

STRONGER

Money is the Answer to Everything

Yes, you read it right. Money is the answer to everything. Astounding, isn't it? Especially coming from your pastor. On the other hand, you may be reading this and such a statement is exactly what you expect from a pastor! After all, a church is only after *your* money, right?

Since I am an honest person, I will confess that I am not the author of the phrase. The phrase comes right out of the Bible. Yes, you read that right too. The words come to us from Ecclesiastes 10:19.

But money is the answer to everything – Ecclesiastes 10:19

Proving that it's a Bible verse doesn't mean that I'm using it appropriately. A single verse used out of context does a lot of damage. Let me assure you however, that I'm citing the verse correctly. Before throwing away this, our fourth Stronger Newsletter, let me assure you that my point isn't as bad as you might think! The author's provocative comment reveals some insightful truths, which I'll explain.

Anyone familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes will know that at times the author views life without God-lenses, so to speak. Consequently, some of the conclusions he reaches are confused to say the least. Anyone who believes that money is the answer to everything, in the absolute sense, is clearly confused. Money is no cure-all. Besides, ask any question in church and the answer is always Jesus, right? Money is never *the* answer to everything.

Phew, aren't you glad we cleared that up? Having said that, the author admits to a reality of earthly life, money makes things happen. Consider the Apostle Paul's comment that the love of money is the root of all evil. Inherent in every type of evil, he is saying, is the driving lust for money; behind many crimes is the money to be gained from them. Money makes bad things happen.

Money makes good things happen too. It is the tool that clothes us, feeds us, and shelters us. It allows us to acquire both the necessities of life and some of its luxuries. Used correctly, money is our friend and an instrument for God's use. After all, God gave us the ability to produce wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18).

If God gives us such an ability, the obvious question is why? Is God trying to buy something from us? Our love? Our obedience? Is God supporting us, like a Father supports a child? Is God giving money to us because He loves us? Like a Christmas present? Is God investing in us? Why do investors invest? What do they invest in? What do they not invest in? Is God paying something that is required of Him? Is God acceding to our demands? Can a person bribe God or blackmail Him?

However one answers those questions, something is obvious. Money, as powerful as it is, has no inherent power in and of itself. Money doesn't live, breathe and move on its own. People put money to use. From the beginning of the Scriptures we see some form of resource being used by God's people to carry out the work of the kingdom. Abram, for example, gave one-tenth of all his spoils to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). Ancient Israel "brought the Lord's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting" (Exodus 35:21). Israel, under King David, gave precious stones to the treasury of the house of the Lord (1 Chronicles 29:8). In New

Testament times, the early Church members sold lands and houses “and shared them (the proceeds) with all.”

Putting these Scriptures together we see that God blesses His people with resources in order for us to do with those resources what pleases Him. God blesses us to be a blessing to others. There are many ways we can bless others, one of which is through our “**Stronger Challenge**.”

***“Money is not a cure-all.
He is admitting to a reality of earthly life: Money makes things happen.”***

Our “**Stronger Challenge**” is *one way* we can allow the resources God has given to be a blessing to others. With our sacrificial, over-and-above three-year financial commitments, we can invest, through our church, in the kingdom of God in Holland and beyond. Through committed giving, we can fuel ministries through our church for decades to come. Not only here in Holland, but to the ends of the world.

Our church family will be encouraged to engage in a spiritual journey to discern how the Lord wants each of us to respond to our “**Stronger Challenge**”. Over the course of the next month, materials will be distributed that we’d like everyone to obtain. The materials include:

1. A **Challenge booklet** explaining our vision and mission; how far we’ve come; what we still have to do; and who we are doing it for.
2. A **13-day devotional** to guide us to what God would have each of us do.
3. A brief **commitment guide** to help us determine our personal commitment.
4. A **commitment card** to indicate the commitment we each feel called to make.

The primary question we are asking each person to answer through prayer is this: “Lord, what do you want to do through me?” Such a question can only be answered in prayer through listening to God. Money does make things happen, but at Central we believe the real happening starts in the heart. Before anything significant can happen, before anything financial can happen, something spiritual must happen first.

Points to celebrate

- **Victory Celebration Point:**
 - This is a challenge to personally encounter God’s love and mercy, and to respond with all our hearts. As our church seeks God’s direction in prayer and as we recognize the joy of giving in God’s name, we will move toward a celebration of goals achieved.
- **Leadership Celebration Point:**
 - Our theme “Not equal gifts but equal sacrifice” motivates us to examine our personal giving in the light of God’s goodness toward us. Though we cannot all give the same amount in dollars, we can give significantly and apply ourselves to understand what it means to truly give. To reach our God-sized goal we need 1,100 people to commit to give.

These Celebration Points represent our church’s challenge to move toward greater ministry opportunities. On June 12, 2016 we will announce the final results of our **Stronger Challenge** and celebrate what can happen when a church prayerfully unites its resources to follow God’s will.

Would you take the time to join with us in prayer? Excited to be taking this journey together...

Craig