

THE PATH TO FINANCIAL FREEDOM

God delights in the prosperity of His children
(Psalm 35:27). How about you?



Bishop Darlingston G. Johnson, D.Min.

Idongesit Essiet-Gibson

Franck Jocktane

Lewis Eugene Kelley

Daniel Koroma

Amara Okoroafor

Ebere Okoye

Obinna Okoye

Bishop Darlington G. Johnson, D.Min., is senior pastor of Bethel World Outreach Church, Silver Spring, MD.

Idongesit Essiet-Gibson is a Scientist/Public Health Officer of the U.S. Public Health Service

Ebere and Obinna Okoye are owners of the fourth man and company, LLC (A wealth building and financial information firm).

Daniel Koroma is a small business lead specialist with Bank of America.

Franck Jocktane is a Network/LAN Administrator at the Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC.

Amara Okoroafor is a mortgage consultant with First National Funding and mortgage, Silver Spring, MD.

Lewis Eugene Kelley is the owner of Rush Technologies (An IT consulting firm).

Laurene Jackson, M.S., is Bethel's staff writer/editor and a freelance writer/editor.

Bethel World Outreach Church
8242–52 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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Bishop Darlingston G. Johnson, D.Min.
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Amara Okoroafor
Ebere Okoye
Obinna Okoye

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Introduction

How many of you love God and also love what money can do? Money is a wonderful servant but it is a terrible master. That's why Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money."¹ God has to be the master. When you make money the master, then you're in trouble. It's something like fire. Fire is a wonderful servant. Fire in the fireplace is wonderful, but if it gets out of the fireplace and gets on your carpet, it destroys. Money in the proper place with the proper perspective is a powerful servant. God wants His children to have a lot of it, as long as they can keep it in the proper place.

—Bishop Darlington G. Johnson, D.Min.

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Can you really turn your financial life around? If you are like most people, your finances are far from perfect. Whether it is credit card debt, living from paycheck to paycheck, an out-of-control budget, the lack of a retirement plan, or not being able to afford a vacation, your personal finances can probably use a little tuning up or a complete makeover.

Yet you ask, Can I really turn my financial life around? You bet, and you can turn it around without a fairy godmother. With God on your side and with wisdom and knowledge as your guide, you can overcome your financial difficulty. We will teach you to invest rather than spend and to live with a budget instead of from paycheck to paycheck. Moreover, you can choose to retire when you want, with just a simple, steady, financial plan put into action. Remember the quote, "Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you"? It's time to put this quote into action.

Read Luke 12:42–48. In this passage, Jesus talks about the steward and his responsibility. Jesus talks about the steward who is faithful and how

¹Matthew 6:24b (NLT)

the one who manages the resources of the master according to the will of the master is rewarded. He who does not manage the master's resources according to the master's will, will be punished.

We will look at various individuals who took this journey and will put what we're teaching into practice step-by-step. If you follow these principles with God as your guide, you will be on your way to financial freedom. The seven major principles of financial freedom are:

1. Having a financial vision
2. Budgeting and saving
3. Managing your debt
4. Managing your credit
5. Investing
6. Protecting your assets and transferring them
7. Starting a business

Are you ready? Let's begin.

CHAPTER

1

God & Money

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Bishop Darlington G. Johnson, D.Min.

Jackie and Robert look at each other on the way home. They believe that this year will be better for them than the previous years. Yet holding on to this faith has become more difficult: Even though they have gotten excited about God's desire to bless them financially, nothing seems to have happened. They have believed that their financial prosperity would come at God's appointed time and that God would not want them to focus on money too much, because focusing on it would be carnal. Their desire has been to please God and to have a clearer understanding of Him and of His thoughts regarding money.

Jackie and Robert are grateful to God that their local church, Bethel World Outreach Church, has just started a series of seminars on finances. For the next 9 weeks, they and their church family will learn how to become debt free and how to experience the year of prosperity prophesied by church leadership. Jackie and Robert have always believed that God has more for their finances; for a long time, they have wanted to be financially free but have not had a plan for achieving this freedom. How will knowing what God thinks of money help Jackie and Robert become financially free?

1.1. Learning Objectives

When you finish reading this chapter, you should understand stewardship and the four principles of prosperity:

- ✓ Faithfulness in tithing
- ✓ Generosity in giving
- ✓ Diligence in business
- ✓ Confidence in God



1.2. Scriptural Reference

Consider the following scripture:

Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:27–34)

1.3. Stewardship

The key to understanding the will of God regarding our finances is to understand the meaning of stewardship. A steward is a person who manages the property of another. We are merely stewards of God’s property. He can entrust us with as much of it (or as little of it) as He

chooses. But why should He trust us with much of His property if we hoard it and behave like we own it? He will entrust us with more of His property if we accept our role as stewards and manage what He gives us according to His instructions. Read and discuss Psalm 24:1 and Matthew 25:14–30; identify some of the main principles regarding stewardship.

Money is neither good nor evil. It is morally neutral. It is a wonderful servant that can produce much good when it is in the hands of an obedient steward. But if we allow it to control our lives, it can be very destructive to our relationship with God and with people. What do 1 Timothy 6:6–10, Matthew 6:24, Luke 9:25, and Luke 12:16–20 have to say about the dangers of money?

In light of these warnings, what should be our motive for desiring a surplus above our own needs? See 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

1.4. The Four Principles of Prosperity

The Bible provides four principles of prosperity, which can lead to great wealth. If faithful stewards practice these principles faithfully, their finances will increase. Discuss each principle briefly, and establish clearly why each is important:

- **Be faithful in tithing.** Tithing, the principle of giving the first tenth of one's income to the Lord, began before the Mosaic Law and continues today. Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek before the Mosaic Law was established. Your god is whoever gets your first and best; thus, tithing establishes the Lord as your God. It is the way you honor Him and acknowledge His total ownership of everything that you have. God promises special blessings to the faithful tither (Malachi 3:10).
- **Be generous in giving.** Paying tithes is where we begin, not where we end. It should represent the floor below which we will not go, not the ceiling of our giving. Giving one tenth of our income to the Lord is like the training wheels on a bicycle: Its purpose is to teach us how to give

while we are still young and inexperienced. But once we have learned, there are no restrictions, and we should desire to go as far above 10% as we can. God promises special blessings to the generous giver. The degree of your giving will determine the degree of your harvest (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6).

- **Be diligent in business.** Nothing works unless you are willing to work. God does not bless laziness. If you desire to prosper, you need to be diligent in business. You need to learn how money works; then you need to use this knowledge diligently. The other lessons in this course are designed to help you implement this third principle successfully. Apply the principles of business taught in this course, and you will reap the fruit of your labor (Proverbs 24:3–4; 6:6–11).
- **Be confident in God.** “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). God prospered Abraham because Abraham believed Him. You demonstrate confidence in God by claiming His promises, obeying His Word, and allowing His Spirit to guide you in all areas of your life, including your finances. Learn to search the Scriptures for instructions, and learn to pray for wisdom. Learn to commit your ways to Him in prayer; then trust Him to direct your steps (Proverbs 3:6).

1.5. Summary

As you proceed to build wealth, remember to keep your priorities straight. God wants to bless you with abundance, but He is against your misusing it or your becoming preoccupied with it. Be preoccupied with God and with His kingdom. If faithful stewards practice these principles faithfully, their finances will increase. These principles can be used ultimately to advance God’s work.