

Introduction: A prize was once offered for the best essay on "money" and the winner's summing up of the subject was as follows: "Money is a very useful commodity, and can purchase everything but happiness. It is a passport everywhere but to heaven." Another writer stated, "Money will buy a bed but not sleep, books but not brains, food but not appetite, finery but not beauty, medicine but not health, luxury but not culture, amusement but not happiness, a crucifix but not a Savior, a temple of religion but not Heaven." Solomon gives insight into wealth and riches.

1. ESSENCE OF WEALTH (What is wealth?)

Solomon uses five Hebrew words to describe wealth.

A. Proverbs 3:16 "**wealth**" (Hebrew " 'ashar," " 'ohser," "'ashir") meaning "**enriched.**" Also translated "rich" in Proverbs 10:4,15,22; 13:7; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 21:17; 22:2,7,16; 23:4; 28:6,11,20; and "riches" in Proverbs 3:16; 8:18; 11:16,28; 13:8; 14:24; 22:1,4; 30:8. (" 'ashar" by Ronald B. Allen as found in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 706)

B. Proverbs 5:10 "**wealth**" (Hebrews "koah") meaning "**ability.**" This word suggests the capacity to endure and produce, while also expressing potency and limitless resources. ("koah" by John N. Oswalt as found in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 436)

C. Proverbs 8:18 "**riches**" (Hebrew "hon") meaning "goods or substance in sufficient quantity to be considered riches or wealth." **It literally means "enough"** but implies having enough to make life "easy." There is a good (Proverbs 3:9) and a bad (Proverbs 1:13) kind of wealth. Translated "wealth" in Proverbs 10:15; 13:11; 18:11; 19:4; "riches" 8:18; 11:4; 13:7; 19:14; 24:4; 28:22; "substance" in Proverbs 6:31; and "enough" in Proverbs 30:15-16. ("hon" by Carl P. Weber as found in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 213)

D. Proverbs 13:22 "**wealth**" (Hebrews "hayil") meaning "**power or might.**" "As wealth is often related to power, thus used to mean wealth, riches, substance, or goods." ("hayil" by Carl P. Weber as found in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 271)

E. Proverbs 27:24 "**riches**" (Hebrews "hosen") meaning "physical prosperity." It is often translated "**strength.**" ("hosen" by Carl P. Weber as found in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 309)

Summary note: The Old Testament seems to portray two views of riches:

1. Sometimes material wealth is seen as a sign of God's blessing, (Gen. 24:35); and,
2. Sometimes the rich are identified with the wicked (Ps. 37:7,16).

Summary facts: Nowhere does the Bible say that having possessions and becoming wealthy are things that are wrong in themselves. Concerning riches or wealth we must remember:

1. Every possession that a person can possibly own comes from God (Ps. 24:1); and God made all things for people to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17).
2. Associated with riches are great temptations, hurtful lusts, and the possibility to trust in them instead of the Lord (1 Tim. 6:9,17). Thus, the greatest danger that arises with riches is that they can become master over a person's life, which is idolatry (Dt. 8:17-18; Luke 14:15-24).

3. Jesus condemned wrong attitudes many people have toward acquiring wealth, and the wrong ways in which they use it (All through the Gospels: i.e. Matt. 6:19; 19:29).

(Summarized from "Riches" in Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, Ed. Walter A. Elwell, Vol. 2, page 1859)

2. EXPLANATIONS FOR WEALTH (How does one acquire wealth?)

- A. Proverbs 8:18-19,21 (3:16; 14:24) = Wisdom
- B. Proverbs 10:4 (21:5) = Diligence
- C. Proverbs 10:22 = The blessing of the Lord (and brings no sorrow)
- D. Proverbs 13:11(14:23) = Labor
- E. Proverbs 22:4 = The reward of humility and fear of the Lord
- F. Proverbs 24:4 = Knowledge
- G. Proverbs 28:20 = Faithfulness

3. EVIL WAYS TO GET WEALTH (What are the wrong ways to accumulate wealth?)

- A. Proverbs 13:11 = Vanity (NASV = fraud) (NIV = dishonest means) (will dwindle)
- B. Proverbs 15:27 (1:19) = Greed (NASV = profits illicitly) (troubles his own house)
- C. Proverbs 21:6 = Lying (fleeting vapor and the pursuit of death)
- D. Proverbs 22:16 = Oppression (will come into poverty)
- E. Proverbs 22:22 (28:24) = Robbery (could lose your life)

Summary note: Treasures of wickedness (NASV = Ill gotten gains) do not profit, Proverbs 10:2

4. EMPTINESS OF WEALTH (What are the limitations of wealth?)

- A. Proverbs 11:4 = Riches will not help you in the day of wrath or deliver you from death.
- B. Proverbs 11:28 = You can't trust in riches because they will cause you to fall.
- C. Proverbs 19:4 (14:20) = Others will seek your friendship because of what you have.
- D. Proverbs 22:2 = Riches do not make you better than the poor before the Lord.
- E. Proverbs 23:5 = (27:24) = Riches do not last for a long time.

5. EXHORTATION CONCERNING WEALTH (What warnings are there with wealth?)

- A. Proverbs 3:14-15 (8:10-11; 18-19; 16:16) = Wisdom is better than wealth.
- B. Proverbs 15:16 = Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure.
- C. Proverbs 16:8 = Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues.
- D. Proverbs 22:1 = A good name is better than great riches.

E. Proverbs 23:4 = Do not labor to be rich.

6. ENTANGLEMENTS SURROUNDING WEALTH (What is associated with wealth?)

A. Proverbs 10:15 (18:11,18) = People seek wealth because of the power wealth has.

B. Proverbs 15:27 (15:6) = Greed can cause one to trouble his own house.

C. Proverbs 18:23 = The rich tend to answer others roughly.

D. Proverbs 22:7 = The rich tend to rule over others.

E. Proverbs 22:26-27 (28:8) = The rich can enter into cruel business practices.

F. Proverbs 28:6 = Riches provide opportunities for perverse ways.

G. Proverbs 28:11 = The rich become wise in their own eyes.

H. Proverb 28:22 (compare with 22:9) = Trying to get rich quick reveals an evil eye.

I. Proverbs 30:9 = Riches could make an individual deny the Lord.

7. EXPEDIENCY OF WEALTH (What should be done with wealth?)

A. Proverbs 3:9 = Honor the Lord with your substance.

B. Proverbs 19:17 (28:27) = Use your wealth to help the poor and needy.

Conclusion: In a nation where everyday wealth is taken for granted, the life of ease is pursued with a deep passion, and materialism is a way of life, Christians must have a biblical view of wealth and riches.

I'm feeling very rich today,
for Jesus holds my purse.
I need not count its scanty store,
As all the assets at my door.
Behind it stands a wealthy name,
And vast resources I may claim.
Since Jesus holds my purse.

My Cashier never lets me want,
Since He controls my purse.
Debit and credit always meet.
I marvel at His counsel sweet.
Concerning purchase I make,
Or money given for His dear sake
While He controls my purse.

And thus I live a carefree life,
For Jesus holds my purse.
Since money is a sacred thing,
Both joy and sorrow it may bring.
According as we do His will,

Or find our hearts rebellious still
Let Jesus hold your purse.