CHAPTER 25
INVESTING FOR A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST (e²)

"Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts" (Proverbs 24:3&4 LB).

"A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 28:20).

"…Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (Matthew 25:23)

WE ARE TO BE GOOD STEWARDS
In the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13), Jesus amazingly commended an unjust manager because he had dealt prudently—he exercised sound judgment concerning his own interests. Then Jesus said something even more startling, "For the sons of the world are wiser in their generation than the sons of light." He was not commending the unjust manager's fraudulent business activities, but his prudence in using present opportunities for his future welfare. Then He said, "If you are not faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches." (For a definition of true riches review the definition of ***salvation***—Strong's # 4991—under the earlier chapter entitled "The Law of Faith.") In this parable, Jesus equates the "*love for money*" with the service of mammon (Luke 16:13). (Mammon is generally considered to be the name of the demonic principality, which dominates the world's financial system.) Paul says that the "…the love of money" is a root of all kinds of evil…" (1Timothy 6:10). Notice that Paul did not say, "Money is the root of all evil"; he said the "**love** of money…." Money must be handled carefully and used wisely in order that the desire for it doesn't seduce us from true devotion to God. The Manufacturer's Handbook says, "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).

Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of the wealth entrusted to one's care. God has entrusted a certain amount of resources (time, possessions, and wealth) to each of us and we are to manage those resources to cause them to increase, so that we may provide for our family, support the spreading of the Good News to the nations, and leave an inheritance for our children's children.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE A WEALTHY INDIVIDUAL?
If we were to ask the average American to define a wealthy individual, most would say "a person who has abundance of material possessions." But many people who have an abundance of material goods live a high-consumption life style and actually have a very little actual wealth. The most appropriate way to define wealth is based on an individual's "net worth." Net worth is the current value of one's assets less his liabilities. Therefore wealth is built by accumulating assets. A millionaire is an individual whose current assets exceed his liabilities by $1,000,000 or more.

YOUR FIRST DECISION ON THE ROAD TO CREATING WEALTH
Many people who receive high annual salaries and possess an abundance of material goods appear wealthy, but are not. They consume most or all of their income buying expensive homes, driving expensive foreign cars, wearing expensive clothes, and purchasing a number of other expensive consumer goods and services on credit. It is their extensive use of credit which makes them appear to be wealthy, but in reality their net worth is very low. If they were to lose their high paying jobs, they could only survive for two to three months. The prototypical American millionaire, on the other hand, lives in a modest home, drives an American made car (only a minority of them drive a current model year car), wears inexpensive suits…and if he left his job he could live comfortably for more than twelve years (1). Therefore it is important for you to decide early in your working career whether you want to **appear wealthy** or whether you want to **be a good steward** by managing the resources God had entrusted into your care "to become wealthy."

HOW DOES ONE ACCUMULATE WEALTH?
As we have pointed out in an earlier chapter, more of the nation's millionaires have built their wealth by investing in small businesses than through any other investment vehicle. The prototypical American millionaire is self-employed; he owns a small factory, a chain of stores, a service business, or is a self-employed professional. Only about one third of American millionaires are employed by others (1).

HONOR THE LORD WITH YOUR POSSESSIONS
"Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

If this proverb was written in the vernacular of the twenty-first century, I believe it would read something like this: *"Honor the Lord with your assets (your possessions), and give Him the first portion of your income, (your increase), so that your income statement will be filled with profit, and your balance sheet will overflow with new assets."*

The Jewish farmer, to whom this proverb was first written, was trained from childhood by his father to farm the family's land. By the time he inherited the land from his parents, he was a seasoned farmer. He understood that after he had given his tithe to the Lord, the rest of the increase was available for him and his family to use—everything, that is, except a portion of the newly harvested seed (usually the best seed) which would be required to plant the next year's crop. But he didn't expect the Lord to pour grain, or herds of cattle, or wine out of heaven; he expected Him to bless his produce and herds with increase (Deuteronomy 28:4) and to give rain to the seed he had planted and fertility to the herds he tended (Deuteronomy 28:11&12). He expected God to rebuke the devourer so as to protect his crops and herds from insects and disease (Malachi 3:11).

The problem with most twenty-first century Christians is that their fathers never taught them how to plant and reap in the twenty-first century financial fields. Therefore, they have never saved and invested (planted) a portion of their income (their increase), and they have therefore never accumulated any assets (lands and herds) which the Lord could increase and protect from inflation, natural disasters and evil men as he did for the Jewish farmer.

