

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: The Poor and Needy: Proverbs 14:23

Being humble doesn't mean allowing yourself to get stepped on like a door-mat. Being humble means taking every negativity positively. Collins Hasty

There is no road too long to the man who advances deliberately and without undue haste; there are no honors too distant to the man who prepares himself for them with patience. - Jean de la Bruyere

Unreasonable haste is the direct road to error. - Moliere

Manners require time, and nothing is more vulgar than haste. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Had the nation of Israel obeyed God's laws, their land would have remained fruitful and there would have been very little poverty or oppression of the poor. Every seventh day was a Sabbath, when the people rested and gave their land and farm animals rest. Every seventh year was a Sabbatical Year, when the land and workers were allowed to rest for the entire year. Every fiftieth year was a Year of Jubilee, when the land not only lay fallow but was returned to its original owners (Leviticus 25:1-34). By this means, the Lord sought to restore the fertility of the land regularly and also prevent wealthy people from amassing huge farms and thus controlling the economy. According to 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, the nation didn't obey these special laws for the land; God had to send the people to Babylon to give the land a rest.

What are the causes of poverty and need? Some people are poor simply because they won't work. Work is available but they prefer not to know about it.

"Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" (Proverbs 10:4, NIV). "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty" (20:13, NKJV).

Or perhaps the enemy is pleasure: "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich" (21:17, NKJV). Of course, the drunkard and the glutton are usually among the poor (23:21). Time, energy, money, and opportunity are wasted when leisure and pleasure control a person's life.

Unfortunately, some people weren't disciplined when young and taught the importance of work. "He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored" (13:18, NIV). Listening to orders and obeying them, paying attention to correction and reproof and not repeating mistakes, and respecting supervision are essential to success in any job. It's worth noting that the Prodigal's first request was, "Father, give me!" But when he returned home, his desire was, "Make me one of your servants" (Luke 15:12,19). He'd learned the value of his father's discipline and the joy of hard work.

The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness. –Proverbs 21:5

Diligence: -- Diligence, while it is opposed to laziness, is opposed also to rashness -- to premature and inconsiderate haste. The diligent man first plans and then acts. He proceeds thoughtfully and systematically. Diligence can effect little, unless accompanied with careful forethought. Diligence means

steady perseverance in execution. The projects of the attentive, plodding, persevering man, who begins in earnest and goes on to the end in earnest, prepared for difficulties, are those that promise to produce, and generally do produce, a favourable result. (R. Wardlaw, D. D.)

Moving too fast can cause one to lose everything because of your impatience, you become restless in your pursuit of gain and ends up losing it all. Haste makes waste!

Some people are needy because they like to talk but never act. "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23, NKJV). This reminds us of our Lord's parable about the two sons (Matthew 21:28-32).

People can become poor because of unwise financial dealings. Rush impulsively into a "good deal" and you may lose everything (Proverbs 21:5), and beware of signing notes and assuming other people's debts (6:1-5), especially strangers (11:15). "A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend" (17:18, NKJV; see 22:26-27). The Jews were permitted to loan money to other Jews, but they were not to charge interest (Leviticus 25:35-38; Exodus 22:25). They were permitted to charge interest to Gentiles (Deuteronomy 23:20). However, they were warned against "going surety" and assuming debts larger than they could pay (Proverbs 22:7).

There are also times when people become poor because of people and events over which they have no control. "A poor man's field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away" (13:23, NIV; 18:23; 28:8). The prophets condemned wicked rulers and businessmen who crushed the poor and seized what little they had (Isaiah 3:13-15; 10:1-4; Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-10). When there's justice in the land and people fear the Lord, then the poor have a voice and protection from oppression.

Oppressing the poor is condemned by God. "He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy" (Proverbs 14:31, NKJV). God doesn't respect the rich more than He respects the poor. "The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all" (22:2, NKJV). The poor are made in the image of God, so the way we treat the poor is the way we treat God. Churches that show deference to the rich and ignore the poor have forgotten the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (James 2:1-8).

How do we help the poor? To begin with, we ought not to look down on the poor because of their troubles, thinking we are better than they. "He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Proverbs 14:21, NIV). God has a special concern for the poor and needy, and in exploiting them we will find ourselves fighting the Lord. "Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil [plunder] the soul of those that spoiled them" (22:22-23; see Deuteronomy 15:7; 24:12).

Christian citizens ought to see to it that laws are written fairly and enforced justly. "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern" (Proverbs 29:7, NIV). "A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops" (28:3, NIV). "Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (31:9, NIV). "The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever" (29:14). These are solemn statements indeed!

When we assist the poor, we are investing with the Lord, and He will see to it that we get our dividends at the right time "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (19:17; see 11:24; 22:9). Before the church helps, however, the family has an obligation to assist

their own needy (1 Timothy 5:4,8). This leaves the church free to help those who have no one to share their burdens. If we shut our ears to the cries of the poor, God will shut His ears to our prayers (Proverbs 21:13).

