

Why We Need Rich People

By Gary DeMar

WRITING A DAILY column for American Vision's website is a perilous enterprise. While most of the emails I get in response are complimentary, there are always a few spoilers. One letter writer was stridently opposed to my article on "Why We Need Rich People" which appeared at www.AmericanVision.org on January 5, 2005. Like most socialists, he quotes the Bible sparingly and most often out of context. Here was my response (with some modifications):

Dear Chris,

Thanks for writing in response to my article on "Why We Need Rich People." I notice that you are using a computer. Those who developed the computer are rich. If you are borrowing a computer, then you are guilty of participating in a culture of richness and contributing to a market-based economy that you seem to oppose. If the computer you are using is your own, then by the standards of the rest of the world, you are rich. The same is also true if you own an automobile, have air conditioning and central heating, and shop at a grocery store where you can purchase foods from around the world at relatively low prices. If you have a refrigerator and a freezer where you can store food for long periods of time, you are living in luxury. Sorry to have to tell you this, but you are richer than King Solomon ever was! So I guess the Bible's condemnation of the rich is only directed at people who are richer than you are.

The Bible has a great deal to say about power. Is all power bad? Not that I can see. Power that's misused is immoral similar to the way money can be misused for evil purposes. You mention Zaccheus as someone who was rich and condemned. He was rich because he was a thief. He misused the power of government—the taxing power of government—to

line his own pockets. But according to your standards, Zaccheus should be singled out as a good guy because he taxed rich people. Maybe he's only a bad guy because he kept so much of what he collected for himself. If he had turned the collected taxes over to Rome, and Rome redistributed the money to the poor, you would nominate him for sainthood.

All types of sexual practices are condemned in the Bible. Does this mean that sex, like riches, should be condemned? Is sex itself condemned or only the misuse of sex? Maybe we should all be celibate so we can avoid the Bible's condemnation of sexual sins. Better safe than sorry.

You mention Joseph of Arimathea in your list of verses about the rich. You are correct in describing him as "a rich man." Why wasn't he condemned by Jesus? I don't see any condemnation of him anywhere in Scripture. Why didn't give all his money away if, as the text says, he had become a "disciple of Jesus" (Matt. 27:57)? It was his wealth that enabled him to care for the body of Jesus (27:59). Maybe the Roman government should have been responsible?

I did not notice Job in your list of verses. God made Job rich: "And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning, and he had 14,000 sheep, and 6000 camels, and 1000 yoke of oxen, and 1000 female donkeys" (Job 42:10, 12). What was God thinking? I guess He didn't know the Bible as well as you do.

Then there's the woman of Proverbs 31. She invested in real estate (31:16), and horror of horrors, she made a profit and planted a vineyard (31:16b). Does she turn the grapes into wine to sell and make even more money? Because she has wealth, she has the means to help the poor (31:20). She also is involved in the textile market (31:24). By your standards, this is a very bad woman.

By the way, Abraham was rich (Gen. 13:2), and so was Isaac (26:12–13). God made them that way. It's those who envy the rich as well as those who abuse their wealth that the Bible condemns (26:12–17).

Gary DeMar



ABRAHAM, SHOWN HERE PAYING TITHES TO MELCHIZEDEK, WAS A RICH MAN



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