HARVESTING IN THE 21st CENTURY REQUIRES EXPERIENCE & CAPITAL
In order to successfully invest in the financial or real estate marketplace, start a successful business, or buy a stake in an existing one, an individual must have both experience and capital. But when most people graduate from high school or college, they have neither capital nor experience, so they go to work for others. Yet just because a person works for someone else, doesn't mean he has to give up his dream of becoming a wealthy investor or starting and owning a small business. Working for someone else is an excellent opportunity to save and invest a portion of your earnings to obtain the capital you will need to enter the financial markets; it is an excellent way to start or buy a stake in an existing business. It is also the perfect time to do your financial homework.

OKAY, HOW SHOULD I INVEST MY MONEY?
Recently a young couple was planning and paying for by themselves a rather large and expensive wedding. They asked where they should invest their savings from their future earnings. I asked them if they had any short term consumer debt. As I recall they said they had $15,000 in credit card debt, and a car that they were buying on credit; but they were otherwise fairly debt free. I mentally estimated that the wedding would probably cost them another $10,000 to $20,000. I gave them the following advice:

1. **Reconsider their plans** for the large expensive wedding in favor of a smaller wedding attended only by their close friends and relatives.
2. **Establish a firm financial foundation** by paying off their credit card debt and automobile loans before they begin to invest. (Interest on consumer debt is usually much higher than they could reasonably earn from investments in stocks, bonds or real estate.)

3. **Do their financial homework** while paying off debt by beginning immediately to educate themselves concerning the various types of investments (i.e. stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, real estate, etc., and the various risks and potential returns associated with each.
4. **Set up a tax-sheltered retirement account** in which to do their investing. (Tax sheltered retirement accounts are discussed later in this chapter.)
5. **Establish a financial goal** and determine how much they would need to save and invest to reach that goal.

WHERE SHOULD I INVEST MY MONEY?

It is not my purpose throughout this chapter to advise you as to where to invest your money; it is my purpose to familiarize you with the types of investments that are available to you and give you an understanding of some of the issues that can affect each type of investment. Basically there are only two types of investment options available to you: the first is lending investments, and the second is ownership investments.

LENDING INVESTMENTS

A lending investment is an investment in which you lend money to an individual or an organization. For example you might deposit your money into a bank savings account or a bank "Certificate of Deposit" at an agreed-upon interest rate. Another common option might be to purchase a government or corporate bond. Bonds are basically IOU's issued by a government or private company. Lending investments are generally fixed investments, and they normally protect your principal. For example, if you purchase a five-year bond issued by the General Motors Corporation at seven percent interest, you are in essence lending your money to General Motors Corporation for a period of five years at seven percent interest. General Motors Corporation agrees to pay you seven percent interest each year for a period of five years, and at the end of five years, to return your original investment (your principal).

The Most Common Lending Investments Are:

- Bank certificates of deposit (CD's) available at any private bank
- U.S. Treasury obligations, such as Treasury bills, bonds, and notes offered by the U.S. Government. These investments are considered one of the safest because they are backed by the U. S. Government.
- Municipal bonds are similar to U.S. government bonds, except they are issued by states and municipalities. The interest paid by municipal bonds is free from federal taxation. Municipal bonds are also considered to be reasonably safe because they are backed by the state or municipality that issued the bonds.
- Corporate bonds, fixed-income investments issued by corporations. Several agencies rate corporate bonds from the safest to the least safe based on the corporation's ability to pay the agreed interest on the bonds, and repay the principle (your original investment) at the end of the purchase term. Investment grade bonds are as follows. AAA, AA, A, BBB; however, anything below BBB is considered junk bonds because they carry a higher risk even though they also usually pay a higher interest.

OWNERSHIP INVESTMENTS

An ownership investment is an investment by which you own a piece or all of a particular asset or company which has a potential to produce earnings. The most time-tested way to build wealth with ownership investments is to invest in three areas: publically traded stocks, real estate, or a small business. When you purchase a share of stock of General Motors Corporation, you are purchasing a piece of the ownership of General Motors Corporation. When you purchase a piece of land or a building, you are making an ownership investment in real estate. When you invest your money to start or purchase a business, you are making an ownership investment in a small business.

