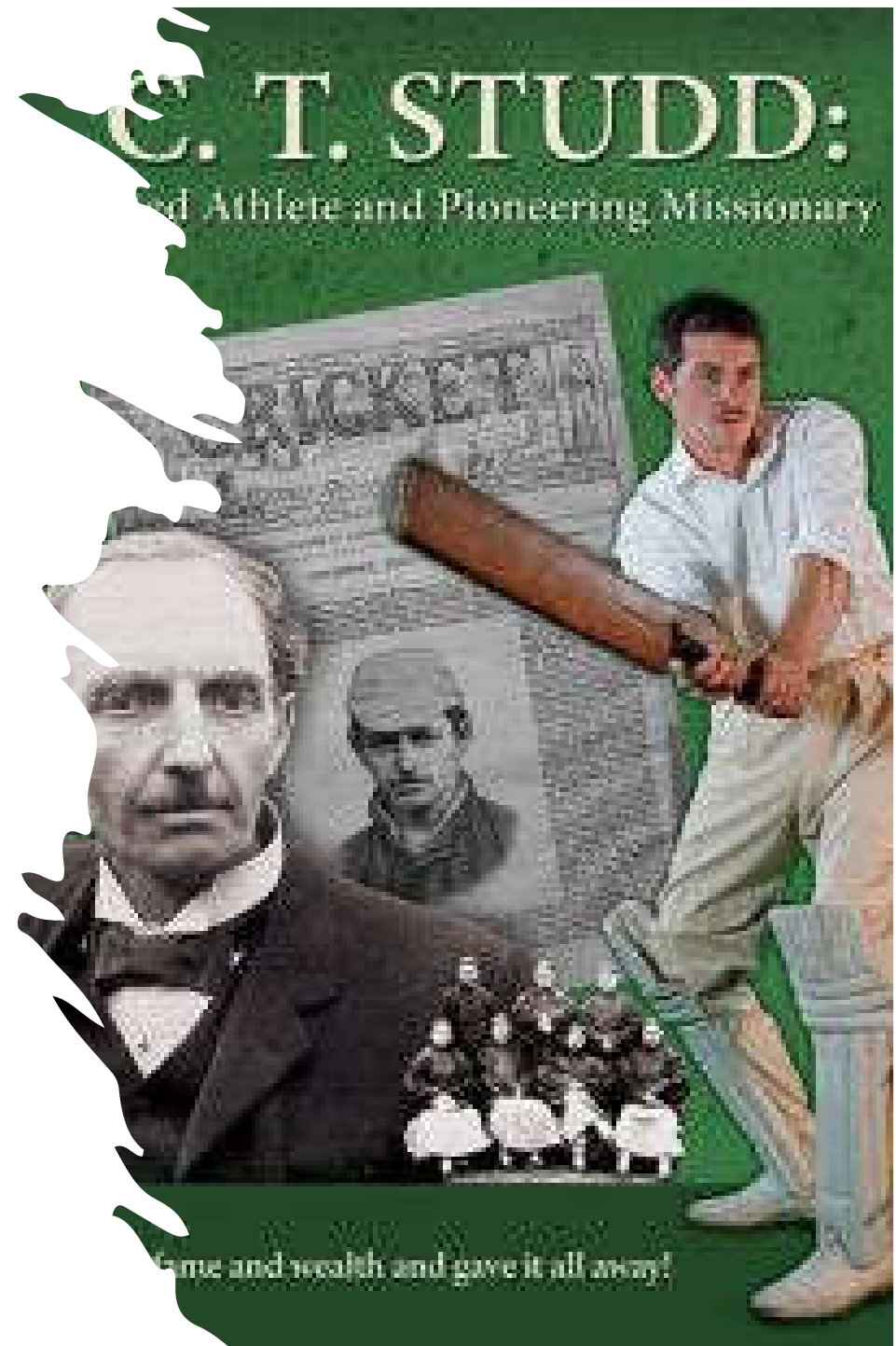
**From a short
biography on C.T.
Studd.**

On January 13, 1887, he gave 5000 pounds each to the ministries of D. L. Moody and George Muller, then 5000 to be used for the poor of London, another 5000 to Booth Tucker, for the work of the Salvation Army in India, and several 1000 pound gifts to various Christian workers in Ireland and England.

He thought he had given it all away, but later found out he had more inheritance coming, so he then sent several thousand pounds to the China Inland Mission, leaving him with 3400 pounds. It was like giving away millions by today's standard.

Three years after arriving in China, C. T. married a young Irish missionary from Ulster, Priscilla Livingston Stewart. Just before the wedding, Charlie presented the remaining 3400 pounds to Priscilla as a wedding gift. She wouldn't have it.

