

What is the best way to transfer wealth between generations? (13:22)

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

THE TEXT (NASB)

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. Classic KJV - Proverbs 13:22

INTRODUCTION



This proverb describes two types of wealth transfer:

1. A family estate moving from parents to children and grandchildren.
2. Wealth moving from the sinner to the righteous.

If a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, this must mean there's something left over after he's raised his own children to adulthood. This speaks of a legacy from good grandparents.

We must suppose that the transfer of wealth from the sinner is forced on him, unwillingly; the sinner and his wealth undergo a painful parting, perhaps because he has no one he wants to have it.



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COMMENTARY

Timing

Here, in the case of the family inheritance, note that the verb is in the present tense—"leaves" rather than "has left." This implies that the grandfather is still around to see his grandchildren enjoy their legacy. This echoes the old maxim: "Do your givin' while you're livin', so you're knowin' where it's goin'." And as someone once quipped, "To give in one's lifetime is true generosity; to bequeath after death is mere convenience."

In his *Answers to Your Family's Financial Questions*, financial counselor Larry Burkett noted, "According to Jewish tradition, a father would begin to pass along his inheritance to his eldest son when he reached his mid-thirties. Eventually he inherited most of the property that his father was going to leave him, while the father was still around to show him how to manage it." The father gave with warm hands.

Life Insurance as a Financial Tool

One way to give during our lifetime is by leveraging a highly-funded universal life insurance plan. When it comes to pure insurance, term insurance is usually the best bang for the buck. However, with tax hungry governments, universal life, or even whole life is worth a look. It's an option only when debt is very low/zero debt and other tax shelters have been used. We can invest as much cash as possible without incurring any income tax liability, and then, in our senior years, borrow against the cash value. In this way, we can generate a lump sum of cash to help our heirs while we're still living. But we should be careful. Life insurance does not encourage personal debt freedom or even debt reduction. It may do exactly the opposite, justifying sustained personal debt with the security of the insurance. We should be cautious not to use life insurance in a way that we're worth more dead than alive. It's meant to guarantee our income for our loved ones, if our income is lost.

Spending Inheritances and Debt



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The bumper sticker on big recreational vehicles reads, “We’re spending our children’s inheritance,” seeming to suggest that such parents are irresponsible. Yet, if it’s good to leave a legacy, it’s equally bad to leave a net debt. So one of the best inheritance strategies is to become debt-free before passing on any inheritance. On a grand scale, that’s bad news for any countries carrying massive debt loads. Massive national debt entails a future of either massive taxation or massive inflation, eroding the livelihoods of our children and grandchildren.

This proverb also assumes that charity begins at home. It can perhaps be good to keep our accumulated wealth within the family, building a legacy. So Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton divided his massive portfolio among his four children and their children, who still own half the stock of the publicly-traded retailer.

Should We Leave Our Children Inheritances?

Randy Alcorn wrote well on this topic, and we’ve included a brief excerpt here. You can read his full post at [Eternal Perspective Ministries](#). You can also watch the interview where Randy discusses this topic further here: [Should I Leave an Inheritance to My Children?](#)

Scripture says that “A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children,” Proverbs 13:22. As a result, many Christians defend and justify leaving vast sums of wealth to their children and grandchildren. I think in order to understand the principle behind this verse, we need to compare what an inheritance meant in biblical times, versus what an inheritance means in this culture today.

The American steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie said, “The almighty dollar bequeathed to a child is an almighty curse. No man has the right to handicap his son with such a burden as great wealth.” So true to his word, Carnegie turned all his wealth over to a charitable foundation, and his great-grandchildren are not proud members of the Fortune 500 wealthiest families list.



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Railway magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt agreed: "Inherited wealth is as certain death to ambition as cocaine is to morality." And Henry Ford observed, "Fortunes tend to self-destruction by destroying those who inherit them"—yet he passed on the presidency of Ford Motor Co. to his son Edsel.

Classic Comments

The great Methodist preacher Adam Clarke observed of this proverb's "good man": "He files many a prayer in heaven in [his children's] behalf, and his good example and advices are remembered and quoted from generation to generation. Besides, whatever property he left was honestly acquired, and well-gotten goods are permanent. The general experience of men shows this to be a common case; and that property ill-gotten seldom reaches to the third generation."

The *K&D Commentary* observes: "A good man leaves such a big blessing to his children, that it spills over to his grandchildren. On the contrary the sinner loses his wealth, it being destined for those who can make better use of it." This reflects the words of Jesus Christ, that the meek shall inherit—not pillage or conquer—the Earth, as stated at Matthew 5:5.

