

# Should a leader try to get rich? (28:16)

A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.

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## THE TEXT (NASB)

A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.

*The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days. KJV - Proverbs 28:16*

## INTRODUCTION



Caution: Beware of leadership just for the money. A **leader** who wants to lead in order to get more money will not lead well.

**Unjust gain** shortens a leader's term in office and maybe even his lifespan. The text does not say that being rich is wrong, or even that being rich and powerful is wrong, but when power is mixed with greed, then it's time to leave office. Usually such leaders must be removed from office.

He who has the gold makes the rules. If he makes the right rules he will enjoy his gold. If he makes the wrong rules his tenure will be short.



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## COMMENTARY

The higher a person goes in leadership the more financially content he must be. Many have fallen from office because of financial corruption. True leadership is always difficult but if it is influenced by greed then good leadership becomes impossible. A leader should NOT try to get rich, but instead focus on serving the needs of those under his care.

### Translation: *unjust gain*

The Hebrew word for “unjust gain” or “covetousness” is **בִּצְעַ** (b?-tse), pronounced “b?-tse”), and is derived from the word plunder. b?-tse is used in Psalm 10:3 as the “greedy man.” This could mean unjust or excessive gain, or merely more gain than is needed. Thus the KJV translation of this word as “covetousness,” implying wanting what belongs to others, is even more restrictive than “unjust gain.” This unjust gain may be in the performance of the leader or of others under his rule. Thus a good ruler will get tough on crime - seek and destroy corruption - wherever it shows itself. Note the agricultural metaphor in Proverbs 20:26..

### Lacking Security



Ironically a leader may think that more assets will mean more stability. Not so! It's the quality not the quantity of the financial storehouse that determines the staying power of the leader. Covetousness impairs leadership, whether profits are honest or dishonest. Greed is sin. Dishonesty is also sin. Any and all sin leads to death.

### Higher Standards

Leadership brings higher responsibilities. Profiting personally on the backs of those whom the leaders should be serving and protecting is an abuse of power. This reveals why a church leader must be one who is “free from the love of money.” Perhaps that's why the text uses the word **hates** rather than a softer word such as *avoids*.

### Leadership Styles

In business management circles, the theory “X” management style has been used to identify



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autocratic, top down, dictatorial rule. The text implies that a person who uses such a style is deficient in **understanding**. Some have said that the best leaders are those who are independently wealthy and have no desire for personal gain. Hence a leader should not exploit those under his care nor strive to build his own empire. For governments this may mean lower taxation and less government involvement.

## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND



Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep," (John 10:11).

Rather than calling Himself the leader of the pack because of His superior strength or skill, Jesus takes on the position of a servant to His followers. He is a leader who *gives* rather than a leader who *takes*. When David became king of Judah and Israel, and had brought the ark of God safely into his country, one of the first things he did was give presents, not collect taxes from the people (2 Samuel 6:18-19). Jesus the Messiah is called the son of David.

Good leaders are givers, not takers.

## APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Be sure it's not for the money if you seek a position of leadership.
- Don't get to the top by stepping on others. Justice and honesty are critical to lasting leadership.
- Pay others in the company more money than the president, but give the president the most honour.
- Check your motives carefully if you are a leader, and make sure that you are more motivated by giving than getting.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to address first? Ask Him.



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## KEY WORDS

better life (quality), bribe, contentment, hate, leadership, oppression, protection, taxes, understanding

## ILLUSTRATION

### Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: "Haste makes waste," "brains over brawn," and "don't jump to conclusions."

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step," she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. "Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late." Pauline says, "First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity."

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day

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timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.

