

EXHORTATION: Stealth Poverty

Typically, when we make deductions about a person's wealth, such deductions are usually on the bases of outward observations of the person's attributes such as their house, car, business holdings, etc. While the outward observations do provide some information about the state of a person's estate, the deductions made from these observations are often very wrong especially in a culture such as ours where we like to keep up appearances.

Financial poverty is defined as the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. However, beneath the visible status of a person's wealth is another sinister malady that is the poverty of the mind or what I term stealth poverty. The word stealth means that our mental RADAR does not easily detect it. It resides in our subconscious, a subtle state of the mind where one feels either helpless or powerless because one is materially poor, or feels very dependent on wealth the definition of success and fulfillment in life. It is a pattern of thinking where the rich person sees himself or herself as omnipotent because he or she is rich, while the poor feels hopeless because he or she is poor. In either case, material possessions define their wellbeing.

A look at the proverbial prodigal son (Luke 15:12-24) can demonstrate how erroneous this kind of thinking is. The prodigal son was materially wealthy at the time of his departure from his father's house. He was still materially wealthy when he was living a riotous life probably with intense drinking, womanizing and partying. He became materially poor when his resources were spent, the party crowd left and hunger set in. This is what one would have seen by observing him outwardly. However, assessing his state of mind would have revealed a very different picture. While he was outwardly rich, he was actually mentally very poor because his actions showed that he thought that all he needed was money. He failed to place adequate value on his relationship with his father who dearly loved him, and was the source of his wealth, disregarded his family, he neither appreciated the temporal nature of material wealth nor did he know how to manage it. He had his priorities totally mixed up. His was a classic case of stealth poverty. When his wealth was spent, he had a rude awakening as the blind folds of mental poverty fell off his eyes and his true state was revealed. This state had been there all along, but was camouflaged by material possessions. In his impoverished state, he remembered his heritage, his loving father, and his responsibilities to his family, and decided to return home. This time he went home not as an arrogant son with a sense of entitlement to the family estate, but as a humbled hired servant. This was the genesis of his true wealth, as stealth poverty was exposed and eliminated. Our young man had grown wise and was heading back home to make things right. Yet, if one saw him in that state, one would have described him as poor and wretched. However, was he? He soon saw his father who ran to him, embraced him, forgave him, and reinstated him into the family. His father gave him a garment indicative of a new life style, a ring indicative of his identity (and this was not money), slaughtered a fattened calf for a great feast indicative of God's abundance (including material things). His status had changed for the best as he now had a "head on his shoulder," and a direction for his life. He eliminated stealth poverty and regained true and lasting wealth. Matthew 16:26, states, **"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

PRAYER TOPICS

1. Give thanks to our loving heavenly father who is the source of all good gifts and freely gives us these things to enjoy. Worship Him as God and raise Him above earthly aspirations by acknowledging Him in all endeavors.
2. Have you seen money as the end of your goals? Have your efforts to attain your material aspirations led you to neglect your relationship with God? Ask the Lord to forgive you and to open your eyes to know that all things are from Him, by Him, and for Him. Pray that the Lord would remove from your eyes, the blind folds of mental poverty so that you may see things as they really are, then desire and take hold of true wealth.
3. Pray for others who are selling themselves cheaply for material gains and power that God would intervene and help them to know the temporal and uncertain nature of worldly wealth. Pray that they may turn around and put their trust in the God.
4. Take authority over the devil, break the chains of mental bondage and set the captives free to serve the one and only true God praying in the name of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 10:4-5.)

God bless you.

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