Together they gave the rest of it away for the Lord's work. The theme of their wedding day was, 'United to fight for Jesus'.





I will
tear down my
barns and build
larger ones, and
there I will
store all my
grains and my
goods

Luke 21:13-21.

Then someone called from the crowd, Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me. Jesus replied, Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that? Then he said, Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.

People find security in money.

Luke 21:13-21.

Then he told them a story:

*A rich man had a fertile farm
that produced fine crops.*

*He said to himself: What should
I do? I don't have room for all
my crops. Then he said, I know!*

*I'll tear down barns and build
bigger ones. Then I'll have room
enough to store all my wheat*

and other goods, and I'll sit back and say to myself.

My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come.

Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!

*But God said to him, you fool! You will die this very night. Then
who will get everything you worked for? Yes, a person is a fool to
store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.*



What do you look to for security?

People find security in money.

Matthew 6:19-21 & 24-25.

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?



People find security in money.

Psalm 49.

Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike:

My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding. I will turn my ear to a proverb; with the harp I will expound my riddle:

Why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them, the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough so that they should live on forever and not see decay.

People find security in money.

Psalm 49.

For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others.

Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves. People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish.

This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. They are like sheep and are destined to die; death will be their shepherd (but the upright will prevail over them in the morning). Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.

People find security in money.

Psalm 49.

But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself. Do not be overawed when others grow rich, when the splendour of their houses increases; for they will take nothing with them when they die, their splendour will not descend with them.

Though while they live they count themselves blessed and people praise you when you prosper they will join those who have gone before them, who will never again see the light of life.

People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish.

God owns everything.

Right up front it would be good to remind ourselves that All the wealth belongs to God.

Haggai 2:8.

The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty.

**GOD OWNS EVERYTHING;
WE OWN NOTHING**



**GOD'S LAW
OF
PROSPERITY**

God owns everything.

1 Chronicles 29:11-16 (David)

Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

God owns everything.

1 Chronicles 29:11-16 (David)

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

God owns everything.

Psalm 50:7-12.

Listen, my people, and I will speak; I will testify against you, Israel: I am God, your God. I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices or concerning your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT
WE THINK, GOD OWNS
EVERYTHING .

Luke 16:10-15.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

He said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.

Judas loved money.

John 12:3-8.

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.



Judas loved money.

John 12:3-8.

He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Leave her alone, Jesus replied. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.

He went on to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.



Joshua 7:20-21. *Achan replied, It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.*

**Achan loved
money.**



Numbers 22:26-33.

Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff.

Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?

Balaam answered the donkey, You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now. The donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you? No, he said.

Balaam loved money.



Numbers 22:26-33.

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. The angel of the Lord asked him, Why have you beaten your donkey these three times?

I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.



Balaam loved money.

2 Kings 5:20-27.

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him. So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. Is everything all right? he asked. Everything is all right, Gehazi answered.