The renowned 17th century pastor Matthew Henry stressed a good man's enduring wealth: "It is honestly acquired and not vulnerable to creditors or the courts. Moreover, a good man has trained his own children, so that they also manage their wealth with enough skill to retain it for the grandchildren. Henry suggests that this text's two halves are linked by a thread of righteousness. The good man, having rightly acquired the sinners' wealth, can rightly preserve it for his heirs.

The wicked can gather it, but can't keep it. Two examples of wealth passed from the evil to the good appear in the Bible's oldest book: Job 20:18-21 and Job 27:16-17. Similarly, Israel literally walked off with unearned treasures, leaving a life of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:36). Again, we read of God's people benefitting from others' wealth without working for it: Isaiah 61:63—except for the work of remaining faithful.

As an aside, if the good leave wealth for their children and grandchildren, what is the moral condition of those who leave massive debt to their children and grandchildren? However we handle our legacy, it is evil to squander all our disposable income on idle pleasures.

Consumption Cancer



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If the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous, well might we ask, “When is the transfer made, and who makes it?” The transfer of wealth from sinner to righteous must be forced upon the sinner, unwillingly, even painfully. So it must be done by someone more powerful. The sinner would not store up wealth if he knew someone else would get it. We read in Ecclesiastes 2:26: “For a person who is good in God’s sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting, so that He may give to one who is good in God’s sight.” In God’s hidden providence, some have great wealth without the hard work, either because they inherited, or it falls into their laps, fumbled by some hapless sinner. Some waste the wealth they earn, and some gather wealth without earning it.

According to this proverb, the best financial strategy is: “Concentrate on living righteously, and not spending it all on ourselves.”

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus was the Righteous One without any sin; yet He died in total poverty.

Only when we factor into account the resurrection and return of Christ to rule the entire world, does the text make sense. Jesus will return “on the clouds of the sky with great power and glory,” Matthew 24:30. He and His righteous ones will rule over the earth.

Righteousness pays very well—even handsomely—but seldom immediately.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Don't waste your time being merely an asset accumulator. If you are not *good* then become *good*.
- Don't consume all your assets. Learn to save for the benefit of others of *your* choice.
- Make sure your will is up to date.

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



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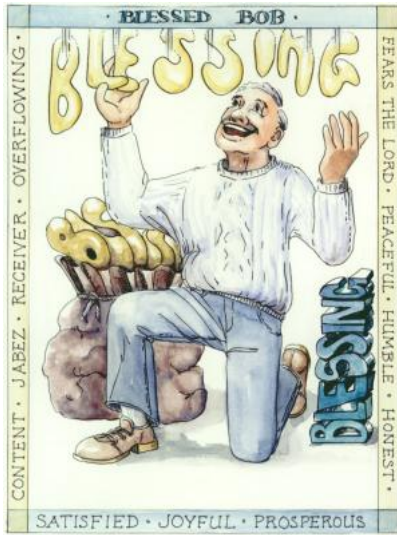
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KEY WORDS

consumption, estate, family, gift, hoard, inheritance, insurance, more assets (quantity), righteous, sin, wealth, bf saving

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Blessed Bob?



Blessed Bob is very fortunate. He recognizes that good things come from God! God is shunned by many, but not by Bob. Bob loves God. He wants to receive all the good things that God has for him. He's not too proud to ask God for help. In fact, Bob prays often. Some think that he prays without ceasing. But he is not without fault. Blessed Bob makes many mistakes, and when he does, he admits his errors. He corrects them and presses on.

Bob gets so many blessings he feels overwhelmed. His cup overflows. But he doesn't hoard his blessings. Like Generous Genevieve, Blessed Bob likes to give to others. He is truly prosperous, even though there are many who are financially richer than he is.

We see examples of Blessed Bob in the Bible in the lives of Job and Joseph. Job went through some very good times (Job 29:2-25) and some very bad times (Job 2:7-8). Joseph had similar financial cycles (Genesis 39:2,21). Both men kept their focus on God, not on their financial condition (Job 1:21, Genesis 50:19-21).

More recently we have examples of those who have lived with the same life focus. R. G LeTourneau was the inventor of the largest earth moving machines in the 1930's and 1940's. He credited God for his tremendous success. He gave away much of his wealth while he was

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still living saying that, "When I shovel money out to God's interests, God shovels money back to me, but God's shovel is bigger than mine." He was called the mover of men and mountains because of his great work and influence. On his gravestone, R. G. LeTourneau left all visitors with these words, SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU MATTHEW 6:33.

Blessed Bob is full of joy. He is satisfied with life!