The Most Common Ownership Investments:

- **Stocks** are probably one of the most common ownership investments. Publicly traded companies issue shares of stock that an individual can purchase on one of the major stock exchanges such as the New York Stock Exchange or the NASDAQ exchange. When you purchase a share of stock, you purchase a part of the company (a part of the equity of the company). That is why stocks are often referred to as "equities." The value of a stock fluctuates constantly, depending on what people consider it to be worth. When more people think the stock will rise in value than think the stock will fall, the stock price will rise, and conversely when more people think the price of the stock will fall than think it will rise, the price will fall. Owning an equity share of a business is similar to owning your own business—the upside increase is limitless, while the downside loss is limited to the money that you invest in it. In the case of starting a new business, the downside loss may also include many hours of your personal time away from your family.

- **Investing in real estate rental property** is another way that you can build wealth. Rental property, whether it is an apartment building or a small office building, can be a particularly good investment for the individual who has personal construction skills. Such an individual can purchase property which is in a good location but has been allowed to deteriorate, and use their personal construction skills to improve the property and place it back on the market at a higher price. But real estate, like any business, requires that the buyer does his or her homework. It is particularly important to know the vacancy rate for the type of real estate they are considering, as well as the income and expense possibilities of the property. But the keystone of success in real estate investing is location, location, location; its importance cannot be over emphasized. If you don't have a lot of personal time to spend with your real estate and you don't want to be a landlord, you might consider investing in a real estate investment trust (REIT). A REIT is a diversified investment company that provides advantages similar to those of a mutual fund or ETF in that it offers a diversified portfolio of real estate and is managed by professional managers. You may invest in a REIT by purchasing it directly or by purchasing it on a major stock exchange.

- **Ownership of a small business** is one of the best ways to become wealthy. In fact, more of the nation's wealthiest individuals have built their wealth by investing in a small business than through any other investment vehicle. This shouldn't be surprising because more new jobs are created annually by small business than from any other source, and small businesses are the economic engine that drives much of our nation's economic growth. While it is possible to become wealthy by purchasing stock in businesses owned by others, the most common way is to become a self-employed small business owner.

WE BUILD WEALTH BY BEING OWNERS NOT LENDERS

Traditionally investors build wealth by being owners not by being lenders. Over the last two hundred years, those investing in the U.S. stock market have earned an average of about 10 percent per year, while those investing in the U.S. bond market over the same period have earned an average of only 5 percent per year. But small (owner-owned) companies often earn returns that are far superior to the average stock or bonds earnings. Although my consulting business struggled financially during its formative years (the first six or seven years) and at times faced some financial challenges, it was not uncommon for me to earn 20 to 30 percent or more return on my investment in the business. Those returns were after I had also received a salary for managing the business.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DOING YOUR FINANCIAL HOMEWORK

Taxes

Federal, state and local income taxes can take a large bite out of your income. So don't forget to study the tax structure when you are doing your financial homework. The first thing you need to do is to determine your current tax rate, particularly your marginal tax rate. (Marginal tax rate is the rate you pay on the last dollars of your income). Since tax rates are structured, you pay a lower tax rate on the first dollars you earn, and as your income increases you pay higher and higher rates. For instance, in 2007 a married couple would pay the federal government only 10 percent on the first $15,650 of taxable income, but they would pay 15 percent on the portion of their taxable income between $15,650 and $63,700. The tax rate increases at various intervals until your taxable income exceeds $349,700 at which time you pay 35 percent. Taxable income is your income from employment and investment less various deductions allowed by the government. Taxes have a major impact on financial decisions such as investing, purchasing real estate, and retirement planning. One of the best ways for you to reduce your taxable income is to invest a portion of your funds in a tax-deferred retirement account.

Investing in a Tax-Deferred Retirement Account

If you are investing money in a tax-deferred retirement account, the earnings from your investment are not taxable until you withdraw your funds from the plan. However, if you withdraw funds from these types of accounts before you reach retirement age, you will not only have to pay taxes on the earnings, but you will have to pay a penalty as well. There are a number of tax deferred retirement accounts available, such as 401(K), Keoghs, Simplified Employment Plan, Individual Retirement Plan (SEP-IRA's), and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's). One of the benefits of being a self employed individual is that you may set up a "SEP-IRA" or a "Keogh Plan" which allows you to save more than if you were saving as an employee under an employer plan. But here are the two most popular tax-deferred retirement plans:

- The 401(K), which must be established by an employer for the employee. In 2007, a 401(K) plan allowed an employee to shelter up to $15,500 plus their employer's matching funds

- The Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), which an employee may establish for himself. In 2007, an IRA plan allowed an employee to shelter up to $4,000; this increases to $5,000 per year if the individual is over fifty years of age.