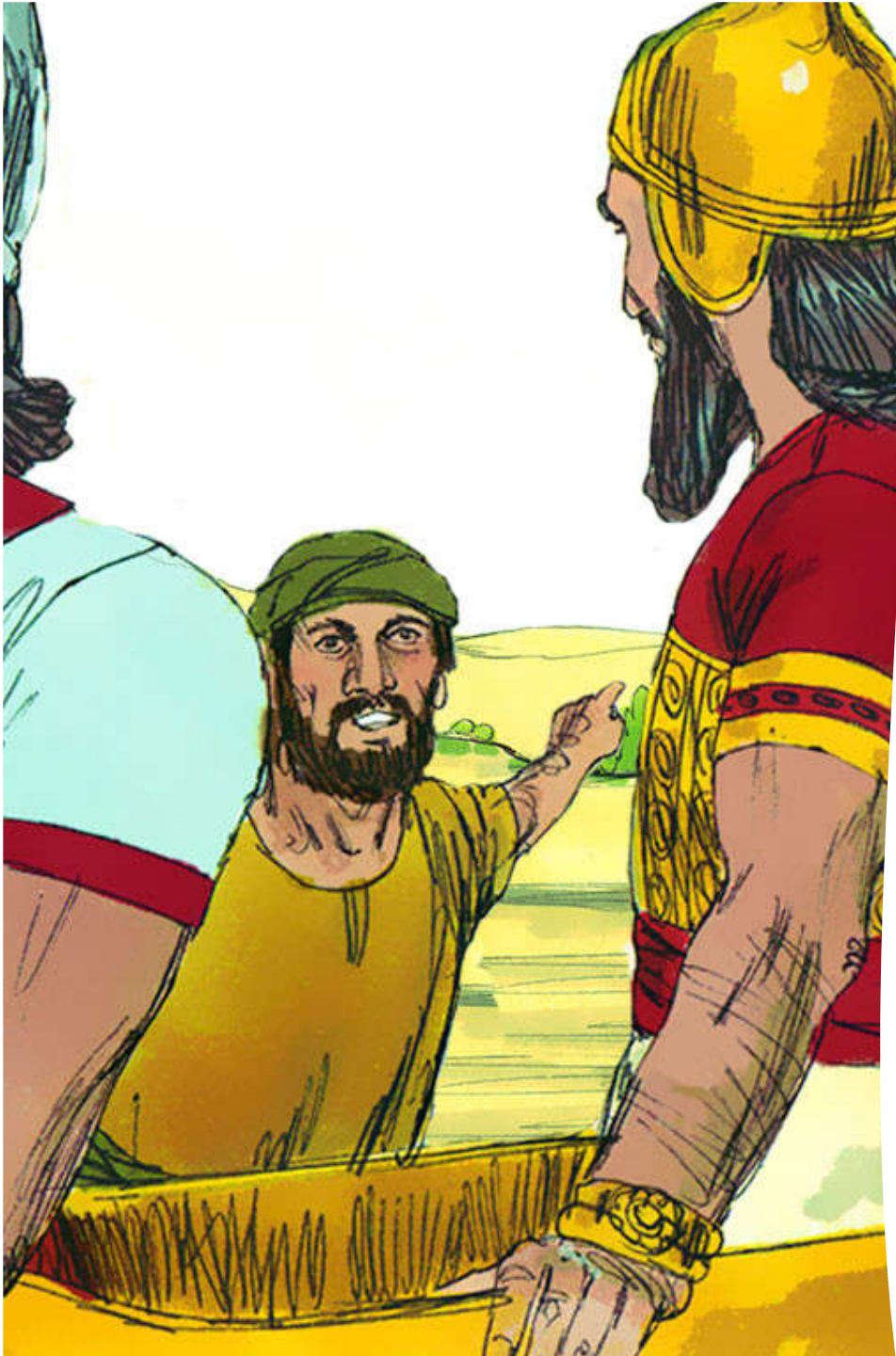
Gehazi.

2 Kings 5:20-27.

My master sent me to say, Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing. By all means, take two talents, said Naaman.

He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing.





2 Kings 5:20-27.

He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi.

When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house.

He sent the men away and they left. When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, Where have you been, Gehazi? Your servant didn't go anywhere, Gehazi answered.

2 Kings 5:20-27.

But Elisha said to him, Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever. Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and his skin was leprous it had become as white as snow.





Gambling.

Costa Stikakos in his research on the subject was amazed to find out from counsellors at Gamblers Anonymous how many suicides were connected to gambling.

He was shocked that some Casinos have their own mortuaries to stop this getting out. He related how a friend of his worked at one of the Casinos in South Africa and that in the first three months after it opened, there were 10 suicides in the parking lot.

Gambling all too often is linked to superstition and faith and luck are diametrically opposed. I have even heard of Christians who ask the Lord to help them win.

**Your chances of winning the lottery are
1 in 14 million.**

A lottery ticket buyer is

- ❖ 5 times more likely to be eaten by a shark.
- ❖ 7 times more likely to be struck by lightning.
- ❖ 6000 times more likely to be hit by a car.
- ❖ A pregnant woman is 20 times more likely to have quadruplets.

Most of those who overcome those odds and win have nothing left after 5 years.

There are alters to the God's that people serve, the lottery is an alter to mammon.



You may argue that you only pay a small amount, but if you were in a country like Cambodia where people are hungry yet fruit is put onto an altar to Buddha and left to rot, would you put an apple on the altar. It is not the size of the offering, it is the reasoning behind it, placing your trust anywhere else but in God.

Proverbs 12:11.

He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement.

The secrets of Abraham's prosperity.

- Abraham forsook all to obey God. **Gen 12:1.**
- He refused to turn back in the midst of a test.
- He did not seek wealth by shrewd dealings. **Gen 23:6.**
- He refused the wealth of Sodom. **Gen 14:21-23.**
- He was generous and Honest.
- He was willing to obey God even if it cost him everything.
- He obeyed the law of tithe. **Gen 14:18-20.**

Abraham refused the wealth of Sodom.

Gen 14:18-24.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

The king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, I made Abram rich. I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share.

Final Charge to Timothy

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus.....

I charge you to keep this command Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.