

# Diligence

## *Four Ds of Financial Blessing:*

Colossians 3:22-24

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Wesley J. Gabel

Are you aware of the financial blessings God promised to Israel? They are listed in the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28. Let's read them together:

*You will be blessed in your towns and in the country. You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks. You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread. You will be blessed wherever you go, both in coming and in going. The LORD will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven! The LORD will bless everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.*

*If you obey the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways, the LORD will establish you as his holy people as he solemnly promised to do. Then all the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the LORD, and they will stand in awe of you.*

*The LORD will give you an abundance of good things in the land he swore to give your ancestors — many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops. The LORD will send rain at the proper time from his rich treasury in the heavens to bless all the work you do. You will lend to many nations, but you will never need to borrow from them. If you listen to these commands of the LORD your God and carefully obey them, the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always have the upper hand. (Deuteronomy 28:3-13, NLT)*

Does this sound like a God who doesn't care about finances? Does this read like a God who thinks poverty is good? Does this look like a God who has nothing to do with the wealth of people? If you read all of Deuteronomy 28, you'll discover that God not only blesses with wealth. You'll find that poverty is a judgment, not to be endured, but to be avoided or removed.

It use to bother me that in Deuteronomy 28, only 14 verses described the material blessings of God, but 53 verses described the curses of God. I wondered why God directed Moses to give almost four times more attention to material curses rather than blessings. Doesn't sound too loving, does it? It did not occur to me what I have so often observed. People normalize their experience whether it is healthy or not. When I worked in a state hospital with mentally impaired people, I noticed that they did not mourn their lack of ability or dependence. Their condition seemed normal to them. I observed the same thing in a dying community. The deterioration seemed normal to the residents. *People define the prevalent as normal!* If bad grades are prevalent, that is normal. If good grades are prevalent, that is normal. If people are warm and friendly, that is normal. If people are cold and suspicious, that is normal. Good grades and bad grades both can't be normal. Warm and cold can't both be normal... especially if normal means healthy. I've noticed that a healthy human being can be described with few words: purposeful, thoughtful, energetic, vibrant, and youthful. However, there are endless lists of symptoms describing maladies. Maladies are given so much attention, so that we might recognize them and seek the proper help.

In the same way, God spoke in Deuteronomy 28 to inform us that it is normal for God to bless all the work we do so that is productive and rewarding. Is that happening for you? Are you looking for a job and not finding it? Are you frustrated in your work? Are you retired and your earnings are not supporting you? Do not normalize scarcity! Do not normalize want! Do not normalize ill health! Do not resign yourself to affliction! At the same time, do not carry the burden of affliction!

Material blessing is exactly that. It is God's activity, not yours! In blessing, God regards you and responds to you. However, God does not respond to you alone. In Deuteronomy 28,

material blessings are promised to a community. I've noticed different types of communities. There are geographical communities like Rochester. Your financial potential differs here from other towns and cities. Change countries and the differences are even greater. Another type of community is industry. The airline, railroad and agriculture industries currently carry more afflictions while the medical and legal communities flourish. A third type of community is family. Family ties carry blessings and struggles. Having said that, being in a blessed community does not mean you experience blessing. Being in a struggling community does not mean you must struggle. Look at David who was an overlooked shepherd. He declared:

***Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*** (1 Chronicles 29:11-12, NIV)

David went on to pray:

***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.*** (1 Chronicles 29:14, NIV)

David was not only elevated by God from herding sheep to leading a nation; God also blessed David's next area of work, David's leadership, so that he and the nation prospered. God's love extends to you and the communities you are apart of. You do not belong to a family, industry, neighborhood, city or nation by chance. You belong so that God may bless.

Wherever I go, I see Christians fall into two types of error in this regard. Error #1 results from misreading their relationship to their community. For some Christians, it is just "you and me, God." The community is irrelevant. They think God deals with them in isolation from their community. Others think their lot is dominated by trends in their community. They see

themselves as hopeless pawns. Instead, we believers are the instruments through which God blesses and prospers our families, industries and communities. The Apostle Paul wrote:

***Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*** (Colossians 3:23-24, NIV)

Paul actually addressed this word to slaves who he encouraged to win their freedom if it was possible. He basically said to them that, whether it is just or not, you are where you are at to make a difference. Work with all your heart. That is diligence. Don't see yourself as a pawn. Don't see everything relying on you. Instead, work with and for Christ who is in you, regardless of who is your master.

If you are pounding the pavement for a job, do it with diligence. See yourself as carrying out God's work in your job search. God is not reluctant to help you. Christ takes no pleasure in idleness. Pray and expect God to show you what to do. Expect to do his bidding as you search. If you are in an unprofitable industry and God is not leading you out of it, pray and seek God's blessing on that industry. Work with all your heart to see its mission accomplished.

The second error Christians make results from "misbeliefs" about blessing. Some Christians actually teach that you should pray as if everything depends on it and act as if nothing depends on it. So we are told to pray in faith and act in unbelief. No Scripture compels us to behave like schizophrenics. Nor does it teach a platter theology or a lottery mentality. God does not, in general, drop things out of the sky into our laps on nice silver platters. Some may want to be given things, like the winnings of a lottery ticket, divorced from their work. However, we are not to act like little children who want everything provided without doing our chores. We are called to more than eating and playing. We were not made in the image of a lazy, self-indulgent God. We are not children of such a God. We are to reflect God in our work. Our work is our

worship. For those who are retired, working, searching for employment or balancing responsibilities with home, community and vocation, there is a wonderful exhortation and promise from Jesus. He says, “*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things* (food, clothing and the like) *will be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33).

If your life and work are from God, then aren't you employed in his service, and isn't it legitimate to seek and expect him to direct you and bless you so that you might bless the people with whom and for whom you serve? Don't you seek and expect God to advance his kingdom through your daily employment? Don't you expect to prosper?

Are you retired? What now is God's work for you now? How do you wish God to reward the work of your hands at this stage in your life? How are your family and community blessed by you? Seek Christ in this. Are you in school? What then is God's work for you now? How do you desire God to reward the work of your hands at this moment? Will the school prosper from you? Seek Christ in this. Are you fully employed in your home? Do you converse with God about your work at this stage, and in what way do you desire God to establish and reward the work of your hands? How is your neighborhood impacted by your work? Seek Christ in this. Are you employed in some industry? Is that where God wants you? How is that community doing? What would God have you do to fulfill the mission of your business, industry or community? Seek Christ in this.

Moses offered a haunting but revealing prayer in Psalm 90. He closed it with this cry to God:

*May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands.* (Psalm 90:17, NIV)

Let's make that our prayer.