Investing outside of a Tax-Deferred Fund

Now, if you are investing dollars outside of a "tax –sheltered" retirement fund, taxes could eat up a large part of the annual interest and dividends earned by your investment. The profits earned by selling an asset, such as a stock or real estate (outside of a tax–sheltered retirement fund), are taxable in the year the asset is sold. We call the profits earned by the sale of assets "capital gains."

Fees Paid an Investment Manager

If you're investing through a personal investment advisor or a mutual fund or exchange traded fund manager, the amount of the fee is very important. If you were to invest a $1000 a year for twenty-five years, your earnings would be reduced by approximately $4,800 for every 1 percent in annual management fees you pay. Mutual funds and exchange traded funds are required by the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) to clearly identify their annual expense ratio in their prospectus. Make sure you understand these costs when investing in such funds.

Inflation

Some types of investments are more susceptible to the ravages of inflation than others. For instance, if you were to invest your money in a five-year bond that pays a fixed 5 percent interest, your interest income would be radically reduced by the 4.5 percent annual inflation experienced in the United States in 2007. On the other hand, investments such as real estate or gold and other precious metals may actually benefit and increase in value due to inflation.

International Investments

International investments are susceptible to currency value fluctuations relative to the U.S. dollar. For instance, if you were to invest in international stocks and the U.S. dollar becomes less valuable in relation to the currency in which international stocks are valued, your investment would gain value. On the other hand, if the U.S. dollar becomes more valuable in relation to the currency in which international stocks are valued, your investment would lose value. Keep currency fluctuations in mind when investing in international stocks.

IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS!
"But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9-10 NLT).

In October of 2003, I was attending a meeting of Christian businessmen in Brussels, Belgium. I was sitting in the lobby of the hotel when a man from Germany, a man whom I had known for a number of years, sat down beside me and began talk to me about a sure-fire investment in which he and his charitable organization had become involved. According to this man, a company called International Product Investment Corporation (IPIC) which was owned operated by an American business man named Greg Setser, was returning huge profits to the investors—20 to 30 percent in four to six months. He explained that Setser would allow Christian businessmen like me to partner with IPIC in the purchase and sale of surplus goods which it had acquired from other companies, and these investments were returning huge profits. He pointed out that a number of large worldwide Christian ministries were investing in and endorsing Setser's company, and he went on to name the ministries. My acquaintance assured me that he had spoken with the head of several of these ministries and they had verified that IPIC was a legitimate company from which they had received huge profits. He pointed out that Setser was actually on the board of directors of one of the best known of these Christian ministries. Then my German acquaintance offered me an opportunity to invest with IPIC through his charitable organization. As he explained the huge short-term profits to be earned, I sensed an overwhelming urge to invest with IPIC. After all, most of my stock and real estate investments were earning only 5 to 10 percent per year, and here was an assured opportunity for me to earn 25 percent every four months. In addition my friend's charitable organizations would receive an additional 20 percent. That overwhelming urge I experienced in Brussels was a satanic "spirit of greed" which was trying to impress itself on my mind. (If you don't understand what I mean, review the chapter 5 in this book entitled "Overcoming Fear.") Frankly, I found it difficult to say no, but I had experienced this spirit before. It had come upon me previously when I had been offered investments in gold mines, oil wells, and other similar "can't lose" investments. I have watched others become involved in these types of investments and every one of them lost their money. When investing your money, stay with what you understand.

In November of 2003, just one month after that meeting in Brussels in which I was offered the opportunity to invest in IPIC, Greg Setser was arrested by the United States Security Exchange Commission and charged with fraud. He was subsequently convicted of twenty-two counts of fraud, conspiracy and money laundering, and was sentenced to forty years in prison. Nearly everyone who invested in IPIC lost his money.