Having pastored three churches, I know some of the problems congregations can have with "con artists" who pose as "believers passing through town who need help." In over forty years of ministry, I recall very few instances when strangers we helped wrote and thanked us when they got home or even repaid the gift. Certainly pastors and deacons must exercise caution and wisdom lest they do more harm than good, but we must also remember that we're helping truly needy people for Jesus' sake (Matthew 25:34-40). Bernard of Clairvaux, composer of "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," gave wise counsel when he said, "Justice seeks out the merits of the case, but pity only regards the need." If our Lord dealt with us today only on the basis of justice, where would we be?

Rich Habits

The gulf between Rich Habits and Poverty Habits is staggering. If you're well off already, chances are you already adhere to most of these Rich Habits. Integrating the ones you've neglected will push you further. But be assured: If you're doing fine now without [minding these principles](#), it'll catch up to you.

Some of the differences between rich and poor are obvious, while others are a little more surprising. Here are the most important Rich Habits you can take up to reach and maintain your wealth potential.

1. Live within your means.

Wealthy people avoid overspending by paying their future selves first. They save 20 percent of their net income and live on the remaining 80 percent.

Among those who are struggling financially, almost all are living above their means. They spend more than they earn, and their debt is overwhelming them. If you want to end your financial struggles, [you need to make a habit of saving and budgeting what you spend](#). Here are some sensible ways to budget your monthly net pay:

- Spend no more than 25 percent on housing, no matter if you own or rent.
- Spend no more than 15 percent on food.
- Limit entertainment—bars, movies, miniature golf, whatever—to no more than 10 percent of your spending. Vacations should account for no more than 5 percent of your annual net pay.
- Spend no more than 5 percent on auto loans, and never lease. Ninety-four percent of the wealthy buy instead of leasing. These folks keep their cars until the wheels fall off, taking great care along the way so that they [save money in the long run](#).
- Stay away from accumulating credit card debt. If you are doing this, it's a clear sign that you need to cut back somewhere.
- Think of savings and investments as two completely different things. You should never lose money on your savings. Try to stash six months of living expenses in an emergency fund in case you lose your job or your business goes belly-up.

- Contribute as much as you can afford to a retirement plan. If you work for a company that matches your contributions up to a certain percentage, great. Always take that free money when you can get it.

2. Don't gamble.

Talk about a sucker bet: Every week, 77 percent of those who struggle financially play the lottery. Hardly anyone who is wealthy plays the numbers. Wealthy people do not rely on random good luck for their wealth. They create their own good luck. If you still want to bet after knowing the risk, use money from your entertainment budget.

3. Read every day.

Reading information that will increase your knowledge about your business or career will make you more valuable to colleagues, customers or clients. Among wealthy people, 88 percent read 30 minutes or more every day. Just as important, they make good use of their reading time:

- 63 percent listen to audiobooks during their commute.
- 79 percent read educational career-related material.
- 55 percent [read for personal development](#).
- 58 percent read biographies of successful people.
- 94 percent read current events.
- 51 percent read about history.
- 11 percent—only 11 percent—read purely for entertainment purposes.

The reason successful people read is to improve themselves. This separates them from the competition. By increasing their knowledge, they are able to see more opportunities, which translate into more money. Comparatively speaking, only one in 50 of those struggling financially engages in this daily self-improvement reading, and as a result the poor don't grow professionally and are among the first to be fired or downsized.

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4. Forget the boob tube and spend less time surfing the internet.

How much of your valuable time do you lose parked in front of a screen? Two-thirds of wealthy people watch less than an hour of TV a day and almost that many—63 percent—spend less than an hour a day on the internet unless it is job-related.

Instead, these successful people use their free time engaged in personal development, networking, volunteering, [working side jobs or side businesses](#), or pursuing some goal that will lead to rewards down the road. But 77 percent of those struggling financially spend an hour or more a day watching TV, and 74 percent spend an hour or more a day using the internet recreationally.

5. Control your emotions.

Not every thought needs to come out of your mouth. Not every emotion needs to be expressed. When you say whatever is on your mind, you risk hurting others. Loose lips are a habit for 69 percent of those who struggle financially. Conversely, 94 percent of wealthy people filter their emotions. They understand that letting emotions control them can destroy relationships at work and at home. Wait to say what's on your mind until you're calm and have had time to look at the situation objectively.

Fear is perhaps the most important negative emotion to control. Any change, even positive changes such as marriage or a promotion, can prompt feelings of fear. Wealthy people have conditioned their minds to overcome these thoughts, while those who struggle financially give in to fear and allow it to hold them back.

Whether you fear change, making mistakes, taking risks or simply failure, conquering these emotions is about leaning in just a little until you [build up confidence](#). It's amazing how much confidence helps.