Several years ago, Dave Soliem and I (Dave's story is highlighted in Chapter 2) counseled a mutual Christian friend concerning a similar investment he had made which purported to provide a 25 percent return on investment every three months. We told him very forcefully that there was no way a legitimate business enterprise could continue to pay those types of returns, but he wouldn't listen. For several months he received the promised 25 percent return. Based on this initial success, he involved many of his friends and acquaintances in the same investment. Suddenly the earnings checks stopped coming, however, and he and his friends lost not only their personal money, but money that they had borrowed from other sources to invest in what turned out to be just another "Ponzi scheme." They lost their money because they didn't do their homework.

BEWARE OF WHERE YOU GIVE YOUR MONEY
I have also sensed the same spirit of greed trying to impress itself upon my mind when certain charismatic preachers take an offering. These preachers are in great demand as convention and television fund raisers because they are very adept at raising money by manipulating the scriptures to support their fund-raising efforts. In a convention several years ago, a well-

known prosperity preacher proclaimed that God would pay off the home mortgage of anyone in the audience who would give one month's house payment into the offering. As he made this challenge, I sensed that same familiar spirit of greed described in the previous paragraphs. As this man presented the mortgage cancellation challenge, it was all I could do to stay in my seat, as some 500 to 600 people rushed to the front of the ballroom to give a month's house payment into the offering. When you hear someone promise a one hundred fold return, when you hear someone promise a supernatural debt cancelation—keep your money in your pocket. Last week my wife and I were looking over the programming on the Christian television stations, when we saw an evangelist offering "green anointing oil" which he called "prosperity oil." Certainly God wants us to be prosperous, but it is your obedience to Him and His Word that will make you prosperous—not your obedience to a man, even an anointed man, or anointing yourself with green prosperity oil.

CHRISTIANS ARE PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO THESE INVESTMENTS

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Christians seem to be particularly vulnerable to such investments for two reasons: first they trust others who claim to be Christians and share the same Christian-Judeo values that they do (this was the case with those who became involved with Greg Setser); and second, they have often been taught that if they give to God's work, He will literally open up the windows of heaven and pour out a such a blessing that they cannot contain it. Therefore, when an investment appears to provide an investment so large that they cannot contain it, they immediately suppose that is must be provided from God, and they fail to take the time to do their homework and to seek God for guidance and direction concerning their investment decision.

INVESTING IN THE STOCK AND BOND MARKET

Individual Stocks

There are potential rewards from investing in stock or bond markets, but there are also significant risks. Investing in individual stocks and bonds requires a great deal of time—time that most investors, particularly young investors, do not have. Therefore many investors have turned to mutual funds and exchange-traded funds rather than picking and choosing individual stocks on their own.

Mutual Funds

Mutual funds are investment companies managed by professional managers who purchase and manage the stock of a large number of companies, thus eliminating some of the risks of picking individual stocks. Mutual fund investors make money by receiving dividends and interest and by the rise in value of the securities owned by the fund. While mutual fund shareholders may buy or sell their shares at any time, their purchase and sale price is not determined until the market closes at the end of the day. In a rapidly rising or falling market, considerable value may be lost between the times that the buy or sell order is placed at 9:00 AM(EST) and the market closes at 4:00 PM(EST).

Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs)

Exchange-traded funds (ETFs) are similar to mutual funds in that they are an investment company managed by professional managers. They also allow investors a convenient way to purchase a broad basket of securities in a single transaction. But ETFs differ from mutual funds in that they can be bought and sold during the day just like common stocks. Essentially, ETFs offer the convenience of a stock along with the diversification of a mutual fund

Mutual Funds and ETFs Provide Diversity

Because both mutual funds and exchange-traded funds are managed by professional managers who purchase and manage the stock of a large number of companies, they also provide diversity and eliminate some of the risks of picking individual stocks. But many mutual funds and ETFs fail to beat their relevant market indexes; therefore an investor should investigate the historic rate of return and annual expense ratio of a fund before buying. You should also look at a fund's management efficiency by selecting funds that maintain low operating costs and no-load (sales charges).

Managing Individual Stocks

I personally have not invested in the stock or bond market outside of my tax-deferred retirement accounts. Over the years I have subscribed to several investment newsletters to guide me in my stock market investment decisions regarding those retirement accounts, but frankly I have not had the time to pick and manage individual stocks. However, I have found ETF stocks to be a better way for me to invest in the market. Exchange-traded funds have the advantage of being able to establish preset "stop loss orders" similar to individual stocks, which allows you to automatically sell at a predetermined price in real market time. Years ago when I was on a mission trip to Russia, I learned the importance of "stop loss orders." While I was out of the country, the NASDAC exchange took a huge drop, and since I had not established a preset "stop loss order," I lost a large portion of my investment in that market. (I discussed this loss in an earlier chapter of this book.)

If you chose to invest in individual stocks or to time the markets (move in and out of the market), remember that you are competing with professionals. Discussions with many of my friends and associates have revealed that those who have tried to pick individual stocks or have invested in stock tips from their friends and associates have often lost considerable amounts of money. It has been said that there are just two emotions in the investment markets—fear and greed. Warren Buffet, one of the wealthiest business men in America, warns, "Sell when others are greedy and buy when others are fearful."

DON'T INVEST YOUR MONEY UNTIL YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK

In the preceding paragraphs, I have familiarized you with some of the more common vehicles that are available to you to make your money work for you, yet you are not yet ready to lend or invest your money. There is still a lot of homework for you to do! Financial literacy is absolutely necessary before you lay your hard-earned money on the table.

Don't invest in the stock market until you know something about the stock market. Learn the language of the market. Open a small account with one of the discount brokerage firms—there are a number of them available. Place your money in the brokerage firm's money market and begin to familiarize yourself with the firm's website. Practice getting a quote on various stocks, mutual funds or ETFs by typing the applicable stock symbol into the quote box. Practice accessing and reading the available stock summary information. Study how the stock has performed over the last day, the last week, six months, or year, and even five years—it should all be available on your brokerage firm's website. Understand the stock's price earnings ratio (earnings per share), whether the stock routinely pays a dividend, and if it does, how much it pays. Familiarize yourself with how to buy or sell shares. Gain an understanding of a market order, a limit order, how to establish a stop loss order and how long a stop loss order is in effect before it expires. It's important to understand these and a host of other routine market tasks. It would be good for you to subscribe to one or more investment newsletters. Two investment newsletters that I have used for years for ETFs are the Fabian Newsletter, which may be reviewed at www.fabian.com; and Richard Young's Intelligence Report which may be viewed at www.intelligencereport.com. I would also recommend the book *A Christian's Guide to Investing* by Danny Fortana. Fontana, a stockbroker and the founder and CEO of Triune Capital Advisors, tends to write about the market with a Christian world view.

Similarly, don't buy property until you understand the basic essentials of real estate. There are literally hundreds of books available in your local bookstore to guide you in the purchase, management and ownership of real estate investment property. As a starter I would recommend *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon L. Lechter.

Before you start your own business, I suggest you work for someone else in the same industry or service business. Keep your eyes and ears open and learn all you can about the business. Depending on the type of business or industry you are interested in becoming involved in, there may be also be university or community college courses available to educate you in the basic issues of the business, but there is nothing like hands-on experience. While the major book stores have instructional books dealing with the operation of the more popular industries, it may be difficult to find instructional books on specialty businesses. Don't overlook going to work for an older owner (one who has no children working in the business) who will be ready to retire about the time you have obtained the experience that is required to run the business. Work hard; make yourself indispensible to the owner. You may be able to negotiate a buyout of the business from the owner; get him to mentor you in the management of the business and even help you finance the ownership transfer.

ONE FINAL ADMONITION CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEALTH

In opening paragraph of this chapter, we discussed the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13) in which Jesus amazingly commended the unjust manager because he had dealt prudently (he had exercised sound judgment concerning his own interests). Then Jesus said something even more startling: "For the sons of the world are wiser in their generation than the sons of light." Jesus was not commending the unjust manager's fraudulent business activities but his wisdom in using his present opportunities to provide for his future welfare. He was simply pointing out that worldly men are often wiser than spiritual men in using their skill and wisdom to store up wealth for their future. Then He proclaimed that men ought to use their money to make friends for themselves both in this world and in the next. The irony, as we pointed out in an earlier chapter, is that many of the principles which the world uses to succeed in life have been in the Word of God all the time. It is time that God's people wake up and begin to use these same principles to make themselves successful. In this book we have endeavored to teach you both spiritual and earthly wisdom concerning the development wealth and success in your life. Now it is time for you to apply these principles to manage your resources and cause them to increase so that you may provide abundantly for your family in this life…and so that you may prepare for the life to come by funding the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the nations and by leaving an inheritance for our children's children.

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